Clemson University

TigerPrints

All Dissertations Dissertations

12-2023

Trash, Fragments, and Breaking Things: Toward a Grotesque Cripistemology for Disabled Life Writing

Michelle Anne Lloyd
Clemson University, malloyd@clemson.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all_dissertations

Part of the Rhetoric Commons

Recommended Citation

Lloyd, Michelle Anne, "Trash, Fragments, and Breaking Things: Toward a Grotesque Cripistemology for Disabled Life Writing" (2023). *All Dissertations*. 3467.
https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all_dissertations/3467

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Dissertations at TigerPrints. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Dissertations by an authorized administrator of TigerPrints. For more information, please contact kokeefe@clemson.edu.

TRASH, FRAGMENTS, AND BREAKING THINGS:
TOWARD A GROTESQUE CRIPISTEMOLOGY FOR DISABLED LIFE WRITING

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy.
Rhetorics, Communication, and Information Design

---

by
Michelle Lloyd
December 2023

Accepted by:
David Blakesley, Committee Chair
Nic Brown
June Pilcher
Hugh Spitler

ABSTRACT

Despite the boom of memoirs of mental health post-1997 and the first advertisements for Prozac, most of them follow the same formula and come from the same places of privilege. This privilege is evident in the author bios on the books themselves and the careers of the writers. The popularity of these books within both abled and disabled realms has therefore created a script that those with mental illnesses are expected to abide by. Following in the example of Margaret Price, Katie Rose Guest Pryal, Merri Lisa Johnson, and others, I resituate mental illness as mental disability and place it within the world of disability studies. In doing so, this dissertation explores practical uses of Johnson and Robert McRuer's cripistemologies, Johnson's c/rip, and Flannery O'Connor's and Yuan Yuan's grotesque as methods for establishing the beginnings of a grotesque cripistemology with which those with mental disabilities might construct accessible narratives. Through a close look at zines and glitches, I seek to discover ways in which writers with mental disabilities might use fragmented writing, trash, and brokenness in order to utilize this new grotesque cripistemology in order to not construct stories of overcoming aimed at abled audiences, but rather stories of the self and of being within the hurricane which is to have a mental disability unabashedly aimed at a disabled audience.

DEDICATION

In memory of my best friend. Your sister and I miss you.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you first to my committee; to Dave for not giving up on me and rolling with the wackiness. Thank you for your guidance and support. To Nic for stepping in, joining the madness, and providing me with thoughtful feedback. And to June and Hugh for sharing your thoughts and sticking with me.

All the love in the world to Caroline, Flannery, and my mom for dealing with me during the writing process. And rewriting process. And panicking process.

Finally, thank you to the Tampa Bay Lightning for providing me with distractions, both good and bad, when I needed them most.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents (Continued) Page

CHAPTER ONE

INTO THE CRIP-VERSE, OR ESTABLISHING THE NEED FOR NEW RHETORICS

Abstract: *And in the beginning there was an introduction. This chapter begins to establish the need for new rhetorics of mental disability in the form of c/rips and cripistemologies. Starting with a general understanding of what mental disability is – and what it isn't – the chapter goes on to set the stage for the rest of the dissertation. This is done by breaking down the language of both disability in general and of mental disability in particular. It also begins to introduce the philosophers, rhetoricians, and other scholars who will be used throughout the dissertation to edge towards the establishment of a new mode of thinking about/considering the ways in which we both understand and participate in the creation of stories of mental disability.*

What this dissertation does not do is attempt to create a one size fits all understanding of how to construct narratives of mental disability, though taking a wide angled view of mental disability in this chapter might make it seem as though that were the goal.

I got kicked out of the community college in Jacksonville for a 0.0 GPA.

Then I got shingles.

Then I got kicked out of the community college in St. Augustine for a 0.0 GPA.

Then I had to accept that the scoliosis-related pain I was experiencing meant that I should really think about a major that wasn't dance.

By the time I finally finished undergrad, I thought I knew everything there was to know about depression and anxiety.

As a child, I learned that when adults told me that I was "remarkably mature and well adjusted for my age," what they really meant was, "holy shit, this child has experienced some hardcore trauma, and this is so far above my pay grade. …" I wasn't performing depression and anxiety the way they had been taught to perceive it – especially for a child – so it was easier for them to think of me as mature and well adjusted. A tiny adult among children. Everyone knows what to look for in children: the quiet ones, the loud ones, those are the kids that need to be watched, the ones in danger of being statistics. Me? I walked a fine line between quiet and loud. I had two best friends I adored, I locked myself in my bedroom with a stack of tapes making the worst mixtapes known to man, I spent hours playing video games and street hockey with the boys next door. Normal-ish. I was a delight to have in class and I hid novels in my science books. I was just bitchy enough to have deserved the punch to the throat that I got in third grade but also the girl who helped the art teacher clean her classroom every Wednesday. Even in middle school and high school when I "turned goth" and my grades dipped I was the picture of a normal teenage girl: I had a job, I had friends, I lettered twice.

These days they would probably label everything I was doing as "masking." I've thought about that. Especially while writing this, while thinking about the two friends that I lost to suicide in high school. I likely was, but at this point it was so long ago and everything is so ingrained by now that I'm not sure what might have been a mask and what was just me.

Honestly? I don’t care. I’m sick of decoding madness and making it palatable.

Now that I actually am an adult, when I think about that phrase that I heard too often as a kid, I imagine them rattling off Benedict Cumberbatch's panicky final lines of an episode of *Cabin Pressure*: "They don't even behave like the crews in the manuals who are the examples of crews behaving badly! They do things no manual's ever thought of!" ("Qikiqtarjuaq").

It was easy to keep up that illusion. My days were jam-packed with school, Girl Scouts, piano lessons, dance classes, Taekwondo, play rehearsals, work, varsity letters, and taking care of my little brother. There just, frankly, wasn't time to be depressed or anxious. But when I had five seconds to slow down, I barely came out of my room. Before colorguard and marching band competitions, my hands would shake so bad I would get makeup on one of my contacts. And sometimes, I would think about just stopping in the middle of the intersection just before my high school. And sometimes I actually could have caught that flag toss I let hit me.

What I'm getting at is that I've always been depressed and anxious. I kept myself busy enough that usually, I didn't give it too much, though. There was too much happening.

Then 2020 happened.

That January, someone I thought was one of my very best friends, a guy I could trust and rely on, told me that he had physically assaulted me and thought seriously about raping me. He was extremely casual about it. Telling me, "It would have been awesome."

Offering it up almost as an aside as he lit my cigarette while we were drinking at Top of the Tavern. He didn't use the words assault and rape, but, well, after the night in question, I woke up with a fat lip that took almost a month to heal, and he spent the next six months telling everyone that I had gotten so drunk I couldn't speak. In the back of my mind, from the moment I woke up next to him, my lip still bleeding, until he confirmed it, I kinda knew already what had happened. I just didn't want to think about it too much.

But I had my comprehensive exams to worry about. I didn't have time to think about what happened or that in that moment, I lost almost every friend I had made in the last three years. Because they were his friends and his girlfriend's friends. And really, academia is far too insular. It isn't healthy.

Then came COVID and the shutdown.

"The willful crip rejoinder to 'it gets better' is 'it's always something'" (Johnson and McRuer 127)

I spent the summer in paralyzed anxiety, unable to do much more than break down every few days. My summer was lost in a haze of tears, Batman video games, and fanfiction until the NHL's Return to Play and the Stanley Cup and something to hyperfixate on.

I don't tell you all of this in order to garner pity. I do it to illustrate a point.

I thought I knew what depression and anxiety were; after all, I'm 35 years old and have experienced both since I was a small child. If I'm not an expert in depression and anxiety, then I don't know what I am.

I thought I knew what depression and anxiety were because I had been experiencing both my whole life; because I have been physically assaulted before, I've experienced sexual abuse, and I've lost my entire friend group before. If I'm not an expert in dealing with big, traumatizing shit, then I don't know what I am.

But the thing is, I've never dealt with assault, abuse, and losing an entire friend group at once. And certainly, never while I was dealing with something as huge as my exams and then the plague that struck almost immediately after.

"They do things no manual's ever thought of!"

The point is, I don't know anything.

I don't have a million things to do to distract me from my depression and anxiety. I stumbled my way into something that approached functioning in September. The Cup Playoffs and football season meant that even if I didn't have to/couldn't leave my apartment, there was a schedule to my week. A division between days so they no longer all ran together in one extremely long March. Now I think I've figured it out for it most part. If I leave my laptop in my office, I have to come to campus to work. And if I have to come to campus to work, I have to get tested for COVID every week. The NHL trying to squeeze 50+ games in what is left of the 2020/21 season means there are games every other day, so I leave two hours before game time so I can listen to the pregame show broadcasting from down in Tampa exactly one hour before puck drop. I memorized the lines of Lightning forwards and the most common defensive pairings, and I repeat them to myself when the stacks of books and articles and knowledge that I have no idea what I'm doing gets to be too much.

Stamkos, Point, and Palat. Hedman and Rutta.

It's a little maladaptive, but it works.

Killorn, Cirelli, and Johnson. McDonagh and Schenn.

I cut all of my hair off and bought a 40-volume bleach kit.

Coleman, Goodrow, and Gourde. Sergachev and Cernak.

The point is, I don't know anything about depression and anxiety.

Maroon, Joseph, and Stephens. Foote and Hedman/McDonagh/Sergachev.

The point is, I know everything about depression and anxiety.

Maybe a cripistemology is what I need: "Cripistemologies are epistemologies of slipperiness and clouds of meaning. […] Any cripistemology worth its name should identify modes of not knowing, unknowing, and failing to know" (McRuer and Johnson 151–152).

Let's start with what I do know.

And in goal, number 88, the Big Cat: Andrei Vasilevskiy!

It Is Known: The Rhetoric of Mental Disability

With the general consensus being that mental illness can only be "real" if it is anchored within medical discourse, is it any wonder that our cultural construction of mental illness is so thoroughly saturated in medical terminology? If the only way for mental illnesses to be worthy of funded research, insurance coverage, and serious study is to construct it as a medical issue, then it is only natural that this is how it is portrayed and explained to the general population. And perhaps the practice of viewing mental illness as a medical problem is not, on its own, too terrible a problem. However, it becomes a problem when you can find the line "this material made possible by an educational grant from Lilly Neuroscience: improving lives, restoring hope" on the back of a pamphlet published by the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) (Fee). As Prozac and Cymbalta's makers, two of the most widely advertised anti-depressants in the United States, Eli Lilly, the research division of which is Lilly Neuroscience, by virtue of their company model, has a vested interest in ensuring that mental illness is understood in an entirely biomedical context. Without the general public's belief that "mental illnesses are brain disorders" that can be cured with the right mix of medications, companies like Eli Lilly would no longer enjoy the profit margins they currently do (Fee). And while it is certainly nothing new for those removed from the production of psychopharmaceuticals to question both their use and the nature of mental illness itself, it is worth taking just a moment to consider these arguments once more and grounding ourselves within this dialogue.

In *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault explains that "the constitution of madness as a mental illness, at the end of the eighteenth century, affords the evidence of a broken dialogue." It is from within this broken dialogue – this "monologue of reason *about* madness" -- that the language of psychiatry was developed (x - xi). So, while the silences constructed mental illnesses, we still lack what Dwight Fee calls a "discernable dialogue *between* 'mental illness' and human experience" (3). Instead, we have a branch of medicine dedicated to correcting what is found in the monologue of reason to cure folks of their madness. Rarely does a diagnosis seem to account for the human aspect fully. What Bradly Lewis calls "biological psychiatry" naturally "brings with it an enhanced narrative of "scientific method" and an amazingly idealized notion of "theory neutrality" (1). In ridding themselves of psychoanalysis with the creation of the third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) modern psychiatry "rid itself of prejudice and superstition" and made a case for its inclusion among the objective sciences (Lewis 5). This new psychiatry became atheoretical, and the range of human expression of emotion became whittled down to a checklist of normal and abnormal expression. Indeed, Federico Leoni calls the DSM "nothing more and nothing less than the accomplishment of a purely medical insurance-oriented need" (96). Or, put another way: "DSM-III desired for every client a reimbursable diagnosis, if not quite a chicken in every pot" (Kutchins and Kirk 43). The history of the DSM and the creation of the DSM-III is thorny and fraught with ethical concerns. Too often, disorders and diagnostic criteria were not thoroughly discussed or researched. Instead, Robert Spitzer's handpicked team of like-minded men were judge and jury, and there existed "no checks or even an illusion of balance" (Lane 52). Indeed, the definitions of mental disorders "are revealed to be particularly susceptible to external pressures and contemporary culture, in a way not easily matched by physical disorders like influenza, TB, or cancer" (Kutchins and Kirk 18).

