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Uses and Implications of the Verb 'Zittern' in Rilke

Ben Hutchinson

The astonishing regularity with which the young Rilke makes use of the verb 'zittern' and its derivations is a fact that has hitherto largely gone unremarked in Rilke scholarship, but one which lies at the heart of his juvenile poetics.¹ He makes full use of the verb's elasticity, exploring its oscillation between opposing emotions, employing it as a bridge between the physical and the mental, the sensual and the spiritual. By this token he is very much a child of his time, schooled in the *Jugendstil* lexicon of the 1890s, in which 'zittern' was a favourite verb with which to translate an inherently visual style into words on a page.² His usage is, however, more personally determined, symptomatic of his incipient preoccupation with the relationship between the artistic and the divine; it evokes both an active and a passive mood of creation, mediating between a *creating* artist and a *created* world. This investigation will thus seek to establish how the young Rilke's use of 'zittern' comes to illustrate the way in which he marries the contemporary idiom with his own subjective interests; through the microcosm of one verb we can see the young poet striving to assert his own individual authority on the conventional vocabulary of the day. We will then be in a position to suggest how Rilke develops his use of the verb in his later poetry, a usage determined by these early preoccupations.

The first stanza of *Das Stunden-Buch*, whilst not by any means the first use of 'zittern' in Rilke's work, may be considered its *locus classicus*: "Da neigt sich die Stunde und rührt mich an / mit klarem, metallenen Schlag: / mir zittern die Sinne. Ich fühle: ich kann – / und ich fasse den plastischen Tag" (KA I 157).³

The moment of the 'Stunde' striking is evoked as a process of physical awakening, of the senses tingling in a moment of synaesthetic fervour, and this is encapsulated in the compressed phrase "mir zittern die Sinne." The four-fold repetition of the 'i' vowel in short and long pairs, a typically Rilkean instance of

onomatopoeic assonance, enacts the tingling effect that this 'Stunde' has on him, where the rhythm, read either as amphibrachs (-/- -/-) or dactyls (-/-- /-- /-,) stresses the dominant first syllables of 'zittern' and 'Sinne,' evoking the trembling of his senses metrically as well as semantically. The phrase, like the whole first stanza (and indeed the whole first book), hovers between the two controlling perspectives of the monk and his God, describing a simultaneous process of empowerment (from without) and creation (from within). So the monk's senses 'zittern' because he perceives himself both as being *affected* (and indeed the impersonal structure of the dative phrase "mir zittern die Sinne" underlines this, as if his senses were controlling him rather than vice-versa) and *effecting* (the very act of writing this poem, which is then configured by his switch from the accusative of the first line into the nominative of "Ich fühle: Ich kann – / und ich fasse den plastischen Tag").

'Zittern,' then, seems here to be causally linked with the striking of the 'Stunde.' Its presence links the sharpened senses (and by extension the emotional nerves) of the poet to a given *moment* in time, a moment couched invariably in the present tense in order to convey an immediacy of action that contrasts, for example, with the subsequent past tense of "Nichts war vollendet, eh ich es erschaut" (KA I 157). Antecedents of this use of the verb to indicate a self-conscious instant in time can be traced in earlier prose sketches. Two of the three short stories in the collection *Die Letzten*, conceived originally around the turn of 1898/1899 under the working title of "Hinter den Worten," make the same connection of 'zittern' to the moment of a clock striking, in very similar terms (Naumann 71). "Im Gespräch" is the first of the stories: "Da fällt die silberne Uhr ein, hell, zögernd, mit einem kleinen Zittern in der Stimme" (KA III 294). The title story "Die Letzten" makes the same progression through 'Uhr,' 'zittern' and 'Stimme': "Jetzt erhebt die schlanke Uhr, die fast verheimlicht zwischen den Fenstern steht, ihre zitternde Stimme" (KA III 308).

