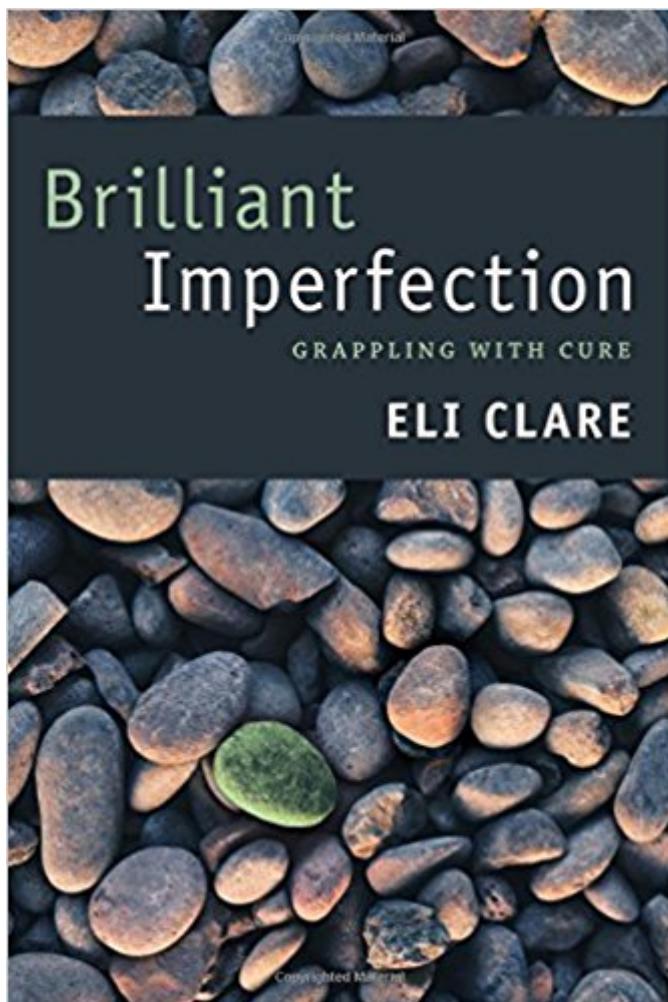


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Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling With Cure



Synopsis

In *Brilliant Imperfection* Eli Clare uses memoir, history, and critical analysis to explore cure—the deeply held belief that body-minds considered broken need to be fixed. Cure serves many purposes. It saves lives, manipulates lives, and prioritizes some lives over others. It provides comfort, makes profits, justifies violence, and promises resolution to body-mind loss. Clare grapples with this knot of contradictions, maintaining that neither an anti-cure politics nor a pro-cure worldview can account for the messy, complex relationships we have with our body-minds. The stories he tells range widely, stretching from disability stereotypes to weight loss surgery, gender transition to skin lightening creams. At each turn, Clare weaves race, disability, sexuality, class, and gender together, insisting on the nonnegotiable value of body-mind difference. Into this mix, he adds environmental politics, thinking about ecosystem loss and restoration as a way of delving more deeply into cure. Ultimately *Brilliant Imperfection* reveals cure to be an ideology grounded in the twin notions of normal and natural, slippery and powerful, necessary and damaging all at the same time.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Eli Clare's *Brilliant Imperfection* effortlessly twines history and memory, embodiment and document to bring the reader into a complex and deeply rooted dance with and among bodies, dis/ability, environment, power, medicine, love, and fear. This is theory and politics carefully contextualized, intimately experienced, brought forth with great heart, thoughtful scholarship, and fierce intellect." (Hanne Blank, author of *Straight: The Surprisingly Short History of Heterosexuality*) "Brilliant Imperfection is a dazzling work of intellectually rigorous and wildly original

thinking that challenges our most deeply held beliefs about the nature of cure, exposing its place in the ideologies of domination. Exquisitely poetic, intensely personal, and highly provocative, the 'messy story' Eli Clare draws us into ranges across a broad and contradictory terrain, revealing all the ways in which how we value mind-body difference is at the very heart of justice." (Aurora Levins Morales, author of *Kindling: Writings on the Body*) "Vermont has many national treasures living quietly among us, and one of them is Addison County resident Eli Clare. His latest book, *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure*, is revelatory, a clarion call for changing the medicalized disability narrative of defective brokenness." (John Killacky Vermont Public Radio 2017-02-22) "Brilliant Imperfection is a clarion call, for changing the medicalized disability narrative, that of 'defective brokenness,' that often prevails in U.S. healthcare.... [It] provides empowering answers and guidance-contributing significantly to the evolving discourse on gender, queer, and disability studies." (John R. Killacky Gay & Lesbian Review 2017-05-01) "Brilliant Imperfection is an honest, moving, and deeply thoughtful engagement with some of the most difficult and significant questions in disability, queer, and cultural studies. . . . A 'Brilliant Imperfection' is sure to become required reading for scholars of disability and queer studies, revealing the multiple, often contradictory meanings and consequences of cure and the importance of work for social justice." (Laurel Daen H-Disability, H-Net Reviews 2017-06-05) "Brilliant Imperfection is powerfully intersectional in its approach to body-mind difference: disability, as an identity, process, and means of interacting with the world, cannot be disentangled from other facets of identity like race, sexuality, class, and gender." (Travis Lau Wordgathering 2017-06-01)

Eli Clare is a poet, essayist, activist, and the author of *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation*, also published by Duke University Press, and *The Marrow's Telling: Words in Motion*. He speaks regularly at conferences, community events, and colleges across the United States and Canada about disability, queer and trans identities, and social justice, and his writing has appeared in numerous periodicals and anthologies. Clare lives in the Green Mountains of Vermont and can be found online at www.eliclar.com.

In *Brilliant Imperfections*, Eli Clare brings a distinctive voice in many forms to the question of cure and its ambiguities and to the broader questions of civic and environmental justice. The mix of reflection, observation and factual information provided a kind of insight into the question of what it means to live in a world where your being as you are is questioned and defamed. The book speaks eloquently to the age old feminist idea that the personal is political and that in adversity or joy no

person is an island. We need one another and the communities we build together to change the world for the better. Eli gives us an intimate look into the question of what it means to embrace one's current body-mind and to take care as needed and desired.

Able-bodied cisgender people, forget everything you think you believe about health and cure and disability politics, and listen to Eli Clare. It's going to get uncomfortable. There will be things he says that will shock you, that bump up against everything society teaches us. Clare covers politics, history, ethics, ableism, gender identity, and more. He doesn't shy away from criticizing systems that manipulate the disabled, and he doesn't shy away from messy, contradictory intersections that cannot be ignored. He teaches us that, somehow, we have to embrace that mess before we can truly respect and empower individuals. The prose in *Brilliant Imperfection* is dazzling. The way Clare phrases his points is so beautiful that the book feels like a mix of nonfiction and poetry. It took me almost an entire month to read this, even though it's not terribly long. I needed extra time to set the book aside, to sit with its points and absorb them. Clare is white, disabled, and genderqueer. He shows great sensitivity to intersectionality, and takes special care to spotlight the voices of POC and Native people throughout the book. *Brilliant Imperfection* should be required reading for us all.

I felt like the writing in Clare's newest book lacks, ironically, some of the raw beauty that attracted me to his work in "Exile & Pride." But everything he has to say in this one is still vital and important now, despite the book having been over a decade in coming. I appreciate how Clare always writes about the ways in which the questions and complexities of human experience often don't conform to the superficial answers or political positions seemingly available.

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