Raising concern about how mental illnesses have come to be constructed does not, of course, deny that madness and disorder exist but simply asks that a fuller, multidimensional approach to considering what we mean when we say someone is "depressed" or "anxious." If we, as Sara Ahmed does, understand emotions as the very things that create the body's surface, then we can never negate the ways in which emotions create selves. Additionally, "if the self cannot be disjoined from discourse, the phenomenology of pain and desolation are closely tied to the shifts of bodies and selves within structures of power and knowledge" (Fee 10). In other words, to pass on a diagnosis of depression based almost entirely on a checklist of symptoms misses the emotional human experience of the patient and ties the very expression of the self more tightly within the structures of power and knowledge and have constructed modern medical discourse. Or, as Kutchins and Kirk put it: "DSM is intended to describe [mental illnesses] and identify those who have them. But DSM oversteps its bounds by defining how we should think about ourselves; how we should respond to stress; how much anxiety or sadness we should feel; and when and how we should sleep, eat, and express ourselves sexually" (15)

We have completely embraced this idea of mental illness as a biomedical concern because if mental illness is "a force to tame and a chaotic energy to measure and organize," then, within a society built upon a Protestant work ethic and capitalism, we are obliged to cure this illness (Leoni 93). When productivity is the watchword of the day, there is little need to consider the many ways in which the body might express emotion. It is psychiatry's job to restore and optimize human capital and create productive (docile) bodies.

Attempting to develop a single definitive definition of depression is like trying to nail jello to a wall. The DSM has a grab bag list of symptoms for psychiatrists and physicians to look for, signs which have made their way into all facets of our popular culture, thanks, in part, to the advertisements for anti-depressants we see so frequently on our televisions. At its core, the DSM is a Chinese food menu of symptoms that might lead to one diagnosis or five or might not lead to a diagnosis at all.

But the fact is that we require a stable definition of depression. The cultural norms in the United States are such that we are required to be happy. The Jeffersonian notion of happiness is one that permeates our every choice and decision even now. The ideals of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are inscribed in the documents that founded this nation, so the idea that anyone might be unhappy means something needs to be done to address the problem. Hence the anti-depressant advertisements. If there is something that can be done to turn that frown upside down, you are responsible for pursuing that option. To fail to do so is to be a malingerer. Depression is your problem and yours alone; you are required to do everything you can to right the ship as soon as possible and snap out of it. Is it any wonder then that not only is the general populous being told that popping a pill is a quick fix for depression but, if that first pill isn't relieving all of your symptoms, Rexulti is here for you.

But the fact is, however, that it isn't as simple as that. When the medical community cannot agree upon a required serotonin level that might tip the scales from happy to unhappy, it is difficult to argue for the prolific number of medications meant to treat depression on the market. Neuropsychologists believe that they have discovered evidence of depression having a biological cause based on brain scans taken of those who have been diagnosed with depression. But rarely, if ever, does the average American receive a brain scan before – or indeed after – a diagnosis of depression. And what's more, there are a million reasons that a person might experience the symptoms of depression long enough for them to be given a diagnosis of depression and a new drug regimen, but sociological explanations of depression have fallen out of favor since the advent of Prozac and a new class of anti-depressants in the late 1980s. Loss of a job, loss of a relationship, any number of significant life-changing events can cause a person to experience the symptoms of depression for the two-week threshold necessary. The grace period with which you have to get over the loss of a loved one without being given a diagnosis of depression, according to the DSM, is two months.

A diagnosis of depression is given based entirely on the language used to describe the sensations, or lack thereof, experienced by the patient. Occasionally, if other symptoms (usually physical symptoms) manifest, tests may be ordered to rule out any other diagnosis, but these generally come after the initial depression diagnosis.

More often than not, almost before a diagnosis is given, drugs are recommended. Yet, anti-depressants don't cure depression. They can lessen the effect of the symptoms for some, but they are not a cure. In claiming that depression is a physical disease, the assumption would be that the drugs used to treat depression would cure it, but that is not the case. Drug companies often use diabetes as an analogy; anti-depressants aren't a cure; they are maintenance. But "there is no serotonin finger-prick device to monitor the levels" of serotonin in the brain (Davis 53). And there is no telling how anti-depressants will affect a person. Some may experience an ease in symptoms, and some may not be affected at all, and some may be affected negatively and require hospitalization. To quote Lennard Davis, "If Viagra had the same track record as Prozac, few men would use it" (53).

There is a problem with the disease model of psychic distress. In fact, it might be worthwhile to consider depression as "part of the normal function of the brain in the context of learned patterns and real-world exigencies" (Davis 57). In thinking about depression that way, not as a disease to be cured but as a learned pattern of behaviors, then, of course, anti-depressants aren't going to cure depression. There is a biological basis in that the depressed person has "a normally functioning brain, containing neural networks that have been shaped by life events and that respond to current life demands in a way that is experienced subjectively as sadness and despair," but it isn't biology itself that created the initial feelings of sadness and despair (qtd in Davis 57). This leads us back to PET and fMRI scans and the ability to actually see the ways in which our experiences have shaped these neural networks, and perhaps there is something to this.

Certainly, Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) has become a popular way to attempt to reprogram the brain. In fact, CBT's effectiveness is the entire business model for the non-diet program diet program Noom. But much like anti-depressants, CBT does not work for everyone (though far fewer people will die from attempting to treat their depression with CBT than will trying to treat their depression with anti-depressants). Depression is likely, caused by a complex mix of biology, genetics, and sociological factors. However, while the general method of diagnosing depression is still a checklist of symptoms, these possible causes are less important than the ways we have created a mythos surrounding depression.

Thus, the need to rethink.

In general, I am not against the idea of diagnosis and treatment. Instead, I want to take a feminist psychiatric disability studies and label c/rip approach to thinking about depression. Merri Lisa Johnson describes feminist psychiatric disability studies as "provid[ing] a validating scholarly frame for women who wish to claim a psychiatric disability label, whether wholeheartedly or ambivalently, alongside the perspectives of psychiatric survivors who decry the medical abuses of forced institutionalization, coerced medication, and wrongful diagnosis" and a label c/rip means to take a psychiatric diagnosis and to apply a Muñozian theory of disidentification over top of it ("Label C/Rip" n.p.). In other words, I have embraced my manic-depressive diagnosis but still, find myself continuing to tug at its loose strings. I don't expect it to unravel completely, but eventually, given enough force and time, more strings will become loose enough to tug at as well. And at this point, it would be practically impossible to divorce a disability label from my scholarship completely. My diagnosis colors my world. Johnson describes herself as "clap[ing] and cheer[ing] and stomp[ing] my feet, welcoming the epiphany of my diagnosis with joy" ("Label C/Rip" n.p.). I don't recall responding quite so joyously to my own diagnosis, but I do recall a vivid sense of calm and relief. There was a logical reason for the illogical ways I was experiencing the world; A label other than "lazy" or "worthless" to describe my world's me-ness. This is me, in all my messy, crazy glory. So, while a forced diagnosis can be a violent act, one that is sought after can be a soothing balm.

The problem isn't depression. The problem is how the disease model of depression has shaped our cultural understanding of what depression is and how it looks and behaves.

The medical model of disability paints disability as something deviant and defective that requires treatment and correction. Within the medical model, it is the atypical body/mind in need of correction, and there is no need for society to even think about disability other than as something that is self-evident and a purely medical phenomenon. Alison Kafer states that within this framework, "Solving the problem of disability, then means correcting, normalizing, or eliminating the pathological individual […] The future of disability is understood more in terms of medical research, individual treatments, and familial assistance than increased social supports or widespread social change" (5). Unfortunately, this is the view of disability that persists and colors the experience of disabled people. We can see parallels in the way in which the disease model of psychic distress also persists. These are the ways in which we are taught to view disability as something to be eradicated, pitied, and avoided at all costs.

In contrast, the social model of disability views disability as a purely social construction: "an oppression stacked upon people *on top of* their impairments, which are real" (Dolmage, "Disabled Upon" 46). In other words, yes, this person requires the use of a wheelchair, but it is the lack of curb cutouts and building access that is disabling. It's understandable why, at the dawn of the new field of disability studies, this would have been preferable to the medical model as it does not pathologize the individual with the impairment and creates a view of a sort of distant utopia where disability does not exist, but without a move towards normalizing. Impairments would stay; disability would go away. A view of disability as socially created does not gloss over the very real effects of disability but draws a harsh line between impairment and disability.

A postmodern model of disability blurs that line considerably. Jay Dolmage takes on Butler's partial social construction of the body to suggest that all bodies, especially disabled bodies, are rhetorically created. Focusing on the body as being rhetorically constructed means placing a greater focus on how "the power dynamics of the process of construction itself, rather than on its products, however transient" (Dolmage, "Disabled Upon" 46). Shelley Tremain views "disability as what Foucault referred to as an 'apparatus' (*dispositif*) of relatively recent force relations" with impairments being "both an effect of and a mechanism of the apparatus of disability" (21). In other words, an apparatus of disability (in a Foucauldian sense) would be all of the modern power dynamics Dolmage speaks of that work to create the disabled body. While feminists, critical race theorists, and queer theorists have long understood that "language and discourse do not innocently reflect, or 'mirror,' a transparent, pregiven reality, but rather construct social reality *as* pregiven," too often, disability is seen as existing a priori (Tremain 33). This postmodern model of disability is crucial because it disposes of the notion of disability and impairment as prediscursive.

Placing depression within the field of disability studies allows me the freedom with which to explore its rhetorical formation that the depression as disease reading would never allow for. More specifically, it will enable me to adopt Dolmage's view of both disability and rhetoric:

> *"The field of disability studies emphasizes the idea of the social or cultural construction of disability, while also insisting on the materiality of disability. Using a disability studies filter to view rhetoric, I recognize the emancipatory potential of new stories in both the 'material' and the social sphere. Disability, in this light, is bodily and rhetorical – two concepts that are united. I situate rhetoric as the function of power within language, and I connect the body because the body is what has been traditionally defined and (thus) 'disciplined' by rhetorics of disability, while at the same time our bodies speak" (Disability Rhetoric 8–9).*

In other words, as I have attempted to argue is true of depression, disability is both a visible deviation from the norm that marks a body as Other, but it is also created through rhetoric – through the ways in which biopower has created the modern body. So, in keeping with disability studies' general view to disrupt the idea of disability as a deficit and something to be pitied and cured or overcome, and a definition of rhetoric as a study of the circulation of power, this sets the stage for a label c/riping of a depression diagnosis. A crip theory such as label c/riping "privileges the dis-composed, the contingent, and the mobile" (Price, "The Bodymind" 269).

If ever there was a time to dis-compose depression, it is now. After a pandemic year – and as the pandemic it still rages on and into year two – that turned all concepts of normal on their head; why not keep poking away at this thing that more and more people are said to have than ever.

If everyone is depressed, what does it mean to be depressed?

It feels a bit like when you repeat a word so many times, it loses all meaning and ceases to be a word at all.

depressiondepressiondepressiondepressiondepressiondepressiondepressiondepressiondepression d e p r e s s i o n DEPRESSION *depression*.

You get depression! You get depression! EVERYBODY GETS DEPRESSION!

If ever there was a call for cripistemology, it is now; "we suggest *cripistemology* to sharpen the neologism while performing similar cultural work: thinking from the critical, social, and personal position of disability" (Johnson and McRuer, "Cripistemologies" 134). Psychological and other so-called invisible disabilities seem to find a ready home in cripistemologies.

Cripistemologies allow for failures and I-just-can'ts.

Stamkos, Point, and Palat. Hedman and Rutta.

What follows in the rest of this dissertation is an attempt at label c/ripping and mobilizing a cripistemology of depression.

Within the dissertation that follows I hope to at least act like a little kid with a snow globe and perhaps shake things up enough to provide a new way of considering the ways in which we not only write about mental disability, but the ways we read it as well. We are just being to do the work of c/ripping and creating new cripistemologies within these pages. This dissertation is only the beginning of many conversations that need to be had.

To start us off I begin with Chapter Two: Writing and the Creation of a Disabled Self. Within this chapter I explore what it means to fail when you – your very existence – is already considered a failure. Chapter Two pokes sticks at the ideas of a disabled narrative and seeks out ways in which a self might be c/ripped and traditional narrative expectations can be/should be abandoned.