The recurrence of such similar imagery suggests the importance of 'zittern' for Rilke as a leitmotif emphasising a given moment in time. Yet why did 'zittern' come to be of such recurring significance for him? We can perhaps find sources in two of the nineteenth-century philosophers of most importance to him: Kierkegaard and,

more tentatively, Nietzsche. The latter's 1864 fragment "Werde neu" reads like a prose progenitor of the first stanza of *Das Buch vom mönchischen Leben*:

Es ist etwas dunkel in der Stube; ich zünd' Licht an; doch blickt des Tages Auge neugierig durch die halbverhangenen Fenster. O es möchte weiter sehn, mitten hinein in dies Herz, das heisser als das Licht, dämmernder als der Abend, bewegter als die Stimmen aus der Ferne, tief innerlich zittert und schwingt, wie eine große Glocke, die bei einem Gewitter geläutet wird.
Und ich erlebe ein Gewitter; zieht nicht das Glockenläuten die Blitze an? Nun so nahe Gewitter, läutere, reinige, blase Regendüfte in meine matte Natur, sei willkommen, endlich willkommen!
Sieh! Da zuckst du, erster Blitz mitten hinein in das Herz, und daraus steigt's wie ein langer fahler Nebel aufwärts. (415)

We cannot be sure whether this directly influenced Rilke's verse, since we do not know whether he encountered this fragment, yet even the speculation remains striking: aside from the obvious coincidence of the centrality of the bell ringing to both Nietzsche's fragment and Rilke's poem, the language itself anticipates the monk's moment of epiphany. The scene takes place in the evening and explicitly links the pealing of the bells to the changing of the weather, in a manner analogous to both the suppressed prose interpolation after the first poem in the *Stunden-Buch*⁴ and another poem of this time originally intended for *Dir zur Feier*: "Durch seine Züge ging ein Zittern – / als sei der Regen das Gericht. / Und leise wachsenden Gewittern / sah deine Seele ins Gesicht" (SW III 588).⁵

The verb 'zittert' in Nietzsche's fragment is heavily stressed, the main verb deferred by three comparative clauses, intensified by the adverbial "tief innerlich" and expanded by the subsequent 'schwingt'; also pertinent is its juxtaposition with 'Stimmen,' just as in Rilke's early stories. In this Nietzsche fragment, then, it is his "Herz, das [...] zittert"; Rilke, however, responds as (Eliot

suggests) a poet should, "thinking with his fingertips," for it is rather his 'Sinne' that tingle in a moment of synaesthesia. The force of Nietzsche's piece, its closing imperative "Werde neu!", seems to find a sympathetic listener in Rilke's monk, who stresses a similar process of 'Werden' right from the start of his 'Gebete' (KA I 157). Whether Rilke had read this fragment or not, the similarities of idiom and context centered on the verb 'zittern' illustrate the extent to which Rilke responded to the style of his time as it was determined by one of its defining figures.

The religious context of this paradigmatic use of 'zittern' at the start of *Das Stunden-Buch* also poses the question of the extent to which the word descends via Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, translated into German, of course, as *Furcht und Zittern*. Whether or not Rilke had read *Furcht und Zittern* by the late 1890s, we know that he subsequently became extremely interested in his work, translating some of his letters to his wife Regina and declaring in a letter to Lou Andreas-Salomé in May 1904 his intention to learn Danish in order to be able to read Jacobsen and Kierkegaard (161). It therefore seems reasonable to assume that he had at least heard of the book; its very name, so resonantly biblical and suggestive of an Old Testament awe, evokes the dilemma explored in the text (the test of Abraham's faith in being asked to sacrifice his son Isaak) and suggests the ethical, metaphysical and emotional complexities of the verb 'zittern.' It is an ambiguous term, for it can imply trembling both "vor Furcht" and "vor Freude," Rilke certainly uses it in both senses in the stage directions to his early plays.⁶ It is through this ambivalence that Kierkegaard's title hints at the ethical dilemma facing Abraham; his relationship with his Old Testament God is strained, for one half of him rejoices in the putative deed since it will please God, whilst the other naturally hesitates to perform such an act.

It is just such ambivalence that Rilke explores through his own use of 'zittern,' locating the verb as a meeting-point of the passive and the active. This perhaps explains his fondness for the cliché "zitternde Hände,"⁷ since for Rilke "Hände sind schon ein komplizierter Organismus, ein Delta, in dem viel fernherkommendes Leben zusammenfließt, um sich in den großen Strom der Tat zu ergießen" (KA IV 422): "Wir bauen an dir mit zitternden Händen /

und wir türmen Atom auf Atom" (KA I 164).

