



## **Trans-Corporeal Intimacies: Eco-Crip Perspectives in Elisabeth Tova Bailey's *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating***

**Ms. Daniya Malik**

Independent Scholar,  
Kashmir, India.

[daniyamalik.research@gmail.com](mailto:daniyamalik.research@gmail.com)

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-6657-8012>

<https://doi.org/10.66376/criterion.v17.n3.19>

### **Abstract:**

The paradigm of estrangement, reflecting both social and ecological marginalisation, frequently constructs disability as a state of fundamental isolation in modern literature. This paper challenges such deficit-based narratives through an eco-crip reading of Elisabeth Tova Bailey's memoir *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating*. While prevailing discourses of society and internalised ableism alienate disabled individuals not only from human society but also from the natural spaces, this paper contends that disability can paradoxically operate as a conduit for re-establishing an intimate and ecologically substantive relationship with nature, transforming what is frequently perceived as a deficit into a condition of increased awareness and ecological sensitivity. An attempt is made to illustrate how disability, rather than being a predicate of limitation, creates an ecological perspective on revaluing human variation and reconnecting disabled experience to the ecology of systems.

**Keywords:** Ableism, Crip Time, Eco-ability, Eco-crip studies, Ecological attunement, Trans-corporeality.

## 1. Introduction

Despite overlapping issues related to the body, ethics, and human–nonhuman relationships, disability studies and environmental humanities have historically developed as distinct academic disciplines. Social conventions in which ableism is promoted cause the oppression of disabled people by shaping natural environments as places that should be occupied by able-bodied and physically fit individuals. Involvement in environmental activities tends to require a high degree of mobility or strength. Additionally, the cultural narratives that often promote healthful interaction with nature often do not consider the experiences of people with various abilities. Consequently, disabled people can internalise such ableist presumptions, and this can result in self-exclusion or an unwillingness to interact with natural environments, thus continuing to propagate physical and psychological obstacles.

Stacy Alaimo, in the foreword to *Disability Studies and the Environmental Humanities Toward an Eco-Crip Theory*, observes that mainstream environmentalism frequently presumes non-disabled, physically fit participants. This supposition leads to scholarly and corporeal exclusion of disabled people from ecological space (ix–x). Such exclusion underscores the importance of re-examining the intersection of disability and environmental perception, especially through frameworks that prioritise interdependence, vulnerability, and embodied engagement with nonhuman life. Posthumanism, new materialism and eco-materialism theories are used to propose a ‘crip’ approach to environmental humanities through decentering human views, acknowledging the agency of nonhuman beings and locating people in relational assemblages that involve other species, technologies, substances, and prosthetics (Alaimo xi–xii). This view extends disability studies to the ecological conditions of interdependence and impact of material and nonhuman forces on embodied experience and arrive at *eco-crip theory*, coined by Sarah Jaquette Ray and Jay Sibara, an intersection of eco-criticism (eco) and

disability studies (crip), which shows how environment, culture, and disability each affect each other and how disabled experiences can expand and challenge dominant ecological thinking.

Such an inquiry is presented in an interesting site in the memoir *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating* by Elisabeth Tova Bailey. Bailey, who is dealing with a severe chronic illness, forms an intimate relationship with a snail in her immediate world, and this shows how disability redefines perceptions, morality, and attachment to other living creatures. In this paper, through the deliberate, slow-paced interactions between Bailey and the snail, her narrative performs a kind of eco-crip consciousness whereby the idea of disability does not simply limit but, paradoxically, opens up new modes of being and knowing the natural world. By placing the memoir on the border of biography and theory, this paper identifies how literature, in turn, can reveal the ethical, spatial and social aspects of embodiment, and thereby indicate the importance of narrative in helping to recreate perceptions of disability and place.

The paper begins by giving a brief description of the memoir by Bailey to place the narrative within the context of its embodiment and ecology. It then critically interacts with the existing literature and theoretical frameworks, highlighting key gaps where previous scholarship has failed to incorporate disability and ecological perspectives. This is followed by a close reading how the embodied experience that Bailey experiences makes her sensitive to the sensibility of the snail's slowness, care and interdependence. Ultimately, the analysis demonstrates how the memoir exemplifies the intersection of disability and ecology, showing that immobility and bodily limitation can cultivate profound relational and ecological insight.