It asks the question: What if instead of expecting a disabled body/life to be something akin to an antique piece of furniture (something solid, recognizable, and familiar) we allowed it to be more like an Ivar system from Ikea? What if we explored modes of being as diy projects rather than a paint-by-numbers kit? And it attempts to do so by picking up Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's theories on staring.

We move along then to Chapter Three: Trash, Zines, the Grotesque, and Building New Narrative Forms. Jumping right in the deep end with a look at the grotesque and hauntings, this chapter seeks to establish zines ass a site in which we might c/rip traditional narratives. Within this chapter I liken zines to bar conversations – ephemeral garbage. But in doing so, I begin to ask the question: what is trash, really? And, given what is discussed in chapter two regarding failure and traditional narratives, might there be a kinship between the disabled body/mind and trash that makes zines a natural fit for out attempt at establishing new cripistemologies?

As the ultimate example of diy, zines allow us a position from which we might experiment with chaos, trash, and the grotesque in order to ask ourselves questions there might not be an answer to. This chapter takes these things, shuffles them like a deck of tarot cards and attempts a reading that asks why not. But the one thing it does not do is attempt to create a road map to be used to "understand" all disabled narratives. One size does not fit all.

In Chapter Four: Glitching Photos and Finding New Ways of Looking, we shift gears and move from text to the world of photography. Sometimes we just need to get over ourselves – and other times we need to just smash things to pieces with a hammer, forcing people to acknowledge us. With an aim of reframing the idea of failure and error, this chapter explores the ways in which we can make failure and error productive – making it less something forbidding to disabled folks and instead something we can use as a method of c/ripping.

Once the terms used within this chapter have been established and explored, we begin with an exploration of Tobin Siebers' *Disability Aesthetics* before making a return to Bakhtin's carnival and Garland-Thomson's stare/stareable bodies, both of which we have explored in previous chapters. Here we will expand our understanding of these ideas and move from the world of text to photography.

Because, as we will discuss, despite its seeming ubiquity the photograph is already an imperfect object (digital photography doubly so) it becomes the perfect site in which we might break things. And by breaking a photograph we might establish a new way of looking.

Beginning as we did in the first chapter, the final chapter revisits and expands upon the current rhetorics of mental disability. From there begins an attempt to tie the rest of the chapters together by arguing that the methods used to write the self through zines and glitches begin to form the basis for a grotesque cripistemology: a cripistemology that embraces rather than shies away from what others might consider grotesque. A grotesque cripistemology is one that can be used to c/rip stories of mental disability via the use and exploration of trash, fragments, and glitches and can ultimately broaden the available narratives. Narratives that are constructed for ourselves.

CHAPTER TWO

WRITING AND THE CREATION OF A DISABLED SELF

Abstract: *Failure – the right to fail – is not allowed if you fall outside of the hetero white cis able-body/minded paradigm. For disabled rhetors, "failure saturates our lives" and ultimately, "it feels like shit" (O'Gorman and Werry 1). To be disabled in any way is an exercise in failure – but to be disabled and employing crip time as a mode of being is something akin to blasphemy.*

Chapter Two pokes sticks at the ideas of a disabled narrative and seeks out ways in which a self might be c/ripped and traditional narrative expectations can be/should be abandoned.

What if instead of expecting a disabled body/life to be something akin to an antique piece of furniture (something solid, recognizable, and familiar) we allowed it to be more like an Ivar system from Ikea? What if we explored modes of being as diy projects rather than paint-by-numbers?

Chapter Two picks up Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's invitation to stare and runs it as far as my crooked back can take us. It asks what is waiting, not just in the bodies on display, but in the white spaces and gaps we create when we put ourselves on display?

This chapter attempts to create a localized earthquake from which we might begin to develop new cripistemologies of a disabled life in writing.

The problem with traditional narrative modes being applied to disabled life writing is, ultimately, that the effort leads to failure. But where J. Halberstam can loudly proclaim “failure as a way of life” and turn it into a kind of queer rallying call; there is no getting around the fact that, for us crips, it just isn’t that simple (171); and to echo Merri Lisa Johnson: “you have no fucking idea what you are talking about” (Johnson, “Bad Romance” 255). “Fail fast” is even, seemingly, the unofficial motto of the Rhetorics, Communication, and Information Design program. It is repeated over and over in the first-year classes. The idea is that you will fail anyway, so you might as well do so quickly and get it over with, so you can brush it aside and go on with your life. But such a motto – such a rallying call – ignores one crucial fact. It neglects to acknowledge that “failure saturates our lives, shapes our experience and delineates the contours of our institutions, and mostly (as Beckett well knew) it feels like shit” (O’Gorman and Werry 1). Halberstam and those who advise students to “fail fast” disregard the “feels like shit” dimension of failure. For them, failure is rebellion and growth.

It sounds perfect. Logical and sound. Everyone eventually fails at something, so making a pedagogy of failure, making failure into a rebellion, is edgy, and on the surface, progressive. Very *look at us disrupting the norm and means of production* that comes from making humanities students read Marx seemingly every semester of their undergraduate lives. But “the idiom of failure is so enmeshed with actual loss for those of us with psyches-that-shatter that I find it hard to get on board this ride” (Johnson, “Bad Romance” 255). From the outside looking in, the idea of throwing up your hands, of just doing a letting go, is romantic. Not caring about the eventual outcome sounds like a vacation more satisfying than any I have ever been on. Maybe I wouldn’t have had shingles a second time and chronic stress hives over the course of the last ten months if I could do just that.

But it just doesn’t work when your positionality within society is built on a perceived mountain of loss and when failure draws blood.

The problem with traditional narrative modes being applied to disabled life writing (and I will get into this in much more detail in chapter three) is, ultimately, one of failure because failure inevitably conjures the thought of the future, of futurity – a time and space where crip time runs up against curative time. Crip time is a thing that flexes and unsticks. It divorces itself from the clock on the wall or the calendar on your phone. It isn’t giving extra time to the disabled, but rather reconceptualizing “our notions of what can and should happen in time, or recognizing how expectations of ‘how long things take’ are based on very particular minds and bodies” (Kafer 27). Crip time creates space and futurity. By contrast, curative time asks why you need a new clock, a new calendar at all. Curative time is inaccessible by the disabled. There is no future for the disabled within this framework: “within this frame of curative time, then, the only appropriate disabled mind/body is one cured or moving toward cure” (Kafer 28). Curative time asks when you will catch up because it cannot imagine any other reality than its own.

Within a curative timeframe, disability is something to be eradicated and overcome. To be disabled leaves one futureless.

To be disabled is failure. The idea of existing within crip time, of being unstuck from time, makes the disabled subject a frightful thing to behold. It makes us "threats to futurity" when we continue to exist removed from curative time (Kafer 31). Disability becomes the future of no future, in which death and disability come to mean the same thing. Eventually, we all die, but tragic death is seen as an inevitable outcome for the disabled that the disabled person might as well already be dead.

Nauseating Nancy: *And I Don't Want to Live this Life* and the Dangers of Normative Narratives of Mental Disability

When I was in high school, I read a book written by Nancy Spungen's mother. It was about Nancy's life from when she was born until she died in the Hotel Chelsea. I thought I really knew what crazy meant when I finished reading that book. I went back and read and reread it so often for the next ten years or so that I think, looking back, I was trying to find a way to reassure myself – to tell myself that I wasn't crazy, I wasn't insane, I couldn't be because I was nothing like Nancy.

Looking back, I feel like an idiot for ever thinking that way.

But I can still remember the first time that I read it. It was the first time I even saw a book that dealt explicitly with mental disabilities; I was in Charleston visiting my aunt and uncle for a week and there it was, sitting there, among the stacks of CDs and guitar strings was a curious black paperback. The cover looked like it had a ripped picture of a woman's face on it, but the face was toned red with black lines through it that were so uniform they had to come from a computer. The book's title slanted across the woman's face in all caps: *And I Don’t Want to Live This Life*. Above the woman’s face was a subtitle*: A Mother’s Story of Her Daughter’s Murder*. It looks, literally, ripped from the headlines. The title seemed familiar, I had been listening to the new Ramones anthology on the drive up to South Carolina, and one of the songs had the same title – or close enough.

The book was written by Deborah Spungen. If I squinted, the woman on the cover might be Nancy. And I ought to know; I had a poster of her hanging above my bed looking quite out of place in the Lettuce Alone! green room; Nancy was all peroxide blonde curls, heavy makeup, and black leather handcuffed to a shirtless Sid Vicious in front of the promo posters for *Nevermind the Bollocks.* She looked tragic and beautiful, I thought. For a short while, when I was around the age Nancy was when she died, I had bleached my hair as white as possible and started wearing alarmingly red lipstick along with the heavy black eye makeup that had come back in vogue. I somehow – foolishly maybe – thought that by making myself look like Nancy during the worst of my breakdowns (up to that point at least), either I would finally slip into her skin and fulfill my destiny, or I would become so frightened I would snap myself out of it.

But suddenly, seeing this book for the first time, I knew I had to read it right away. Whenever I left my aunt and uncles’ apartment, I carried it with me for the next two days. It became my purse book – the book I would whip out and read as much as I could from whenever I had a spare moment. I took it with me when we went up to Myrtle Beach to see Everclear, and I took it back home with me. All told, I’ve probably read it at least a dozen times. There are definitely books that I have read more – and more often – but there is something that keeps drawing me back to this one.

The story itself is almost frustratingly cliched: Nancy Spungen, born in the late 1950s in suburban Philadelphia to a proper middle-class Jewish family. At three months old, she was labeled ‘difficult’ and ‘violent’ and was given barbiturates. She excelled academically, was a violent bully towards her younger sister, and adored her younger brother. At eleven, she was sent to a therapeutic boarding school in Connecticut; she was transferred from the Connecticut campus to one in Pennsylvania when she started high school. At fifteen, she ran away from the school and attempted suicide. She was subsequently diagnosed with schizophrenia. A year later, she began attending the University of Colorado Boulder but was expelled following arrests for buying marijuana from an undercover police officer and having stolen property in her dorm room. At seventeen, her parents moved her into an apartment in New York where she worked as a stripper and prostitute and integrated herself into the inner circles of many New York-based bands – including the Ramones. At eighteen, she moved to London. At nineteen, Mr. and Mrs. John Simon Ritchie moved into room 100 of the Hotel Chelsea. At twenty, she was found dead of a stab wound to the stomach under the bathroom sink.

By all accounts, Nancy’s life was incredibly difficult and ended tragically. My sixteen-year-old self, having spent the last year hyperfixating on 70s punk, was familiar with Nauseating Nancy (as the British tabloids had called her), “Horror Business,” “I Don’t Want to Live This Life (Anymore),” and *Sid and Nancy.* I knew about her life with Sid Vicious and her death, which may not have come by his hands. The idea of learning more about Nancy fascinated me. I wanted to know more. Who was she beyond being the Sex Pistols’ Yoko Ono? Were the British tabloids excessively unkind and sexist in labeling her Nauseating Nancy, or was she really just an absolute nightmare of a person?

When I put the book down the first time, I felt numb. I was sure that I had read it wrong and, in the way only a teenager who grew up surrounded by teachers and a legion of voracious readers could, I picked it up again. I interrogated each word and every punctuation mark. Reviewers called Deborah Spungen brave for writing it, saying that she did everything she could for Nancy and how difficult it must have been.

I felt like I had been given a death sentence. I knew, logically, that whatever was wrong with me, it wasn’t schizophrenia – if that was even an accurate diagnosis for Nancy. A few years prior, my mom tried to get me to see someone, but I was too terrified of the idea of finding out precisely what flavor of crazy I was. Would I die young, locked away from the world in a hospital like the grandfather I never knew? Would I be like the aunt I stole the book from, in and out of hospitals and jails, doing drugs and sucking men dry until they ultimately killed themselves as my uncle did? I don’t want to know because every story I knew ended with either the crazy person dead or sane people wishing they had died. I kept rereading the book over the years, sure that I had misread it or something or that my teenage self had missed something that my literature graduate student self would pick up on.

I used Nancy as a marker for crazy just as sure as I used that long-dead grandfather and my crazy aunt.