Here the hands are shaking because they are being led by God, and they are awed by him, but they are also in the process of creating, of building toward him. The adjectival present participle thus establishes the monk (and by extension 'wir,' mankind) as both subject and object; indeed, it can be said to represent the internal processes of the devotional artist, inspired to create, transmuting a passive *im*-position into an active *ex*-position. This explains the preponderance of "zitternde Hände" in the *Stunden-Buch* and the *Geschichten vom lieben Gott*,⁸ the give-and-take relationship with God latent in the idea of 'zittern' anticipates Rilke's insistence on mutual responsibility stated in a letter to Marie von Thurn und Taxis-Hohenlohe: "ich kann religiöse Naturen nicht begreifen, die Gott als das Gegebene hinnehmen und nachfühlen, ohne sich an ihm produktiv zu versuchen" (357).

The supreme manifestation of 'zittern' as an index of religious fervour must be, however, the passage describing the "Epileptiker, Veitstanzender oder Besessener"⁹ towards the end of the *Buch von der Pilgerschaft*, a passage that invites a juxtaposition of the two monks of the first and second books. For here in the second book it is a third-person narrative description – and thus it is as if we are now on the outside looking in at the corresponding 'zittern' already discussed at the start of the *Buch vom mönchischen Leben*, almost as if they were one and the same monk seen from different perspectives. Manfred Engel's description of these as "ekstatische, das Alltagsbewußtsein sprengende Zustände" (KA I 774) rings etymologically true, for as we have already seen with the phrase "mir zittern die Sinne," the impersonal grammar evokes the Greek notion of *ekstasis*, of standing outside the self – and here it is as if the monk from the first part of the *Stunden-Buch* is standing outside himself: "Und langsam ging sein Fall an ihm vorbei [...] / Und er verneigte sich in solche Tiefe, / daß ihm ein Zittern durch die Glieder lief" (KA I 226-227).

Again it is the dative case suggesting that it is something being done *to* him. This impersonality strongly recalls its main literary (and appropriately Russian) precedent, in Dostoevsky's epileptic Prince Myshkin's famous seizure that saves him from Rogozhin's knife in *The Idiot*: "it is quite impossible, or at least very difficult, for the observer to imagine or concede that it is the man himself

who is screaming. One even gets the impression that it is someone else screaming inside the body of the man" (Dostoevsky 246). (The suggestion that 'zittern' is an index of insanity has already been prepared earlier in the *Buch von der Pilgerschaft*: in the poem "Nachtwächter ist der Wahnsinn" the verb is used twice in the space of three stanzas, again in both an 'active' and a 'passive' sense – to refer both to personified 'Wahnsinn' itself and the effect that it has on Rilke's favourite image of receptivity, the dog.)

The notion of 'zittern,' then, combines with the impersonal grammar to suggest a correlation between the subjective monk of the first book and the *perceived* epileptic of the *Buch von der Pilgerschaft*. The repetition of 'neigen' (or 'verneigen') is also worth noting, recalling the very first verb of *Das Buch vom monchischen Leben*:

Er neigte sich, als bräch er sich entzwei,
und warf sich in zwei Stücken auf die Erde,
die jetzt an seinem Munde wie ein Schrei
zu hängen schien und so als sei
sie seiner Arme wachsender Gebärde. (KA I 226)

This reads like an objective description, from without, of the process that the monk describes at the very start of the *Stunden-Buch*, from within, producing the 'Schrei' of the poem itself. It seems that Rilke is polarising himself through the personae of the monks, both grammatically and conceptually, into nominative and accusative, observer and observed, across the spectrum of the first two books of the *Stunden-Buch*, just as he does within the first stanza – and just as the verb 'zittern' enables him to be both subject and object, trembler and trembled. In a manner typical to the *Stunden-Buch*, however, the roles can also be reversed, so that the verb applies to God himself. The monk's direct address to him turns the verb back onto its source: "Du bist die Silbe im Gesange / die immer zitternder im Zwange / der starken Stimmen wiederkehrt" (KA I 177).

The comparative form here, reinforced by the iterative 'immer,' stresses Rilke's insistence on the provisional nature of God in the *Stunden-Buch*, on his never-ending process of becoming. This is underlined sixteen pages later; a comparative naturally should culminate in a superlative, but even this will not suffice to contain

an ever-expanding God: "und das zitterndste Bild, das mir meine Sinne erfinden, / du würdest es blind durch dein einfaches Sein übertreiben" (KA I 193). This seems to be a palinode of the ecstatic epiphany of the first stanza in the book: the impersonal dative construction, and the explicit repetition of 'Sinne' in the plural, ironically recall and revoke the initial jubilant tone, accepting the inevitable shortcomings of human beings in comparison to God.