### **1.1 Overview of *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating* by Elisabeth Tova Bailey**

*The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating* by Elisabeth Tova Bailey is an engaging meditation on the boundaries of chronic illness, mortal frailty, and environmental sensitivity. “She [Bailey] went for a hike in the mountains of Europe. She awoke the next day with flu-like symptoms

[...] that resulted in “severe neurological symptoms” that would take several years of recovery, with long-term damage to her autonomic nervous system. It was during a relapse that she found herself being cared for in a studio apartment” (Martens 1719).

Confined by a debilitating illness, Bailey finds herself limited in mobility, yet she discovers a profound relational and intimate connection with a woodland snail gifted by a friend. The memoir revolves around a seemingly small occurrence: a friend gives her a snail in a pot of violets. “Initially the snail seemed a burden, [but] after watching and feeding it, she comes to regard the snail as a companion, and to draw parallels between its life and her own, identifying with it” (Martens 1719). She becomes sensitive to the minute world of a wild snail; she sees with exceeding patience its slow steps and its habits by night, its sensitive intercourse with its surrounding world. It is this exact observation in detail which allows Bailey to consider the rhythms of time, the frailty and stability of life, and the sheer interrelatedness of human beings and nonhuman life. The title itself is emblematic; it encodes a temporality slowed to such an extent that even the faintest acoustic nuance is endowed with ontological significance, so that the sound of a snail eating becomes perceptible. Bailey transforms the snail into a site for theorising embodiment by potentiating the fusion of personal narrative with natural-historical description and literary reference. This close interaction allows her to reconsider the issue of disability as not only a constraint but also the opportunity for another pattern of survival, presence and relatedness in the nonhuman world. Consequently, Bailey subverts the reductive view of disability as a mere deficit, demonstrating that an attentive study of nonhuman life can foster fortitude and existential clarity.

The memoir takes on a critical position among eco-crip studies (where ecology and disability studies intersect), it describes how disability can refigure experiences of direct access to the environment, and how companionship between species can, even in its most unobtrusive

form, become a means of ex-post facto underpinning and introspection. The presence of the snail makes the affirmation that life in its myriad forms holds intrinsic value, questions anthropocentric values and shows the ethical significance of interspecies relations. The memoir shows that even small acts of kindness can greatly bolster the human spirit and resilience, especially in the context of chronic illness.

During the depths of illness, she finds that “spending time with a snail...[was] pure entertainment,” a living emblem of how disability slows perception and deepens attunement to nonhuman rhythms. Moreover, as she writes, “as my functional abilities improved just a bit, watching a snail began to take patience,” signalling how able-bodied recovery can loosen that kinship (Bailey 152). This juxtaposition reveals the fact that disability does not merely alienate human beings but may positively position them to receive nature more, and the effects are that readers tend to appreciate interdependence as opposed to being alienated.

## 2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Scholarship on the intersection of disability and the environment has grown considerably over the last decade, particularly through frameworks such as eco-ability and eco-crip theory. Anthony J. Nocella II et al. introduced *eco-ability* in *Earth, Animal, and Disability Liberation: The Rise of the Eco-Ability Movement*, to describe an intersection of ecological thinking, animal liberation, and disability studies that viewed all three as socially constructed categories that have historically been both marginalised as a disorderly place to be dominated, and in addition to animals, as resources to be consumed and, therefore, as the anomaly the body of the disabled is perceived as something to remedy or fix or conceal. Eco-ability redefines these binaries by asserting that diversity, interdependence and care are generative and not restrictive forces, that collaboration is better than competition and that interdependence is better than independence (Nocella II 141-144).