I reread it for the first time in years during the quarantine summer of 2020. In Deborah Spungen's straightforward resignation, I heard my stepdad announce to a dozen of his closest friends that it didn't matter how many degrees I had because I would always be nothing but "a drain on government resources." Crazy trailer trash. So damaged, I might as well end it now and save everyone the grief that would come with my next manic episode. I wonder when exactly it was that Deborah Spungen resigned herself to Nancy's death. Did she go ahead and write the end of Nancy's life as bloody, violent, and inevitable when Nancy was sent away – and kept away for the rest of her life – at eleven? When Nancy took scissors to her wrists at fifteen? When Nancy was expelled from college at seventeen, and they moved her into a New York apartment to live alone?

Even the title gave me pause. *And I Don't Want to Live This Life*. That's a line from a poem included in the first of two suicide letters Sid Vicious sent Deborah Spungen from his jail cell following his arrest for Nancy's murder. Within the context of his poem and Dee Dee Ramone's song, the line is a plea for the guards at Rikers just to let Sid die and be with Nancy again. Taken at face value as a title, the line can be read as speaking to Nancy's suicidal ideation. Within the context of the cover design of the 1996 edition and the straightforward tone of Deborah Spungen's narrative, it serves as a rationale for not only sending Nancy away at age eleven but doing everything she could to keep her away.

In recounting this story, I hope I made at least two things clear: we are made as much of the things we take in from the world around us as we are flesh and blood, and even if a person with mental disabilities doesn't have a death wish others will have one for them.

Put It ll in a Blender: Fragmented and Built in Pieces and Parts

In *Senses of the Subject*, Judith Butler states that "this creature that I am is affected by something outside of itself, understood as prior, that activates and informs the subject that I am" (1). I am disabled before I am me, and my choices, the things that I do or say, my very self, are formed by my disabled label – and they in turn influence and inform the "I" of other disabled people at a local level. What I mean by this – by local – is that my performance (the overwhelming "I") is affected and informed by the aunt and grandfather I mentioned earlier, just as it is affected by my memory of Nauseating Nancy. Just as myself, my performance, my "I," will influence and inform how those who know me will relate and understand others like me.

I'll never forget sitting at a coffee shop just off campus opening up and sharing stories of disability with a guy I met on Bumble when he – in response to hearing I was bipolar – was compelled to ask if I had ever been arrested because, according to him, his buddy's ex-wife was bipolar. She was a "crazy bitch" who was in and out of jail. There was no second date.

"Norms act on us from all sides, that is, in multiple and sometimes contradictory ways; they act upon a sensibility at the same time they form it" indeed (Butler, *Senses of the Subject* 5).

It's all incredibly Foucauldian.

I am, of course, not entirely formed by these norms and localized “I”s – there are parts of me – the fanatical hockey fan who is drinking an overpriced lavender vodka drink at a Lightning player’s favorite bar; the cat mom; the stress smoker – that are “me” within the “I” but “I am never simply formed, nor am I ever fully self-forming” (Butler, *Senses of the Subject* 6). And if I break with norms that seem to contradict others, who am I? In this instance, “we may not know precisely who we are or what is meant by ‘I’ when we say it” (Butler, *Senses of the Subject* 9), Which clears things up immensely. We become disorientated and are set adrift. We need the example, the performance of others, the other “I” to find ourselves again if we can stand such a thing.

We become partially undone as we grow. And we continue in this vein until we are disoriented and adrift. At which time we either construct a new “I” or we become victims of the language that creates the “I” – the body and self – both god and that which is ineffable as the body is at once language and “exceeds every possible linguistic effort of capture” (Butler, *Senses of the Subject* 20-21).

So how in the hell are we meant to write the body?: “there is no writing without the body, but the body fully appears along with the writing it produces” (Butler, *Senses of the Subject* 28). All we are given are glimpses. Highlights and select moments in time captured like snapshots.

Indeed, Butler continues this in *Giving an Account of Oneself,* writing that “when the ‘I’ seeks to give an account of itself, it can start within itself, but it will find that this self is already implicated in a social temporality that exceeds its own capacities for narration" (8). But we must give accounts of ourselves to the best of our ability because we work within a system of our own surveillance through these accounts, especially in this age of social media with all its pharmakonical attributes. This surveillance threatens, and "we become morally accountable as a consequence of fear and terror" (Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* 11). Too often, a disabled account of the self, of necessity, "responds to allegation" (Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* 13).

No, I have never been arrested. But my mom once threatened to call the cops when I was manic; I still, years later, have a messed up big toe to serve as a souvenir just as sure as I have a pinkie toe that will attest to the ability of the doors of the Hendrix's Center's ability to break bones.

I am left to fabricate large parts of the "I" or be labeled an imposter.

Standing in the Street Yelling "Look at Me!": *Staring, How We Look* and Why We Should

In *Staring, How We Look*, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson reminds us that "staring bespeaks involvement, and being stared at demands a response" (3). By allowing ourselves to become stareable objects in the public eye, we are offering "an occasion to rethink the status quo" (Garland-Thomson, *Staring, How We Look* 6). It is important to note that staring and gazing is not the same thing: "we may gaze on what we desire, but we stare at what astonishes us" (Garland-Thomson, *Staring, How We Look* 13). We stare in order to know. In order to comprehend the other – this unknown thing we see before us. In that way, to stare is beneficial to both the starer and staree. As it should be given, the stare is human nature: “the evolutionary origin of staring is a startle response. When staring is intentional – as in the loving look or the hostile glare – we are master of our eyes. When an unexpected sight grabs our attention, however, staring is spontaneous and volatile” (Garland-Thomson, *Staring, How We Look* 17). We cannot help the initial impulse to stare, so our eyes stray and betray our impulses even though we are told not to. The trick is to appear as though you are merely paying attention and not staring when you have been presented with an invitation to stare.

And yet it is only through staring – what Foucault calls the “clinical gaze” – that we can realize the reality of a diagnosis – of the validity of the label. Yet, it is only by offering ourselves over as staree that we can subvert the original image. Staring both enforces the normal and creates the new.

“Staring, in other words, makes things happen between people” (Garland-Thomson, *Staring, How We Look* 33). It is through staring that we orient ourselves, and it is by way of this orientation that “we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made: the ‘I’ and the ‘we’ are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others” (Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* 10).

And yet, with the disabled subject on display, the assumption is “that disability cannot be a desirable location, and that it must always be accompanied by a nostalgia for the lost able mind/body” (Kafer 43).

“How much longer do you have to live this way” (Kafer 28)? That is the only temporality that matters; it seems: a curative temporality that goes hand and hand with the national pursuit of happiness everyone is so obsessed within this country. “Claiming crip, then, can be a way of acknowledging that we all have bodies and minds with shifting abilities, and wrestling with the political meanings and histories of such shifts” (Kafer 13).

It means inviting others to stare. Not just at our bodies in the streets or on a screen, but also at our words and the things we create that are illustrative of the spaces between words.

Into (Fragments of) Tissue and Blood: Writing the Fragments and Creating a Self

The act of writing creates; not just the words on a screen or scribbled in a notebook. More than that – writing creates realities and truths. That’s what makes writing so terrifying. What makes narrative dangerous. Life writing that doesn’t follow the normative genre expectations creates space for the cripping of the narrative – of modes of being.

In “Self Writing,” Foucault states that the askēsis of writing about one’s self is, at its core, “the fashioning of accepted discourses, recognized as true, into rational principles of action” and at its core it serves “an ethopoietic function: it is an agent of the transformation of truth into ethos (Foucault, *Ethics* 209). In writing, the self is molded, and the body becomes subject – “the object of ethical analysis, entering into a relationship with himself” (Lee 182). Without this writing, there can be no body for “writing transforms the thing seen or heard ‘into tissue and blood’” (Foucault, *Ethics* 213). But this is not just any writing; this is the rewriting and transcription of all that had come before it: all that is “seen or heard.” These many rewritings of what had come before are prior texts “integrated into one’s comportment and its most minute reflexes and automatisms” (Lee 186). Prior writings are collected in *hupomnēmata*, fragmentary and disjoined citations and references that allow the shaping of the self. Through these disjointed fragments, the subject knows itself as a direct result of “the disruptive visual encounter with the other” (Lee 189)

Social media has taken the place of the notebooks which originally housed the *hupomnēmata*. We now live our lives in a much more obviously fragmented nature. Through these, the self has the means to enter into relationships with the other. The self creates itself as a “response to the disruptive visual encounter with the other” and now seeks to continuously remake itself with public proclamations against the same other that helps to define their very being. These disjoined scribbled fragments that were once private “form part of ourselves” so that our very selves have become virtual selves and utterly authentic selves (Foucault, *Ethics* 210).

Bodies have become archives – collections of fragmented moments curated over time as in a *hupomnēmata*. Social media has taken that base desire for confession and turned it into an even greater tool for conformity, thus complicating our already complex relationship with confession and to the social norm by bombarding us with fragmented confessionals and an overwhelming sense of FOMO: “we are forever trying to catch up, updating to remain (close to) the same; bored, overwhelmed, and anxious all at once” (Chun 1). Our fragmented utterances become “tissue and blood” bodies/selves as we continuously drive to post.

And perhaps Derrida was correct when he declared that there was a violence embedded within the word; after all, how can anything that leaves such a mark behind as Derrida claimed be anything but violent? And so, self-writing becomes self-harm. And yet, such violence can also be revolutionary and strike out at the others even as it digs into our flesh. Through this violence, we can create resistance – as though writing were a knife dragging across the skin. As we make others stare. The "tissue and blood" that is created by writing the self becomes marred and bloodied even as it constructs itself.

Her Hair Is a Riot of Poison & Banality: Medusa, Metis, and the Disabled Self

We, the disabled other, possess what Foucault called subjugated knowledges: "forms of experiencing and remembering that are pushed to the margins and rendered unqualified and unworthy of epistemic respect by prevailing and hegemonic discourses" (Medina 11). From within the subjugated knowledges, we have the privilege of creating unrest. We have "certain possibilities for resistance and subversion" that, while we may suffer pains to write ourselves, ultimately push against norms previously unnoticed by others who would otherwise have had no reason to notice them (Medina 11). But that is only if we can recreate these "hidden or forgotten bodies of experience and memories" (Medina 11).

That is the task Jay Dolmage asks us to take up as he invokes the myths of Metis and Medusa. For, according to Dolmage, "Metis stories refute a canonical view of rhetorical history that not only overlooks the body but also explicitly vilifies the female body and that uses disability as a master trope of disqualification" ("Metis, Mêtis, Metiza, Medusa" 1). Within this idea sits the thought that these subjugated knowedges are not shoved somewhere deep within the dark corners of history – and subsequently rhetoric – but are instead within the body itself. Mêtis is a “cunning, adaptive, *embodied* intelligence” (Dolmage, “Metis, Mêtis, Metiza, Medusa” 5). We, deep within ourselves, already possess these subjugated knowledges. But this is not a rhetoric that is formed by a straight line but instead resembles a rollercoaster ride or the x-rays of my back.

Dolmage contends that “The elision of Hephaestus and his mêtis from our view of rhetorical history is simply in keeping with a larger pattern of disavowals of Othered bodies and the maligning of embodied rhetoric” yet, at the end of the day, “bodily difference fires rhetorical power,” and it gives credence to the power of subjugated knowledges as it waves a flashlight at a “shadow tangle of body-values, body-denials, and body-power” (Dolmage, “Metis, Mêtis, Metiza, Medusa” 7-8). We can use this forgotten rhetoric – this idea of mêtis – as a way of c/ripping ways of knowing ourselves and moving our bodies from the attic to the middle of Main Street, inviting the curious stares of others. We can use this mêtis as a way of “recognizing the stigmatization and effacement of bodily difference, yet also mobilizing new stories and new expressive possibilities” (Dolmage, “Metis, Mêtis, Metiza, Medusa” 8). We can use this mêtis to become Cixous’ Medusa and invite the stares of man straight on: “And she’s not deadly. She’s beautiful and she’s laughing” (Cixous, “The Laugh” 885).

For three years at Clemson on my desk sat framed a quote from “Laugh of the Medusa” that I found at a boutique downtown, and now it sits on the bookshelf next to my desk here in my home office in Tampa: “Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time” (Cixous 880).

For Dolmage, it is fear that leads to violence against Medusa. Not fear of her exactly, but of the monstrous woman who is “discursively excessive, and thus corporeally oversignificant” (Dolmage, “Metis, Mêtis, Metiza, Medusa” 14). Indeed, “The Medusa myth communicates male fear of women’s power…when women are recognized as cunning, thus powerful, they can be seen only as a threat and thus must be appropriated, silenced, slain” (Dolmage, “Metis, Mêtis, Metiza, Medusa” 16). It is within all this mêtis that Dolmage is able to link the figure of the monstrous with the rhetorically feminized disabled body.