The application of the superlative 'zitterndste' to the noun 'Bild' reminds us of the artistic context in which the young poet of the late 1890s wrote. *Jugendstil* was the ruling aesthetic, the neo-Romanticism evident everywhere in Rilke's early poetry. *Mir zur Feier*, his most overtly *Jugendstil* collection, uses 'zittern' as an adverbial present participle to evoke a tableau of blooming maidens, linking their tentative trembling to that of early spring through the emphasis on movement and line ('Zweigen') characteristic of so many *Jugendstil* paintings: "Und so ist unser erstes Schweigen: / wir schenken uns dem Wind zu eigen, / und zitternd werden wir zu Zweigen/ und horchen in den Mai hinein" (KA I 105).

Related to 'zittern' in *Mir zur Feier* is its close cousin 'schauern,' used to suggest a similar longing to become part of a larger whole: "Ich bin so jung. Ich möchte jedem Klange, / der mir vorüberrauscht, mich schauernd schenken" (KA I 65). This precious, rarefied atmosphere, evoked by these present participles 'zitternd' and 'schauernd' which suggest the *Jugendstil* emphasis on gesture and motion, is clearly to be found everywhere in the poetry of the period (not least in Stefan George and his circle). One of many possible examples will suffice, Morgenstern's brief poem "Vorfrühling": "Zittern meiner Augen Schleier nur? / Oder zittert rund um mich Natur? / Zittern beide wohl vom gleichen Geist, / der für Menschen 'Frühlingsanfang' heißt?" (106).

This use of the verb to suggest organic movement is also cultivated in contemporary aesthetic theory. Ernst Schur, investigating oriental influences on *Jugendstil* art in 1899, claims that Japanese artists manage to capture the essence of flowers "so leicht, so von aller Körperlichkeit befreit und so wahr, daß unsere Seele zittert" (92); Hermann Bahr approvingly quotes the poem 'Mein Garten' by Loris (Hofmannsthal) as the apotheosis of 'Symbolismus,' as early as 1894: "Schön ist mein Garten mit den goldnen Bäumen, /

Den Blättern, die mit Silbersäuseln zittern" (140).¹⁰

Hofmannsthal himself, in his slightly later dialogue "Über Gedichte" (1904), uses the adjectival present participle 'zitternden' three times in one paragraph in an attempt to define the relationship between poet and nature:

es ist wundervoll, wie diese Verfassung unseres Daseins der Poesie entgegenkommt: denn nun darf sie, statt in der engen Kammer unseres Herzens, in der ganzen ungeheuren unerschöpflichen Natur wohnen. Wie Ariel darf sie sich auf den Hügeln der heroischen purpurstrahlenden Wolken lagern und in den zitternden Wipfeln der Bäume nisten. Und aus allen ihren Verwandlungen [...] wird sie nichts anderes bringen als den zitternden Hauch der menschlichen Gefühle. Treibe sie [...] empor, hoch [...] über dem zitternden Lichtabgrund im Westen, der dem Durchgang der Sonne nachbebt. (Hofmannsthal 172)

This reads almost like a *Jugendstil* manifesto of the late Romantic aesthetic. Just as "Silbersäuseln zittern" seems to derive from *Faust II*,¹¹ so perhaps we can read this later dialogue as a restatement of Goethe's famous lyric "Über allen Gipfeln / Ist Ruh, / In allen Wipfeln / Spürest du / Kaum einen Hauch",¹² as if Hofmannsthal had subconsciously attached the *Jugendstil* participle 'zitternden' to the Goethean nouns 'Wipfeln' and 'Hauch' in a manner that typifies the era. The young Rilke's fondness for the verb was clearly a shared proclivity, as our examples from Morgenstern and Hofmannsthal suggest: its defining characteristic is its visual nature, attempting a translation of paint into poetry.

We can thus suggest that two main lines of influence determine Rilke's use of 'zittern' in his early poetry: the biblical tradition of 'zittern' as a sign of religious angst, indicating an approach both *to* and *by* God, and this reigning movement of *Jugendstil* preciousness, emphasising 'zittern' as a pathetic fallacy. Rilke's recurrent use of the verb can therefore be seen as not only characteristic of the time, illustrating the extent to which his idiom was determined by

contemporary art, but also characteristic of his own turn-of-the-century interest in synthesising the aesthetic and the religious.