Following these premises, Stacy Alaimo, in the Foreword to *Disability Studies and the Environmental Humanities*, observes that mainstream environmentalism has a “hidden attachment” to the able, hyperfit body and has consequently remained blind to disabled bodies. Accordingly, Alaimo calls for more inclusive frameworks that foreground interdependence and vulnerability as central ecological virtues (ix). Parallel to these views, in the Introduction to *Disability Studies and the Environmental Humanities*, Ray and Sibara situate Stacy Alaimo’s (2010) theory of *trans-corporeality* within the emerging dialogue between disability studies and the environmental humanities (1). This theory conceptualizes human bodies as materially and sensorially entangled with the nonhuman world in ways that disrupt the human/nonhuman distinction. It also emphasizes the need to cultivate closer, ethically attentive interactions with the nonhuman world.

Supplementing these ideas, the idea of *crip time* introduced by Alison Kafer, underlines the ability of disability to create alternative time frames, where slowness, delay and attentiveness create more intimate and humanely responsible relationships with the nonhuman world (Kafer 26-27). All strategies together reject the concepts of ableism and anthropocentrism by showing that difference and interconnectedness are the success factors of ecological and social wellbeing.

Despite these theoretical developments, little scholarship has approached Elisabeth Tova Bailey’s memoir *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating*, through eco-crip, crip time or trans-corporeality. Instead, the prevailing scholarship has largely placed the text within the category of illness narratives or general human-nature studies despite exploitation of disability as mediator of environmental perception and environmental ethics. To counter this gap, the concepts of *eco-ability*, *trans-corporeality*, and *crip time* are applied to Bailey’s memoir to suggest that her forcibly imposed immobility creates a slow, intimate, and morally aware experience with the snail and its micro-environment. When read within this framework, the

memoir does not merely describe the disabled person looking at nature. However, it is an exercise in different ecological relationships in which the vulnerable, slow, and interdependent create new knowledge and care.

### **3. Interpreting Elisabeth Tova Bailey's memoir *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating*: Theoretical Applications and Analysis**

Under this section, the frameworks of *eco-ability*, *trans-corporeality*, *crip-time* and altered spaces are applied to the memoir by Bailey in which disability can be used to perceive, engage in ethics and interdependence with nonhuman life. The subsections below discuss these theoretical perspectives in greater detail and how the narrative of Bailey can be used to challenge the view of ableism and anthropocentrism.

#### **3.1 Eco-Ability and the Reimagining of Human–Nonhuman Relations**

The concept of *eco-ability* developed by Anthony J. Nocella II comes in an interesting book entitled *Earth, Animal, and Disability Liberation: The Rise of the Eco-Ability Movement* (2012) and can be used as a powerful lens for reading Elisabeth Tova Bailey's memoir *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating*. Eco-ability connects ecology, disability studies, and animal liberation through demonstrating how the three fields have been influenced by histories of domination and "normalisation." In Western culture, wilderness has frequently been visualized as a disordered place that needs to be managed, animals as resources to be exploited, and disabled bodies as something that should be cured or disavowed (medical model of disability). Nocella II criticises these dichotomies by redefining "nature" and "disability" as socially constructed categories, as opposed to being objective biological properties. He puts forward the idea that diversity is not a weakness but a state of being robust and coexisting in ecological, bodily, and species diversity. These values can be found in disability studies in the form of the affirmation of the difference of abilities, as well as the

critique of the concept of “normalcy” and in ecology, in the form of acknowledging that ecosystems flourish when they are varied, reciprocal, and in balance. Bringing these insights together, eco-ability exposes how ableism and speciesism operate as intertwined forms of oppression and invites us to imagine more inclusive, multispecies communities. As Nocella II writes:

Eco-ability [...] is a philosophy that respects differences in abilities while promoting values appropriate to the stewardship of ecosystems [...]. Disability studies as a discipline also praises difference, uniqueness, and interdependency. Disability studies suggest that every being has differing abilities. Each being plays an important role in the global community and is valuable within the larger ecological context. Eco-ability respects differences while challenging the concepts of equality, sameness, and normalcy. These concepts are social constructions that fail to respect the uniqueness of individual abilities and differences, which, as the ecological and disability communities realise, are interdependent. (Nocella II 143-144)