Take Another Look: More Staring

We need to put our disabled bodies in the center of Main Street and scream at the public. To cause a ruckus. To promote ourselves in the style of the freak show.

After all, writing the self is “counter-disciplinary writing that works to remake subjects at the level of their being” (Sheldahl-Thomason 226). Our bodies have become those docile things that society has formed. According to Edward F. McGushin, there was a handing over of control for how our selves were formed made possible by a government of surveillance. And yet, it is staring that can free us to truly form our own selves.

But to take it back and return again to Garland-Thomson, let us talk about this staring that we ask others to do a bit more. We know that “We stare when ordinary seeing fails, when we want to know more” (Garland-Thomson, *Staring, How We Look* 3). In this way, staring is a demand – a forced confessional in which the stare must provide suitable answers for the starer’s unasked questions. Staring then is a form of vulgarity, a “furtive, guilty pleasure" on the part of the starer – an act "never far from voyeurism" (Garland-Thomson, *Staring, How We Look* 5). To that end, traditionally, staring tends to create a sense of "unease on both sides of the ogling eyes" (Garland-Thomson, *Staring, How We Look* 5). This unease stems from the lack of answers ("Why are you the way you are?) and general lack of a desire to answer these questions ("Noneya"). Yet, as I noted previously but is worth repeating, often the act of staring "offers an occasion to rethink the status quo" (Garland-Thomson, *Staring, How We Look* 6). This is because, at the end of the day "to be a staree is to show a starer something new, to catch a starer off-guard with an unfamiliar sight" (Garland-Thomson, *Staring, How We Look* 7). So then when "people with stareable bodies" offer themselves up as a potential staree and no longer live cloistered lives but public lives "the visual landscape enlarges" (Garland-Thomson, *Staring, How We Look* 9). By doing so, those with stareable bodies necessarily open up dialogues on the body and norms. So though often the staree might feel powerless under the gaze of the starer, the very act of making one's self an object of staring brings forth a sense of agency that with it comes to a potential regaining of rhetoric.

But why shouldn't one stare at the objects that grab our attention? Though our mothers cautioned us against staring, Garland-Thomson reminds us that "the impulse to look at each other is a natural human response" that, going back to Freud's fort-da, allows children an opportunity to establish "the borders of the self" (Garland-Thomson, *Staring, How We Look* 14). Staring then becomes the starer's "quest to know" and the staree's chance to be known.

No wonder, given the Foucauldian sense of governmentality that rules our daily lives.

Yet we run into difficulty when these ideas of making one's self stareable run up against modern social media because, as Garland-Thomson points out, "we prefer to stare for our own reasons and on our own terms rather than to be forced into a stare by something or someone stareable" (*Staring, How We Look* 19). Thus, when we see the unexpected – the "stareable body" – we instinctively recoil and declare it wrong or bad without giving thought (usually) to why it is the image before us is causing us to react in such a dramatic fashion.

Two overwhelming problems, however, tend to occur if the initial disgust can be overcome: often the sight of the visibly disabled body so overwhelms the starer that the staree becomes their disability and loses their personhood; or, the staree is able to retain their status as a complete person, and the starer is quick to lose interest when the novelty of the image subsides. The trick is figuring out how to, if not circumvent, overcome these responses to the unexpected sight of a stareable body.

Garland-Thomson notes that "our bodies are the props that deliver this performance" of normativity I spoke of in the first chapter and "as long as they are compliant they remain largely invisible even to us" (*Staring, How We Look* 35). Stareable bodies that intentionally enter the public sphere and demand to be seen then are bodies eschewing the norms that govern our appearances and performances. They are George Jones indulging in vice while the audience waits for the show to start – and he never does go on. But breaking free of the panopticon allows for some of Medusa’s powers to be returned to her. In staring at those stareable bodies being offered up for consumption, we also begin to know ourselves. Paraphrasing Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Garland-Thomson points out that “we experience ourselves as a body moving through the world that touches and is touched by our environment…but we can only see the very particular self that we are through the mediation of images or reflections, which reverse our appearance so that what we see is a slightly distorted mirror image of how we look to others” (*Staring, How We Look* 51). We have no real concept of how we appear to the world – we only have the impressions of others and our stares through which we might police our own performances of normative behavior. So, when we are forcibly confronted with the stareable body that eschews its obligatory performance, our sense of self is often called into question.

If I Fail to Update My Instagram Do I Still Exist?: Social Media and Observation/Creation of the Self

In remarking on the habit of social media users that tends towards a constant refreshing and 24/7 confession, Wendy Hui Kyong Chun states that “if users now ‘curate’ their lives, it is because their bodies have become archives” (xi). I spoke briefly to this point earlier when speaking of writing the self. Rather than falling back on the now-cliched statement that we are all becoming cyborgs, Chun notes that our habits are turning us into machines; so then rather than our cellphones and social media accounts becoming extensions of our bodies, we are becoming the sum total of that which we do with our machines and post on our social media profiles. Thus “users have become creatures of the update. To be is to be updated” (Chun 2). And as with our visual performance, we learn acceptable habits from others: “habits are forms of slow training and imitation that lead to belief, or at least the appearance thereof” (Chun 17). Habits then are those actions we continuously perform that function to police normative behavior and appearance.

And all of this must be, of course, reconciled with the idea that we are molded by our social media use and the habits we have formed. If we are asked to ape a singular performance of disability, then we become further irrelevant, merely taking up space and marking time if we fail in our update. If that is the case – if that’s what a disabled existence is, and strict adherence to curative time in both real and virtual spaces – then I agree with those curative ableist hordes: kill me now and put me out of my misery. Alleviate the burden to society I am. Because my systems don’t update at the same rate, others do. They, like me, run largely on crip time. But we operate in a world of “pics or it didn’t happen” and 24/7 digital accountability. There is a glitch.

But the fact of the matter is that “we need modes of networked inhabitation that engage with and buttress publicity, rather than seek a false refuge in privacy” (Chun 13). We require and, indeed thrive in, the sunlight (or, in some cases, the light of the screen) – exposed and glorious. Truly a sight to behold. Chun tells us, “social media are dominated by curiosity” (22). In this way, they have become a form of staring that removes itself from the general public. No longer does the starer have to be observed in their gawking pose; No longer does the staree have to meet the eyes of the starer. We have entered a realm of asynchronous staring throughout digital confessionals. In some ways, this may work to make those with stareable bodies more willing to allow themselves to become staree – thus forcing the starer on the other side of the screen into a jolt of discomfort and recognition.

All of this habitual performance has placed us in the middle of what Chun calls a “historically unique situation,” one in which “we are forever mapping, forever performing – and so we are told, forever empowered – and yet no more able to imagine, let alone decisively intervene in, the world around us” (44). These constant performances, forced upon us even from within the supposed privacy of our own bedrooms, have seemingly left us less able to process those jolts that come from being unexpectedly confronted by a stareable body.

While, ultimately, surveillance has always been – as Chun calls it – “a co-production,” it has never been more obviously true than it is now in the age of social media in which to update (to confess) is to be. And often this need to update takes the form of posts to Instagram. We use images as a shorthand narrative for our day-to-day lives.

Snap Snap: Reading Disabled Images as Life Writing/Reading Disabled Images as Art

The difficulty – beyond getting the general populous to go along with the idea that social media posts are a form of art – comes in the understanding of the word aesthetics: Siebers describes aesthetics as tracking “the emotions that some bodies feel in the presence of other bodies" and that, at the end of the day, "aesthetic feelings of pleasure and disgust are difficult to separate from political feelings of acceptance and rejection" (*Disability Aesthetics* 60). Yet, ultimately, are these not the feelings that we undergo when confronted with the stareable body in our day-to-day lives? Siebers observes that "people with disabilities elicit feelings of discomfort, confusion, and resentment because their bodies refuse cure, defy normalization, and threaten to contaminate the rest of society" (*Disability Aesthetics* 61). If the disabled body provokes such drastic reactions regardless of its context – and ultimately opens up understandings of what the body is and ought to be by virtue of its provocative nature – I am going to push forward with an understanding of the presentation of stareable bodies as a form of disability aesthetics? Regardless of our choice to call certain social media posts art or not, some attention should be paid to the idea of disability aesthetics – and perhaps doing so might make us more inclined to label those images art after all. Tobin Siebers states that "disability does not express defect, degeneration, or deviancy in modern art. Rather, disability enlarges our vision of human variation and difference, and puts forward perspectives that test presuppositions dear to the history of aesthetics" (Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics* 3). Disability aesthetics then embrace the stareable body as an object of art and celebrates the ways in which it forces new understandings of what the body might be. Siebers points out that "it is often the presence of disability that allows the beauty of an artwork to endure over time" (*Disability Aesthetics* 5). It is the concept against which all normative performances are judged. It follows then that "its embrace of disability as a distinct version of the beautiful," Siebers argues that had allowed modern art to endure (*Disability Aesthetics* 9).

Art had, historically, been a safe space within which supposedly radical ideas and opinions might be explored; it follows then that we might embrace modern art's trend towards disability so that we might "explore and expand the spectrum of humanity that we will accept among us" (Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics* 10). In this way, disability art (something I will write of in more depth in chapter four) becomes subject, theme, autobiography, and political act all in one. And, more than that, disability aesthetics operate within "a system of knowledge that provides materials for and increases critical consciousness about the way that some bodies make other bodies feel" (Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics* 20). Disabled persons with stareable bodies then are given a chance, through art, to overcome the understood disqualification and loss of rhetoric (defined by Siebers as "a symbolic process [which] removes individuals from the ranks of quality human beings, putting them at risk of unequal treatment, bodily harm, and death" (Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics* 23) that comes from functioning outside the bounds of normative expectations.

The end goal, of course, being that by embracing a disability aesthetic, "the figure of disability checks out of the asylum, the sick house, and the hospital to take up residence in the art gallery, the museum, and the public square" in an effort to understand what it means to be disabled (Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics* 139).

Glue and Tape: Putting it all Together to Create a Self

All of this is a very long-winded way to say that the self is a constructed thing built by how we write ourselves and how we view and are viewed by the world. It is built upon the very principle of narrative and is both fictitious and far too real.

Tanya de Villiers-Botha and Paul Cilliers contend that the self is a complex system. I cannot bring myself to disagree with their assessment when they say that “in order to cope, a complex system needs to be able to do two things: it needs to be able to store information about its environment (memory) and it needs to be able to adapt its structure to changes around it” (de Villiers-Botha and Cilliers 28). The complex system is a neatly packaged way of understanding what I have been babbling about all along; that “if it merely mirrors the world around it, the system will have no separate identity that can be recognized. The system needs to interact with its environment” (de Villiers-Botha and Cilliers 29). We need to make ourselves stareable. We need to hurt ourselves in order to write the self, just as we do violence to others with the existence of our words.

But, ultimately, the “complex system cannot be broken up into its constituent parts, nor can it be replaced by a simpler system, without losing vital characteristics of the system” (de Villiers-Botha and Cilliers 29). This seems a given as it is impossible to truly break down the self and realize just how the self has internalized all of the individual fragments it has collected over the years without losing ourselves in the process. Every so often, we might try to realize that this thing has had such power and sway with us as I did with Deborah Spungen’s book last summer. But a part of me that is desperate for understanding precisely who I am rebels against the thought that I can’t be so easily dissected. If I cannot be de-composed, then what use do I have of crip theory if "a crucial element of crip theory is its emphasis on – its desire for, we might say – decomposition rather than (fictitious) wholeness" (Price, "The Bodymind" 274)? I can't cosign a statement in which de-composing means losing a vital characteristic of the self when it would seem to do the exact opposite and allow for the building upon characteristics of the self if it does anything at all. Even if de-composing the fragments of the self means bringing a contradictory element into the "I," there is no loss, but instead addition and growth. The idea of losing with its negative implications recalls the concept of failure. Failure to be whole, perhaps?

A system implies a wholeness. There is no drawing meaning from the temporary moments when everything gets subsumed into a single being called "I."

Within this chapter the goal was to inch towards a c/ripping of the self and a cripistemology that might be used to understand constructions of the disabled self and the ways in which we might begin to write new life narratives.

The next chapter will explore the idea of fragmented selves and storytelling in much more depth by looking a zines, trash, and the creation of value/the valuable.