The question, then, is whether his use of the verb evolves beyond these derivative beginnings. Maney's verse concordance lists 67 recurrences of 'zittern' and its derivations in Rilke's poetry, only 25 of which occur after the period leading up to the *Buch der Bilder*. The disproportionate majority of instances are thus to be found in the early collections of volume I, and the uncollected counterparts in volume III, of Zinn's edition of the *Sämtliche Werke* – in other words, in the early, turn-of-the-century poetry. This suggests the consistency of the *Jugendstil* idiom which persists into the *Buch der Bilder*, a collection which does not develop his usage of the verb in any significant manner, largely since many of its poems were written at the same time as the *Stunden-Buch*. Two examples can illustrate this, written on successive days in July 1899: "Initiale" and "Das jüngste Gericht." The former covers the old *Jugendstil* ground of Romantic yearning and soft-focus desire:

Aus unendlichen Sehnsüchten steigen
endliche Taten wie schwache Fontänen,
die sich zeitig und zitternd neigen.
Aber, die sich uns sonst verschweigen,
unsere fröhlichen Kräfte – zeigen
sich in diesen tanzenden Tränen. (KA I 275)

"Das jüngste Gericht" continues in the idiom of *Das Buch vom monchischen Leben*, three times using 'zittern' to indicate a process of becoming closer to God. The last of the three instances, however, emphasises an aspect of the verb that will become increasingly important in Rilke's work: after considering its temporal, aesthetic and religious implications, we now encounter its sonic resonance, which Rilke characteristically tends to transfigure into the cosmic:

Sieh, wie sie zitternd in den Schwingen hängen
und dir mit hunderttausend Augen klagen,
und ihres sanften Liedes Stimmen wagen
sich aus den vielen wirren Übergängen

nicht mehr zu heben zu den klaren Klängen.
(KA I 298)

This is the note that will ring on into much of Rilke's subsequent poetry. His adopted *Jugendstil* aesthetic was, as we have seen, overwhelmingly visual, a translation of paint into poetry; yet here we have the beginnings of a spatio-sonic sensibility that will culminate in the "klingendes Glas" of the *Sonette an Orpheus*. Eight years after this monastic narrative Rilke uses the verb 'schwingen' again, only this time at the start of the *Neue Gedichte* it represents an intransitive *eros*, rather than divine love. "Liebes-Lied" strangely does not include any form of 'zittern,' perhaps because the whole poem describes precisely this verb. The following poem, however, "Eranna an Sappho," turns precisely on this conjunction of *eros* and *poesis* implied in "Liebes-Lied," encapsulating in the central line "und ich zittere wie eine Bitte" the devotional stances of both the lover and the poet, as expounded in a 1907 essay: "es ist nur ein Schritt von der Hingabe der Liebenden zum Hingegebensein des lyrischen Dichters" (KA IV 647).

'Zittern,' then, is used to imply an intensified moment of poetic creation analogous to both religious and romantic devotion. A very late poem of 1926 even ascribes the verb to the poem itself: "Vielleicht ist er dem Gedicht verwandt, / welches, zitternd in des Lesers Hand, / unberührt von dem, was er empfand, / sich schon wieder in sich selber bindet" (KA II 402). Here the putative self-sufficiency of the poem is suggested by the reversal of the usual cliché of "zitternde Hände": instead it is the poem that it is trembling *in* the hand, not the hand itself. The familiar Rilkean present participle underscores the existential present tense common to much of his later poetry. Even in the *Neue Gedichte*, however, the form is used to anthropomorphise 'Dinge,' just as the 'Gedicht' is in 1926, evoking a nodal moment of crisis: in "Der Reliquienschrein," "ein Ding, ein zitterndes" initiates the "Kettenglied Schicksal" that will leave him "plötzlich um sein Dasein fragend."