By exposing the mutualism between human and nonhuman lives, Bailey, in *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating*, demonstrates the concepts of eco-ability. Faced with an abrupt illness that confines her to bed and limits her physical movements, Bailey experiences a shrinking geographic world; however, this spatial constraint allows her to be more attentive to the snail within the immediate surroundings, ‘leading to a heightened awareness. She observes it attentively - noting its slowness, deliberation, and delicate yet meaningful existence, thereby developing an interspecies companionship. As she observes, “After weeks of around-the-clock companionship, there was no doubt about the relationship: the snail and I were officially cohabiting” (Bailey 22), signalling not merely cohabitation in physical terms but a mutual, ethical engagement between beings with differing abilities. She writes:

The tiny, intimate sound of the snail's eating gave me a distinct feeling of companionship and shared space. It also pleased me that I could recycle the withered flowers by my bed to sustain a small creature in need [...] One has to respect the preferences of another creature, no matter its size, and I did so gladly.

(Bailey 12-13)

These lines illustrate eco-ability insofar as it prefigures the ethical, reciprocal and interdependent relationships between beings as an example of how consideration of the capabilities and requirements of another creature leads to ecological and emotional consciousness. The fact that Bailey has bodily limitations is not a deficit, rather it opens up a chance to interact with the snail in a way that would otherwise not be noticed, which is the principle of eco-ability that difference in ability is not a weakness, but a way of getting to know ecological sensitivity and relational awareness better.

The application of eco-ability demonstrates that Bailey's relationship with the snail is not merely an outcome of shared space but an ethical practice of reciprocal coexistence. By foregrounding interdependence over autonomy, Bailey reimagines the human-nonhuman relationships as collaborative rather than hierarchical, thereby exemplifying eco-ability's vision of inclusive multispecies communities.

### **3.2 Trans-Corporeality and the Material Entanglement of Body and Environment**

Stacy Alaimo's concept of *trans-corporeality* suggests rethinking human embodiment and its relationship to the environment. In *Bodily Natures* (2010), Alaimo argues that the human body is never sealed off from the environment around it but is "always intermeshed with the more-than-human world" (3). Following on this idea where the body is viewed as a product of the material, historical, and discursive conditions in which it exists, disability studies challenge the prevailing concept of the body as discrete, unique and self-contained and instead

focus on the ongoing process of the body being entangled with the environments in which lives, work, and interactions take place. Stacy Alaimo writes:

Potent ethical and political possibilities emerge from the literal contact zone between human corporeality and more-than-human nature. Imagining human corporeality as trans-corporeality, in which the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world, underlines the extent to which the substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from “the environment.” It makes it difficult to pose nature as mere background, as Val Plumwood would put it, for the exploits of the human since “nature” is always as close as one’s own skin—perhaps even closer. (Alaimo 3)

This kind of standpoint emphasises the literal ways in which environmental circumstances define human bodies and the ways human actions are echoed through ecological systems.

Trans-corporeality can be applied to the memoir *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating* by Elisabeth Tova Bailey to reveal that Bailey’s immobilised body and the snail’s miniature world are not oppositional, but are rather mutually constitutive, interpenetrating material processes. Being relegated to her sickbed does not shut out nature to Bailey but rather makes her more sensitive to it. Her own corporeal vulnerability only adds to her awareness of the feeding and movement pattern of the snail. It creates a literal contact zone where the illness and the nonhuman life intersect. Through Alaimo’s lens, Bailey’s description of the feeding, tunnelling, mating and night activity of the snail helps to see not the inert setting but rather the active, co-creative environment in which the human and the snail co-inhabit. Bailey’s encounter with the snail renders Alaimo’s notion of trans-corporeality tangible. She writes:

I combed through scientific gastropod literature, eager to know more about my companion. I learned that snails are extremely sensitive to the ingestion of toxic substances from pollution and to changes in environmental conditions, such as temperature, moisture, wind, and vibration. I could relate to this, as my dysfunctional autonomic nervous system made me sensitive to these things as well. (Bailey 59)