CHAPTER THREE

TRASH, ZINES, THE GROTESQUE, AND BUILDING NEW NARRATIVE FORMS

Abstract: *Never mind the millions of projects on Pinterest that you will never do, or the boxes from Ikea sitting in the corner of your living room – zines are the ultimate diy. Zines are a site of fragmented storytelling. Whether that is because the author uses a scrapbook approach or because they contain several issues, you are asked to stare, to interrogate, and to wonder what you should do/feel/be once you are through reading it.*

Jumping right in the deep end with a look at the grotesque and hauntings, this chapter seeks to establish zines ass a site in which we might c/rip traditional narratives. Within this chapter I liken zines to bar conversations – ephemeral garbage. But in doing so, I begin to ask the question: what is trash, really? And, given what is discussed in chapter two regarding failure and traditional narratives, might there be a kinship between the disabled body/mind and trash that makes zines a natural fit for out attempt at establishing new cripistemologies?

Zines allow us a position from which we might experiment with chaos, trash, and the grotesque in order to ask ourselves questions there might not be an answer to. This chapter takes these things, shuffles them like a deck of tarot cards and attempts a reading that asks why not. But, the one thing it does not do is attempt to create a road map to be used to "understand" all disabled narratives. One size does not fit all.

The grotesque is paradox made visible – and, honestly, that's probably why I like it so much. In *The Riddling between Oedipus and the Sphinx,* Yuan Yuan notes that the grotesque is created as an "intermingling, merging, and coexisting of the opposites, the incompatibles, and irreconcilables" (19). What makes the grotesque is "what it does to boundaries" and the ways in which it is defined by the ways in which it is constantly "transgressing, merging, overflowing, destabilizing" (qtd in Yuan 21). The grotesque does the impossible and does away with the fiction of the singular subject.

The grotesque is constantly working to form cripistemologies – to create c/rips.

"It's always something." I think I mentioned this truism in chapter one – it's a Southernism, but one, as Merri Lisa Johnson points out, that is exceptionally crip. Johnson and McRuer point out that "cripistempology's origins are literally non-metropolitan" (128). Cripistemology was birthed "in the backwoods and branch campuses of disability and queer theory" (Johnson and McRuer 128). Cripistemology was birthed in zines. It is hardly a coincidence that cripistemologies are being developed and championed by Gen X'ers and Millennials – those generations most familiar with the cultural capital of zines, of using the underground to their advantage – to build communities and identities. Cripistemologies are needed. Too often, "disabled people's knowledge is dismissed as trivial, complaining, mundane (or bizarre), less than that of the dominant group" (qtd in Johnson, “Bad Romance” 133). Zines champion “knowledge derived from everyday experiences of those at odds with a world ‘structured for people who have no weaknesses’” (Johnson, “Bad Romance” 133). Or was that cripistemologies? A cripistemology not only allows for knowledge to be made from disabled bodies, but it would be nothing without it. While at the same time: “the term also expands the focus from physical disability to the sometimes elusive crip subjectivities informed by psychological, emotional, and other invisible or undocumented disabilities," making cripistemologies ideal for my purposes (Johnson, "Bad Romance" 141). And yet, it "does not assume epistemic privilege for the disabled person… nor does cripistemology restrict epistemic privileges to the disabled person" (Johnson, "Bad Romance" 141). My lived experience doesn't supersede yours or that of your loved one. They do not exist in a hierarchy of "correctness" but within a kaleidoscope of realities.

The fact is, not all of us speak the same language. Not all of us have the same understanding – the same cripistemological knowledge. So why should one person's experience be privileged over another? Bodily knowledge, even that which haunts the edges privileged over another? Bodily knowledge, even that which haunts the edges of bodies, is derived from individual bodies, from individual experiences, and the particular fragmentations that have created such a body.

Everything is very cut and paste DIY.

I'm not sure what it is, but I'll know when I see it kind of stuff.

And, well, why shouldn't we reclaim the figure of the grotesque if "there is no fixed proper meaning of [it] except a history of convoluted conceptualization and varied significations with different uses" (Yuan 28)? It would seem, to me, that the figure of the grotesque was tailor-made to perform a c/rip and establish a cripistemology of its own. Using the grotesque as a site in which to interrogate the postmodern – to engage in the "riddling of identities" – allows for a bit more freedom as it lets us step into the posthuman and explore how we might best utilize it for our own purposes. Or how we might come to identify with it. We can do this many ways but for the purpose of this chapter, we will focus on zines.

The Truth Shall Make You Odd: Adapting Flannery O'Connor to Disabled Life Writing

In her essay "Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction," Flannery O'Connor not only makes a defense of the use of the grotesque, but she also ultimately makes a case for its necessity. In true cripistemological fashion, O'Connor tells her audience that the modern writer is narcissistic enough to speak entirely for himself and with just enough anxiety to doubt that "his work is important enough to justify his doing so" (37). I think, within the bounds of O'Connor's essay, we can draw an easy connection between the Southern writer and the disabled writer, which is hardly surprising given O'Connor's status as a disabled Southern writer. She points out that, "if you are a Southern writer, that label, and all the misconceptions that go with it, is pasted on you at once, and you are left to get it off as best you can" though it is attached with rubber cement and that the writer's work will constantly be "judged by [it's] fidelity ... to typical Southern life" (O'Connor 38). We have preconceived notions of who the disabled writer is and what disability looks like—those who step beyond the precise boundaries of expectation face scorn from their audience.

In the Creative Writing course I am teaching, when we discuss genre, I tell my students that genres come with certain expectations, certain tropes that need to be utilized, and, if the author fails to make use of these tropes, the audience will walk away feeling frustrated, tricked, and disappointed. I make an analogy to a customer walking into an Indian restaurant and being given fish tacos. I love fish tacos, but I came to the restaurant looking for a curry, so no matter how good the tacos are, I'm still going to react negatively. The disabled writer who refuses to give their abled audience catharsis has broken the genre conventions and created a hostile audience.

That's okay; those stories weren't written for you. They were written for us.

There is one quotation that keeps me coming back to O'Connor's essay on the grotesque time and time again: "we find this quality about [Southern writing] that is generally described, in a pejorative sense, as grotesque. Of course, I have found that anything that comes out of the South is going to be called grotesque by the Northern reader, unless it is grotesque, in which case it is going to be called realistic" (40). The grotesque works, she goes on to say, are ones in which

> *"The writer has made alive some experience which we are not accustomed to observing every day, or which the ordinary man may never experience in his ordinary life ... yet the characters have an inner coherence, if not always a coherence to their social framework. Their fictional qualities lean away from typical social patterns, toward mystery and the unexpected. This is a kind of realism" (O'Connor 40).*

O'Connor has a particular affinity for the grotesque that she attributes to a Southern upbringing: "whenever I'm asked why Southern writers particularly have a penchant for writing about freaks, I say it is because we are still able to recognize one" (44). This is, she says, because the South is "Christ-haunted … the Southerner, who isn't convinced of it, is very much afraid that he may have been formed in the image and likeness of God. Ghosts can be very fierce and instructive. They cast strange shadows, particularly in our literature" (O'Connor 45). It's an interesting assertion for a Catholic writer. Still, the fact is it ideally sets up the grotesque to be that paradox that goes around muddying and transgressing previously clear lines.

By calling the South Christ-haunted, O'Connor affirms the death of God. And "the death of God opens up more avenues toward potential possibilities of transgression" (Yuan 179). It creates space for "the grotesque to refashion different positions for alternative concepts of being" (Yuan179).

We begin to work within a Bakhtinian carnival: "Bakhtin's carnivalesque promotes disruption and disintegration as well as embraces self-recreation and self-transcendence" (Yuan 184). The carnivalesque is the place in which "the grotesque did not die but was expelled from the sphere of official art to live and develop in certain 'low' nonclassic areas" (Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* 31). We will return to these spaces as literal carnivals of freaks in the next chapter, but it is a concept that I think we can apply to the underground spaces in which zines have been created. For now, let's focus on the carnival existing in the ether and return to the physical later.

Speak Up & Speak Clearly (Because I Can't Understand You): Revisiting Language, Writing & Madness

From the start of *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*, Hélène Cixous asserts that "writing changes languages" (1). When we began to lock those society deemed mad away in asylums, we lost the Language of Madness. Indeed, in *Madness and Civilization,* Foucault notes that "[madness] was deprived of its language; and although one continued to speak of it, it became impossible for it to speak for itself" (*Madness* 69). In silencing the Language of Madness, the Language of Reason became the language supreme. And yet, the work of translating – of listening to the words spoken by those who spoke the

Language of Madness – never truly occurred. Instead, the Language of Reason imposed itself upon madness and created the Language of Psychiatry, which, instead of engaging in a dialogue with madness about itself instead monologues about the ways it views madness. Put another way, the Language of Psychiatry mansplains madness and mental disability. We see this in the utter failures of rhetoric that occur within the various incarnations of the DSM (recall our discussion of it in chapter one). This monologuing apes Spivak's statement about women that "women are either silenced or ventriloquial, not-quite-subjects who hold up the culture or, if conscientized, resist" (775). I don't think it would be wholly absurd or out of the question to make a similar statement about those who are mentally disabled.

But then, what are we to do with the subject of language and Foucauldian constructions of identity and disability if we accept the idea that, as Catherine Prendergast notes, "to be disabled mentally is to be disabled rhetorically" (57)? Further taking up this claim, Margaret Price, in her book *Mad at School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life*, states that "to lack rhetoricity is to lack all basic freedoms and rights, including the freedom to express ourselves and the right to be listened to" (26). What's more, this lack of ability to communicate well – to be a credible rhetor – means that "one is generally overlooked – or rather obliterated as a speaking subject" (Price, *Mad at School* 27). Put another way, to be disabled mentally is to be (by normative considerations) lacking the ability to speak and be heard or to self-advocate. Accordingly, there is a fundamental disconnect between the mentally disabled subject and rhetoric. A level of stigma plays into the fact that the speech acts of the mentally disabled are overlooked by the able-body/minded.

What’s more telling, however, is the perceived lack of ability to tell one’s own story in a linear and coherent – “sane” – fashion. Katie Rose Guest Pryal states that to be disabled mentally is to be labeled “an unreliable observer of [the] world” (479). The mentally disabled subject then is shoved aside and classed as an unreliable narrator of their own lives. If the mentally disabled subjects are disabled rhetorically and not to be counted upon to give reliable narratives of the world, why should we listen to their stories? And how might a Foucauldian lens help us use these disconnects to construct the grotesque cripistemology? While Price argues that critical discourse analysis (CDA) is more fitting than a Foucauldian lens for studying the rhetorics of mental disability – given its activist bent – Bradley Lewis argues for the use of Foucault’s theory of discursive practice, stating that “there is always room to shape, reshape, and resist within discursive formations” (46). There is always room for cripistemologies and c/ripping.

Language itself is a violent thing. What do we do when we use language the way we do to label and name things. In other words, what has the loss of the Language of Madness done to us as a society? Žižek states that our everyday language itself “involves unconditional violence” and calls it “the first and greatest divider” (2). Žižek says that our everyday language itself “involves unconditional violence” and calls it “the first and greatest divider” (2). In illustrating his point, Žižek uses the example of the anti-Semitic pogroms: “What the perpetrators of pogroms find intolerable and rage-provoking, what they react to, is not the immediate reality of Jews, but to the image/figure of the ‘Jew’ which circulates and has been constructed in their tradition" (2). We can see echoes of this in the ways in which the Language of Psychiatry has constructed, and the Language of Reason circulates various images/figures of what it means to be mentally disabled. These images/figures of the mentally disabled created by the pseudoscience that created the Language of Psychiatry have little bearing in fact. However, "The catch, of course, is that one single individual cannot distinguish in any simple way" between the real mentally disabled subject and their constructed image (Žižek 2).

What's more, this constructed image/figure affects not only the way in which those who are disabled mentally are experienced by others but also the ways in which the mentally disabled experience themselves. Žižek calls these inventions of language "this fantasmatic dimension" (2). It is not the mentally disabled themselves who society hates; it is the fabricated construction of mental disability that is intolerable to society. If what we, as a society, are responding to when mentally disabled people speak is, in fact, a "fantasmatic dimension" and not the reality of themselves as mentally disabled people, is it any wonder that they have been divorced from rhetoric? When Žižek states that "Language as the 'big Other' is not an agent of wisdom to whose message we should attune ourselves, but a place of cruel indifference and stupidity," is he not exactly illustrating what occurs throughout time as the 'essence' (to use Heidegger's term) of the Language of Madness morphed into the Language of Psychiatry (4)? The Language of Psychiatry purports to speak for the mentally disabled -- leaving them in a constant state of being outside of language -- creating a false image/figure of the mentally disabled person.