This existential usage of the verb is apparent in the overtly 'religious' poems of the later years (that is to say, poems on a religious theme). In "Emmaus," when 'they' finally recognise Christ through the breaking of the bread, the key descriptive clause emphatically

precedes the verb: "Und, zitternd hochgerissen, / standen sie krumm und hatten bange lieb" (KA II 55). Similarly in "Das Tauf-Gedicht" the present participle trembles with the weight of the future as a hand confers the blessing on an incipient 'Dasein' – "zitternd von ihr, die künftige Figur / in dir erfrischt wie ein gewilltes Land" (KA II 155). The 1924 *Briefwechsel mit Erika Mitterer* develops this use of the verb further, as a possible means of mediating between heaven and earth: "Scheint es für uns zu zittern, jenes Zeichen, / in einem Himmel, der beständig schweigt?" (KA II 350).

Here the transition from the physical to the metaphysical is complete: 'zittern' has graduated from the corporeal weaknesses of the hand to the celestial sublimity of the sky. This, it seems, is typical of Rilke's use of the verb, from its earliest derivations to its final manifestations: continuously pushing the physical towards the psychological, 'zittern' comes to represent the poet's will-to-metaphor, a constant craving of wider resonance. The verb can thus be seen not only as an important indicator of moments of heightened intensity, but also as a microcosm of Rilke's poetic evolution, from the devotional attitudinising of his *Jugendstil* youth to the Orphic existentialism of his later years.

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Notes

¹ By young, I refer to all of Rilke's poetry and prose through *Das Stunden-Buch*.

² Elisabeth Klein lists 'zittern' (along with many other similar verbs) as being characteristic of *Jugendstil* poetry (see Klein 207).

³ I cite from the *Kommentierte Ausgabe in 4 Bänden* (KA).

⁴ Rilke's original prose comment reads: "am Abend des zwanzigsten September, als nach langem Regen Sonne durch den Wald ging und durch mich." See the reprinted manuscript in Mövius, 167.

⁵ *Sämtliche Werke in 6 Bänden* (SW).

⁶ In *Jetzt und in der Stunde unseres Absterbens* Helene "begreift voll Entsetzen sein Wort. Ihre Augen sind starr aufgerissen, ihr ganzer Leib zittert" (SW IV 786); in *Höhenluft* Anna is described as "zitternd vor Freude" (SW IV 819).

⁷ For further examples see *Im Gespräch* (KA III 292, 296) and *Frau Blabas*

Magd (KA III 342).

⁸ Of the thirteen *Geschichten vom lieben Gott* only four do not contain some variant form of 'zittern.'

⁹ Lou Andreas-Salomé describes the experience Rilke and she had of seeing a 'derwischartig-heilig' monk have a seizure in *Rodinka*, 68-69.

¹⁰ Bahr attempts here to define 'Symbolismus' in contrast to traditional symbolism as "Stellvertreter und Zeichen nicht des Unsinnlichen, sondern von anderen ebenso sinnlichen Dingen" (136).

¹¹ See *Faust II* ("Klassische Walpurgisnacht / Am untern Peneios"), 222.

¹² Goethe is also referred to by name later in the dialogue.

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'Mißgestaltet und Mißverstanden': The Representation of Disability in Twentieth-Century German-Speaking Theatre

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With the growing number of books written about disability and an increasing number of courses using this term in their names, it can be difficult to understand what disability studies actually is. One of the most comprehensive explanations as to the nature and the aims of this relatively new academic discipline is offered by Simi Linton's *Claiming Disability*. Assuming that educational institutions shape cultural knowledge and meaning, she sees disability studies as an academic project aiming to correct the way disability is currently dealt with in the academics and "to hold academics responsible for the veracity and the social consequences of their work" (1-2). Disability, according to Linton, is commonly viewed as a medical phenomenon, which means that it is not usually studied in the Humanities, but only in the specialised applied subjects, such as rehabilitation, special education and health (132-56). The idea that disability is a medical problem that needs to be solved with the help of special institutions is a discourse which, in the view of disability studies, forms part of the oppression of people with disabilities. For J. I. Charlton the shift away from the traditional view of disability as a "sick, abnormal, and pathetic condition" is a key element in the struggle against this oppression as "it sees disability as normal, not inferior and demands self-determination over the resources people with disabilities need" (10).

The themes of self-determination, self-definition and subjective experience, all intended to contest the objectification of disabled persons implicit in traditional social and academic practices, are at the heart of the project of disability studies.¹ People with disabilities are objectified wherever they are still marginalized, wherever they have no say in the way resources are allocated to them or they are excluded from the discourse that defines their social identity. According to Linton the four main objectives of disability studies are the theoretical construction of disability as a complementary social identity, the exposure of oppressive mechanisms and their