These lines do not merely engender a resemblance between two frail creatures, but they dramatise an incarnated awareness of mutual material vulnerability. By aligning the vulnerabilities of her impaired nervous system with the ecological precarity of the snail, Bailey enacts the collapse of boundaries between human and nonhuman bodies as theorised by Alaimo. She constructs this entanglement through a deliberate stylistic juxtaposition, moving seamlessly from the clinical register of “scientific gastropod literature” to the intimate account of her own “dysfunctional autonomic nervous system.” Rather than relying on sentimental anthropomorphism, Bailey establishes a shared material vocabulary through physical stressors such as “temperature, moisture, wind, and vibration,” which function as literal points of contact between human embodiment and nonhuman biology. The phrase “made me sensitive” is particularly significant because its syntax emphasises shared vulnerability; neither Bailey’s body nor the snail’s exists as an autonomous, self-contained entity. Instead, both emerge as porous biological organisms continually shaped by the material forces of their shared environment. Read through the lens of trans-corporeality, this passage demonstrates that ecological interconnectedness is not merely an ethical ideal but a material condition of embodied existence.

### 3.3 The Snail's Slowness: Meditative Pace and Temporal Reflection

Temporal perception is one of the central themes in Bailey's memoir. While the previous sections have demonstrated how disability fosters ecological interdependence and material entanglement through the frameworks of eco-ability and trans-corporeality, this section shifts the analytical focus to temporality itself. Through the figure of the snail, Bailey reconceptualises slowness not as a symptom of impairment but as an alternative mode of experiencing time. The unhurried rhythms of the snail offer more than companionship; they provide a temporal model that enables Bailey to perceive the world in line with the rhythms of her disabled body rather than the accelerated expectations of able-bodied life.

Within this framework, slowness operates not as a passive symptom of physical confinement or a mere meditative retreat, but as a radical temporal orientation that actively subverts the accelerated, efficiency-driven velocity of able-bodied normativity. By aligning her narrative gaze with the unhurried rhythms of the snail, Bailey actively directs her attention to the minor aspects of the environment, including the shifting of light, the sound of silence and small animals nearby. This altered temporal orientation transforms her isolated sickroom into an ecological space where perception is no longer governed by speed but by attentiveness.

Scholars of eco-criticism and disability studies, such as Nocella II et al. (2012), focus on the ability of nonhuman subjects to highlight alternative temporalities and argue that the slowness of the snail redefines productivity and presence. Slowness is therefore placed in the memoir as an observational tool and not as a stagnant one, making the relationship between human recuperation and nature more interdependent.

Alison Kafer's concept of *crip time*, proposed in *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, (2013), provides a critical approach for understanding how disabled bodies experience time differently compared to the non-disabled bodies. Crip time asserts that conventional timelines within the

society – fast, linear, and efficiency-based are organized according to the standards of the able bodies without paying due attention to the individual rhythms, needs, and abilities of the disabled. Crip time challenges this assumption by proposing that time itself is flexible and can be shaped according to the demands and abilities of disabled bodies, rather than forcing these bodies to conform to rigid societal schedules.

Notably, crip time does not simply entail the provision of additional time to accomplish tasks. Instead, it relies more on reconceptualisation of temporality, where the pace, flow, and experience of time are aligned with bodily needs and capacities. This approach stands in sharp contrast to what Kafer calls *curative time*, in which disability is conceived solely within the context of cure, rehabilitation, or normalization. Crip time, in turn, introduces possibilities and futures where the disabled bodies will no longer be gauged in relation to the able-bodied norms. This model undermines the perceived universality of productivity, speed and punctuality and demonstrates the radical redefinition of time by disability (Kafer 26-27).

In the memoir, crip time is powerfully represented through the narrator's metaphor of snail slowness, which conveys how disability shapes not only the pace of bodily movement but also the engagement with the surrounding environment. The narrator's slower rhythm, frequent pauses, and emphasized moves are characteristic of a temporal orientation based on the requirements of the body rather than on the force of the external environment. This slowness allows for a deeper, more reflective interaction with nature, demonstrating that alternative temporalities can enrich ecological and embodied experiences.