Žižek would claim that we are all outside of language and it is only through sacrifice that the Word might "inscribe itself into flesh," recalling Lacan's insistence that the subject requires mutilation to properly "fit" language (5). I argue that what further separates mentally disabled people from language -- what makes the sacrifice necessary to dwell within the house of language impossible properly and creates a rhetorical disconnect -- is not a lack of desire to engage with the Language of Psychiatry, but a recognition that the Language of Psychiatry does not speak for the mentally disabled as it exists in its current form. Thus mentally disabled people became divorced from rhetoric and labeled as unreliable narrators of their own lives not through any personal faults but because of the unease experienced by those with able bodies/minds when the disabled attempt to speak for themselves. After all, and I feel that this is worth repeating, it is not the mentally disabled person who is hated by society, but what they represent -- the fantasmatic construction of what it means to be mentally disabled. And when that construction begins to speak back, to question and dismantle the language which constructed their entire existence, is it any wonder that those who are able bodied/minded -- those who delight in and pay lip service to diversity but who rely on being able to say that at least they aren't *that* kind of different -- begin to bristle and call any performance that doesn't fit a model of overcoming or correcting disability wrong?

The DSM Enters the Room: Rhetoric and Diagnosis

Overreliance on the Language of Psychiatry does violence, too. It forces labels, stereotypes, and myths where they do not naturally fit. While I would love to claim that I have the same diagnosis as Anne Sexton and Carrie Fisher, the fact is that I do not. The same label might be used on all three of us (bipolar disorder/manic depression). Still, the truth is that the diagnostic criteria for what it means to be bipolar have changed over time and continue to change. Though they strip rhetorical power away from the sufferer, as noted in previous chapters, mental disabilities are entirely rhetorical in nature, according to Kimberly Emmons: "Without diagnostics such as blood tests or X-ray imaging, depression becomes visible or remains invisible through the language used to describe it" (1). Because of this, mental disabilities -- though Emmons focuses on depression -- are "particularly vulnerable to the means of [their] own articulation" (1). Indeed, since the advent of Prozac -- and the 1997 law changes that allowed for its advertisement directly to potential consumers -- there has been a drastic uptick in the amount of information about mental disabilities in the news, our popular media, and online. All of this has led to an increase in self-doctoring and self-diagnosis of mental disabilities. To an increased knowledge of the Language of Psychiatry. And while some of the perceived transparency about the causes of mental disabilities (within the medical model) has helped chip away at the stigma that those who have been diagnosed with a mental disability continue to suffer from, this reduction of stigma has not resulted in a joyful regaining of rhetoricity in which those with mental disabilities are suddenly able to effectively self-advocate.

Remember, the DSM itself is a suspect technology. As Emmons points out, it is not possible to diagnose a mental disorder via blood test or X-ray. Diagnostic criteria wax and wane in ways that our understanding of things like influenza, TB, or cancer do not. Mental disabilities, then, have become constructs in the way that other things that we traditionally consider illnesses or diseases do not. It is difficult to call anything that relies on rhetoric as strongly as the DSM does a true science.

Consider this: According to the diagnostic criteria outlined in the DSM-IV, roughly 12 million Americans were diagnosed as having Generalized Anxiety Disorder – and two-thirds of that 12 million were women (Kutchins and Kirk 23). Are Americans becoming more anxious? Or have we begun to, as others have noted, pathologize everyday behavior? Perhaps we are getting better at recognizing what mental disorders look like? Regardless of which answer to any of those questions makes you feel better about the state of psychiatry, what is now being called Generalized Anxiety Disorder did not exist until 1980 with the publication of the DSM-III, and even then, the entry in the DSM-IV barely resembles that first description of Generalized Anxiety Disorder written in 1980. Where there was once only two possible labels for a patient's anxiety, there are now over twenty: "Because" as Herb Kutchins and Stuart A. Kirk note in *Making Us Crazy: DSM: The Psychiatric Bible and the Creation of Mental Disorders*, "these boundaries are arbitrary, agreements must be hammered out among a few psychiatrists serving on special committees" (27). Here Kutchins and Kirk recall the work done by Foucault, Szasz, and others and conclude that, despite the seemingly scientific nature of the DSM, "Mental disorder … is not a scientific or medical concept but a lay concept and a value judgment" (29).

By invoking Bakhtin and Anzaldúa, we can arrive at a hybrid language from which we might begin to overcome the violence of the Language of Psychiatry: "hybrid linguistic construction for Bakhtin means double voices, double accents, double languages, and double consciousness. Bakhtin postulates that hybridization is 'a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance'" (*The Dialogical Imagination* 358). Constructing a grotesque cripistemology allows for the kind of trickster Anzaldúa becomes in *Borderlands/La Frontera*. Tricksters "speak in riddles in double voices and play with ambiguities, resisting the authoritative meaning and hegemonic discourse," and in doing so, they create space for liberation from the expected and the understood (Yuan 207). A hybrid language allows for the grotesque to become a figure of freedom.

Glue Sticks and Photocopiers: Using Zines to Read and Write

No one requires permission to c/rip their diagnosis. And there are plenty of zines of mental disability that never mention specific diagnoses but in which moments of clinical diagnosis shine through. But the point of a label c/rip is to trouble the clinical even as you invoke it. A disidentification a la Muñoz – c/ripping allows for identification and critique. Johnson claims that she has "never felt subsumed or disqualified by [her] psychiatric label" ("Label C/Rip" np). A cynical part of me – admittedly the most significant part of me – wants to scream that, of course, she doesn't; she got her diagnosis as a tenured professor. Still, the fact is that many zinesters seem to operate under the same mantra.

In her introduction to *Writing a Riot*, Rebekah J. Buchanan calls zines "messy, complex texts," not unlike the lives of those who engage in the writing of zines (xxiii). Elaborating on the need for zines, Buchanan states that "individuals participate in zine related activities to understand the world around them and situate themselves in specific cultural sites” (xxiv). Because “zine work is active,” every line, every doodle, is placed on a page with the utmost care, as through these zines, “writers determine what to present as well as how to present situations through a constant negotiation with self and audience” (Buchanan xxiv). Creating a zine about mental disability upends the understood relationships of power by engaging in alternate literacy practices that transform literacy into performance and social practice.

There was a zine serving as a bookmark in Buchanan’s book. On the surface, there is nothing to recommend Niko Nada’s “My Therapist Dumped Me for Being an Alcoholic and Yet I Don’t Feel Any More Artistic.” My initial snobbish reaction was that Nada didn’t seem to put much effort into their zine. The pages read like a haphazard scrapbook. The zine opens and closes with a photobook strip of Nada crying with what looks like a bloodied face. From there, they copy single items onto pages, so you flip past a bank statement, liquor store receipts, and 48-hour notifications of utilities being shut off interspersed with blunt statements like “I am so scared of everything yet so down for anything” and “there’s not a single person who had told me to go to rehab that hasn’t also bought me a drink” (Nada np). Nada’s zine, like many others, reads like a conversation at a bar. I’m getting to glimpse at something deep and personal, but only really getting fragments.

My local in Tampa is the James Joyce, an Irish pub just down from the Centro Ybor streetcar stop. I like to work from there the same way I worked from Nick’s in Clemson. Maybe it’s the noise. Maybe it’s the alcohol. Maybe it’s just getting the hell out of my apartment. Whatever the reason, one day I was there working, negotiating precisely what I would owe if I took a pair of tickets to the Korn and Stained show that was starting in an hour and explaining what, exactly, it was I was scribbling in my notebook about when this New Yorker noted that only in an Irish pub would strangers be so open with one another. I didn't think it was that unusual. Or is that just another example of the Scots Irish settling the South? Either way, I don't doubt that that has something to do with my love for zines.

Can I Get More Personal For a Sec?: Excerpts From a Zine

The CFP mentions accepting zines.

The throbbing of my ankle jolts up to my stomach, and I feel sick.

We first spoke at the Q&A following his exam defense. He had just spoken about creating digital zines, and I laughed. *Zines are ephemeral*, I said. *They aren't meant to last*.

He disagreed.

Trash, though, we agreed later at the end of the semester pool party, was in the eye of the beholder and worth – occasionally – holding on to. And hey, there is a zine fest in Asheville, did you know? Are you going? I might try to get a table and sell my zine. Then his wife came over, and our conversation came to an awkward end.

There is a kind of romantic irony in many perzines – of their collage, scrapbook nature.

When I left Clemson, I threw hundreds of pictures in the dumpster near my apartment alongside the listing cat tree and the lamp that refused to work except when it wanted to – usually in the middle of the night after I had gone to bed. Pictures of high school winter guard competitions and trips to Orlando, Miami, Tallahassee, and Tampa, and seemingly everywhere in between. A photographic map of Florida seen through a teenager's eyes. And pictures of my father, of Ocala, and Jaguars games when he would take me at the end of a visitation – or, more often than not, meet me at the park and ride in Mandarin. And we would spend five hours side by side but alone, both of us becoming one with the sea of teal. Me with gold glitter running down my face. Pictures of Joyce and I at Warped Tour. Pictures of the now married, now a man, boy I had been sleeping with until a year ago. (Three years after his wedding.)

Memories of someone else, maybe. Maybe I was trying to finally throw that me away. To throw her in the dumpster with those pictures. But of course, I couldn't get rid of it all, and no matter how long it has been since I legally became someone else (ten years last February), I am still her, and she is still me.

And I wonder who might find those pictures. Where they are now and what story they might tell some stranger about a girl from Jacksonville who came to Clemson to both forget and remember.

Maybe one day I will regret getting rid of photos I hadn't seen in years. Maybe I already do.

When I moved, I unearthed books I hadn't seen since that unreal year in New York. Books that I had lovingly selected at The Strand. Books that had sat in the trunk of my car for the last seven years. Books on Oscar Wilde, books on Flannery O'Connor. Wilde's love letter to Bosie. O'Connor's prayer journal.

A ticket stub for a Placebo show in Hell's Kitchen used as a bookmark in *The Invention of Murder*.

Fragmented segments of self. Episodes of a longer story. And probably – given how long they had gone unread – things I should have gotten rid of years ago.

These days, my association with zines is linked to the feeling of flesh in my mouth and a busted lip that took a month to heal.

I would finish my zine on silence and dealing with the end of the world trauma on top of fresh new trauma with plenty of time to spare to submit it, but it's his email address that is listed under where to send your submissions. And that's not a can of worms I want to open right now. Not when I have a dissertation to write, and I have to figure out what to do with my life.

If, as the sticky notes on my laptop would have me believe, pharmakeus–pharmakeia–pharmakon exist in a chain, then we are left with the specter of the pharmakos. There is no need for the physicality of the scapegoat if you stop at the drug itself.

A million years ago, before the end of the world, before That Night and The Monday, when we were standing by the pool with drinks in our hands, I said *y'know, I think it's a control thing. I know that if someone wanted to, they could scan my zine and put it on the internet if they wanted, but if it's printed – if I make it by hand – then I at least have the illusion of control sometimes.*

He laughed like it was the funniest thing he had ever heard.

One Man’s Trash: Trash and the Creation of Value

Zines are, like bar conversations, ephemeral garbage – things meant to be discarded. And yet, “what can be heard, seen and touched has become the cornerstone of memory” (qtd in Guruianu and Andrievskikh 198). We cling to things that ought to be fleeting moments. What should be or become trash becomes something else.

Touchstones.

And yet, “without the text, without the object where the past might dwell, the self moves from being caught in a tug-o-war between memory and forgetting while navigating constant decay, loss, and erasure, to a state of dynamic stasis – nomads of the now exiled from history, individual and collective, where a *life* had been reduced to an *existence*” (Guruianu and Andrievskikh 204-205). I go back and forth on my opinion of zine archives. In general, I don’t like the idea. As an academic, as a feminist, as a disabled person, I applaud the efforts to collect and house zine archives within more extensive libraries. Lest we forget the non-dominant voices.

Writing is difficult work made even more complicated when attempting to write individual experiences with mental disability. The Riot Grrrl zinesters created unique ways of working through the ills and anxieties of the twentieth century in an attempt to speak for the body. Creating a zine allows us to do just that. Further, these zines might serve as cultural artifacts through which we might better understand some aspects of twenty-first century life and come to develop our own grotesque cripistemologies. A commodity of suffering is a foundational tenant on which the punk movement which birthed the Riot Grrrls was built.

DIY pain.

Come one, come all, and see the girl with the long red hair die again and again.

The deathless ones. For how can anyone truly die if they keep coming back to life? And though some disapprove of turning pain into a public spectacle, it does not stop those who are in pain from performing that pain, again and again, seeking the proper audience.