The snail metaphor thus becomes poignant to depict how the crip time changes the way of life and ecological perception and underlines the fact that the body tempo determines the manner in which the world is perceived and interpreted. This attention to slowness and bodily tempo is evident in Bailey's first description of the snail she receives while bedridden: "I didn't remember ever having noticed any snails on my countless hikes in the woods. Perhaps, I

thought, looking at the nondescript brown creature, it was precisely because they were so inconspicuous” (Bailey 7–8).

A close textual reading of this passage reveals how Bailey’s vocabulary underscores this temporal friction. Her retrospective use of the phrase ‘countless hikes’ evokes a past life defined by hyper-mobility and unreflective velocity - a state of able-bodied acceleration where the nonhuman world was reduced to a blur of background scenery. It is only when illness forces a structural deceleration that her ‘decelerated physical state’ matches the temporal register of the snail. The narrator’s illness reduces her bodily tempo, which enables her to observe elements of the natural environment that might otherwise remain unnoticed. Her disability forces her to live in a different rhythm and pace, one that allows her to notice, reflect and connect with her surroundings more deeply than she could at a “normal” pace, showing that disability transforms one’s experience of time and the perception of the environment, offering deeper insights when interpreted through the framework of crip time.

Ultimately, a crip-time reading of *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating* demonstrates that temporal deceleration is not merely a passive byproduct of somatic limitation, but a radical epistemic tool that actively dismantles ableist monopolies on perspective. Through the lens of crip time, the snail’s slowness ceases to be a metaphor for restriction; instead, it is reconfigured as a site of quiet political resistance, revealing that alternative bodily rhythms generate alternative ways of knowing that challenge ableist assumptions about productivity, recovery, and the experience of time.

### **3.4 Companionship in Altered Landscapes**

Beyond alternative temporalities, Bailey’s narrative shifts the analytical gaze to spatial negotiation, mapping how severe illness transforms the domestic interior from a site of isolation into a space of interspecies encounter. Whereas the previous section examined how

disability reshapes the experience of time through crip time, this section explores how it reconfigures space by bringing together two displaced beings within a shared environment.

Her immobilisation shrinks her physical world down to the micro-perimeter of a single room. This is not a chosen space but rather a space that is imposed by her disability, and she has to find her way in the world with a new and slower outlook. Similarly, the snail that enters her room is a creature of the forest and is thrown uninvited into a new, confining environment. Similar to Bailey, it will have to manoeuvre in an environment that does not inherently belong to it, and which forms a mutual sense of displacement. She observes a snail in her environment and develops a strange sense of companionship:

After being transported from the woods, the snail had emerged from its shell into the alien territory of my room, with no clue as to where it was or how it had arrived; the lack of vegetation and the desert-like surroundings must have seemed strange. The snail and I were both living in altered landscapes not of our choosing; I figured we shared a sense of loss and displacement. (Bailey 20)

In this shared environment, space is made relational, whereby both Bailey and the snail adapt to spaces that are determined by conditions outside their control. A close reading of the passage shows how Bailey uses spatial descriptions to draw a parallel between her confinement and the snail's displacement. She describes her bedroom as an "alien territory" and a "desert-like" space, employing imagery that strips the room of familiarity and comfort. These descriptions highlight the sense of estrangement experienced by both Bailey and the snail. While the snail has been removed from its woodland habitat, Bailey is similarly separated from the active, mobile life she once inhabited because of her illness. By recognising this "shared sense of loss and displacement," Bailey begins to reimagine the room not simply as a place of

confinement, but as a shared space in which two displaced beings negotiate new ways of inhabiting their altered environments.

Ultimately, the alien and imposed space is transformed from a site of isolation into a shared landscape of resilience. Through this reciprocity, both human and nonhuman come to inhabit the altered landscape not as passive sufferers but as active participants in shaping a new space of care, adaptation, and mutual belonging. These experiences demonstrate that disability reshapes not only how bodies move through space but also how space itself is experienced, transforming a site of confinement into one of shared habitation and interspecies coexistence.

#### 4. Conclusion

Elisabeth Tova Bailey's *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating* demonstrates that disability, far from simply imposing limitations, can cultivate unique pathways to ecological awareness, ethical engagement and interspecies companionship. As has been demonstrated in this paper, the memoir portrays the unity of nature and disability. In her prolonged illness and the disability of her body, Bailey forms a personal, close relationship with a snail and discovers that immobility leads to an enhanced sense of engagement with nature through interactions with nonhuman entities. Her slowness and attentive observation perform the ideals of eco-ability and trans-corporeality, depicting the impactful relations to the natural in the case of disabled experience. As Bailey reflects:

I could never have guessed what would get me through this past year—a woodland snail and its offspring; I honestly don't think I would have made it otherwise. Watching another creature go about its life ... somehow gave me, the watcher, purpose too. If life mattered to the snail and the snail mattered to me, it meant something in my life mattered, so I kept on ... Snails may seem like tiny, even insignificant things compared to the wars going on around the

world or a million other human problems, but they may well outlive our own species. (Bailey 154)

This reflection answers the main question of this study by showing how disability influences human connections to nature through slowness, attentiveness, and embodied awareness. Instead of viewing disability only as a loss, Bailey's memoir illustrates that changing bodily experiences can reshape perspectives and create opportunities for ecological awareness and relationships with other species.

At the same time, this interpretation recognises a crucial tension within eco-crip criticism. Seeing disability as a source of ecological insight can risk romanticising chronic illness or reducing disability to just a way of gaining environmental awareness. Such a view ignores the harsh realities of Bailey's illness, including pain, physical limitations, and social isolation. Consequently, this study contends that Bailey's relationship with the snail should be understood not as a sentimental reward for suffering, but as a response to the shared conditions of vulnerability, confinement, and dependence that shape both human and nonhuman lives.

More broadly, this study adds to eco-crip theory, eco-criticism, and disability studies by showing that each theoretical framework highlights a unique aspect of Bailey's memoir. Eco-ability shows how disability promotes ethical and ecological relationships with the nonhuman world. Trans-corporeality emphasises the material connections between bodies and environments. Crip time explains how disability changes the experience of time. Spatial analysis illustrates how shared displacement turns spaces of confinement into places of coexistence. Together, these perspectives reveal that disability is not simply depicted in nature writing but fundamentally changes our understanding of embodiment, time, space, and ecological relationships. By bringing these frameworks together, this study goes beyond just applying existing theories to Bailey's memoir. It shows how they work together to create a

deeper eco-crip reading. Ultimately, this framework prompts literary scholarship to move past human-centered and ableist paradigms, promoting more inclusive interpretations that recognise disability as a valuable perspective for understanding the relationships between humans and the more-than-human world.

### Works Cited:

Alaimo, Stacy. *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. Indiana University Press, 2010.

Alaimo, Stacy. "Foreword." *Disability Studies and the Environmental Humanities: Toward an Eco- Crip Theory*, edited by Sarah Jaquette Ray and Jay Sibara, University of Nebraska Press, 2017, pp. ix-xiv.

Bailey, Elisabeth Tova. *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating*. Algonquin Books, 2010.

Kafer, Alison. *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. Indiana University Press, 2013.

Martens, Debra. "A patient and her snail." *CMAJ: Canadian Medical Association Journal*, vol. 184, no. 15, 2012, p. 1719, [doi:10.1503/cmaj.111987](https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.111987). Accessed on 10 September 2025.

Nocella II, Anthony J. "Defining Eco- ability: Social Justice and the Intersectionality of Disability, Nonhuman Animals, and Ecology." *Disability Studies and the Environmental Humanities: Toward an Eco- Crip Theory*, edited by Sarah Jaquette Ray and Jay Sibara, University of Nebraska Press, 2017, pp. 141-167.

Ray, Sarah Jaquette, and Jay Sibara, editors. *Disability Studies and the Environmental Humanities: Toward an Eco-Crip Theory*. University of Nebraska Press, 2017.