I came to the zine scene late – as a mid-20s undergrad student marveling at the idea of these indie publications Modernists would create. Dr. Earle made them sound magical. Something that required none of the political maneuvers of traditional publishing houses.

And then I found Riot Grrrl zines.

I've come to believe that zines are sublime in a Kantian sense. These zines, mine and the ones I have bought from others, are beyond me. They exist in some ethereal plane "as it evades perception, such an object at the same time leaves no doubt in its overwhelming material presence" (Guruianu and Andrievskikh 166).

Fragmentary composed mana.

Cut My Life Into Pieces: Using Fragments and Trash as Touchstones of a Life

In *What's the Use?* Sara Ahmed states that "we can learn about objects from the objects they are near, from their traveling companions" (25). We can make connections and create a narrative from fragments when we consider what exists on either side of the fragment. She goes on to state elsewhere that "a used object preserves a life even after it appears a life has been terminated" (Ahmed, *What's the Use?* 38). When we use things, we are creating meaning for both the thing and ourselves. We can be transformed by the things we pass from person to person once we have used them up, just as we have the ability to transform something from trash to narrative. Both work in concert to construct some sort of meaning out of junk.

We return to the idea of memory and touchstones. And discarded objects: junk and garbage. Even after something has been broken or has become something we really ought to throw away, we are hesitant to do so. In *The Afterlife of Discarded Objects,* Andrei Guruianu recounts a story about a cooking lesson and a cracked bowl: “the story, of course, has more to do with how to live – with an experience and a relationship – than with culinary expertise or with a single cracked bowl. And it has to do with something that does not even involve the object itself” (21). We fear that if we were to get rid of every cracked bowl, we might just lose that something – that memory, that story – if we do away with the physical object. Even if we keep our broken and used things in boxes in the back of the closet, they are still nearby. We can still go and find them with relative ease if we want to. The trick is figuring out the line between memory objects and trash: “because we simply do not know what will be important in the future, what we might need or want later, what might be necessary to call up from the recesses of remembrance, we feel obligated and compelled not to destroy but to collect, preserve ‘every indicator of memory’ as a bulwark against forgetting” (Guruianu and Andrievskikh 24-25).

I keep a lot of things that I really ought just to throw out. In a book, I recently found an airline ticket: *Indianapolis to Charlotte, American Airlines flight number 5487, Gate B10, Departing at 5:01 PM on March 30, 2018, Seat 15C, Group 8*. I forgot about the actual events that would lead to the need for the old school printed-at-the-gate boarding pass in this day and age until I found it. I remember going to Indianapolis, of course. It was a quick 24-hour trip to present at the Popular Culture Association (PCA) conference and then back to Clemson. I spent three of those hours virtually attending one of my graduate seminars. I presented at an impossibly early hour. I ate nothing but aloo gobi in an attempt to forestall any further cravings for curry when I got back to an Indian-foodless Clemson. But now I remember that it was the flight back from the conference that was an absolute nightmare. My flight was delayed long enough that I would have missed my connection in Charlotte if I hadn't sobbed to the gate agent that I absolutely had to get on a flight, any flight, to Charlotte because my cats were home alone and were probably getting hungry (I wasn't sure when Shauna had come over to feed them in the morning) until the Delta gate agent found an American Airlines flight she could get me on.

Never fly anywhere with me; if the flight out doesn't get delayed and requires rebooking in order to make connections, the one back definitely will.

I'm probably going to put the boarding pass right back where I found it instead of tossing it in the trash, though, as it's the one physical touchstone I have of my first PCA conference and my first trip to Indianapolis.

Nada includes a Bank of America deposit receipt in their zine "My Therapist Dumped Me…." You can see that the deposit was made on 04/11/17 at 13:22 in Los Angeles. The deposit was a five-dollar bill, serial number 3496. This deposit brought their available balance to $0.71. This is across from a page that states: "i have my name on the lease of a cute house. i live with cute kids in a cute neighborhood. there are cute places to eat that have cute drinks to drink. cute people want to go home with me. all of this and i still feel so ugly" (Nada np). After having found Nada's Instagram account, I know now that they were likely referring to the gender diaspora they were feeling but nowhere in the zine do they mention being trans or nonbinary. Instead, we are given two pages of mostly white space and left to connect the fragments ourselves to establish an account of their alcoholism.

In *Meander, Spiral, Explode*, Jane Alison, states that "a pool of white surrounding a raft of words rests the eye and creates the time-space for a reader to draw connections or ponder… All sorts of things can 'happen' in white space: a few minutes, a month, centuries – leaving a place for a reader to ponder or guess" (37, 47).

Within the white space of Nada's zine, they create and recreate them. They c/rip alongside Nada as they attempt to work backward from the trash and short paragraphs to construct Nada's experience of mental disability.

There are three pages toward the start of the zine – single photocopied items take up the first two. A Peet's Coffee card on the first page says, "We'd appreciate a second chance. Please enjoy a complimentary beverage on your next visit." Directly across from that on the next page is what appears to be a broken-down box for a valentine: one side of the box says "glass rose" on the top, followed by a picture of the rose or a see-through window into the box. Underneath it says, "Happy Valentine." The other side of the box that we get to see leaves no doubt what it is "Happy Valentine Glass Rose." Those two images side-by-side annoyed me the first time I read Nada's zine. I didn't understand what one had to do with the other, what either one of them had to do with the subject of the zine. Then I read the quote they typed on the next page: “it’s like you never really learned how to live with yourself and other people, so you just hungrily devour anything in your path that looks or feels good.” Now I dislike those images for other reasons; they hit a bit too close to home with the added context of the quote.

I’m not sure if the scratch-off card showing the owner as $3 richer makes it better or worse.

Alison Piepmeier calls the creation of zines a “story of rupture” (26). They are rejections: rejections of traditional publishing methods, rejections of attitudes, and rejections of ideas.

Otherwise, why would anyone write them?

Straight Lines Are Boring: Using Chaos to Construct Disabled Narratives

Arthur Frank calls attempts to tell a story while experiencing the illness you are writing about “chaos” (102). Let's revel in the chaos – in the messy, fragmented stories.

The ability to narrate one's own life linearly and coherently is prized by most people. Yet, given the level of stigma attached to the lack of ability to do so by those who are mentally disabled, it would seem that it is also taken for granted more often than not. Because humans are naturally social creatures who thrive on telling stories, it is assumed that everyone can construct a cohesive narrative that a general audience can understand. Life and story seemingly go hand and hand. But more often than not, attempts to tell stories of mental disability to suffer from their lack of traditional narrative structure. They become anti-narratives. Chaos stories: stories that are tried from the middle of the worst episodes of a mental disability. Frank believes that “The teller of chaos stories […]

cannot tell [their stories] in words" because, in his words, "To turn the chaos into a verbal story is to have some reflexive grasp of it" (98).

For this reason, Frank claims that "chaos stories are not narratives" but instead "anti-narratives" (98). While we might have a wealth of narratives in the form of memoirs of mental disabilities written by professional writers or academics (typically female, typically white, generally middle-class), we do not have a sense of what the typical person with a mental disability goes through daily because as a society we have decided that they are not worth listening to. Or when we do listen to them, we go about it in entirely the wrong way. We have negated their position as a rhetor. We force them to wear a mask of sanity while telling us of their mental disability, and if they do a good job in speaking through this mask, we rebuff them as not being disabled enough to be worth listening to. If the confines of the mask muffle their speech, society tells us to distrust them.

And it goes further than that. In an article entitled "Storying the Self: A View on Autobiography from Developmental Psychology," Robyn Fivush states that "Cultures both compel and constrain narratives. To be a person, one must be able to provide an account of oneself, a story of who one is, how one became this way, and what one will become" (243). To be mentally disabled then is to lose your rhetoricity and lose your sense of personal identity. With so much at stake, why are we only recently turning our attention to the mentally disabled?

Price gives us a way around this conundrum by combining Disability Studies and CDA as a way to read stories of mental disability. In her article "'Her Pronouns Wax and

Wane': Psychosocial Disability, Autobiography, and Counter-Diagnosis," Price explores three texts: *A Mind Apart: Travels in a Neurodiverse World* by Susanne Antonetta; *Lying: A Metaphorical Memoir* by Lauren Slater; and "Her Reckoning: A Young Interdisciplinary Academic Dissects the Exact Nature of Her Disease" by Wendy Marie Thompson. Within each of these texts, according to Price, there is a counter-diagnosis at work. Price defines counter-diagnosis as an attempt by the autobiographical narrator to use language in a way that enables them to "subvert the diagnostic urge to 'explain' a disabled mind" ("Her Pronouns" 17). This is done by queering the very foundations of the typical diagnostic story. This is done in a number of ways, most of which rely on a creative incoherence that fails to paint one cohesive narrative -- what Frank would label a series of chaos narratives. However, these tales are not told from the middle of madness but are instead reflections upon what it felt like to be mad. In playing with pronouns, the three texts explored in detail by Price fail to explain the disabled mind but instead often place the audience within it.

By contrast, Pryal notes that the mood genre itself could be used as a way to circumvent this loss of rhetoric: "mood memoirs can be read as narrative-based responses to rhetorical exclusion suffered by the psychiatrically disabled" (480). By noting "their shared exigencies," Pryal argues the mood memoir should be classed as a separate genre of life writing. She notes that they share a number of rhetorical conventions, namely, "apologia, a moment of awakening, criticism of doctors, and certain techniques of auxesis," all of which act together to create "a reliable ethos for the mentally ill, at least in certain spheres" (480). The mood memoir, according to Pryal, does more than function aesthetically or literarily, they serve a rhetorical purpose by constructing our very understandings of mental disability.

And yet, as noted previously, these narratives tend to be speaking from a comparatively privileged position. These are narratives written for the most part by white women, straight women, and college-educated women. Those narratives that are not are still privileged in comparison to most narratives of mental disability in that they were published for the most part by traditional publishers. What of, to mangle a phrase of Prendergast's, the unexceptional mentally disabled person? Are we to disregard any text that does not fit our rigid definition of a narrative and thereby discount the writings of most people with mental disabilities?

Zines obliterate lines.

The grotesque obliterates lines.

A grotesque cripistemology allows zines to do the work of c/ripping.

A grotesque cripistemology allows zines to democratize the rhetoric of mental disability.

A grotesque cripistemology allows zines to create new narratives.

These are stories told in utterances.

The fact is that – at the end of the day – all that we are boils down to our last utterance: "the identity of 'I' is not stable because 'I' can only be understood in relation to a surrounding world" (Watts 181). Eric King Watts states that "Bakhtin recognizes in the text multiple 'voices' speaking from a plethora of historical places and cultural milieus" (184). When one utilizes their 'voice,' Watts goes on to say, "the sound of one's ‘voice’ bends space and time. The experience of ‘voice’ jars us from the illusion of sameness and continuity that results from conformity and mindlessness in society” (184).

Come one, come all.

Zines are an invitation: an invitation to stare, an invitation to gawk, an invitation to react.

Within this chapter we headed towards a new grotesque cripistemology; one that values and creates value from that which might otherwise be considered useless and/or trash. Given the status of disabled persons within the general public, what could be more fitting than that? Zines provide us with a place in which we might do the work to establish individual c/rips and work within these new grotesque cripistemologies.

In the next chapter we will build on these ideas and this new cripistemology by applying it to more visual modes of storytelling. Chapter four takes the grotesque to its next logical evolution and introduces the glitch.

CHAPTER FOUR

GLITCHING PHOTOS AND FINDING NEW WAYS OF LOOKING

Abstract: *Sometimes we just need to get over ourselves – and other times we need to just smash things to pieces with a hammer, forcing people to acknowledge us. With an aim of reframing the idea of failure and error, this chapter explores the ways in which we can make failure and error productive – making it less something forbidding to disabled folks and instead something we can use as a method of c/ripping.*

Once the terms used within this chapter have been established and explored, we begin with an exploration of Tobin Siebers' Disability Aesthetics before making a return to Bakhtin's carnival and Garland-Thomson's stare/stareable bodies, both of which we have explored in previous chapters. Here we will expand our understanding of these ideas and move from the world of text to photography.

Because, as we will discuss, despite its seeming ubiquity the photograph is already an imperfect object (digital photography doubly so) it becomes the perfect site in which we might break things. And in breaking a photograph we might establish a new way of looking.

In the previous chapters we inched towards new ways of thinking about the writing of mental disability. Ways in which we might begin to see them and ways in which we might use them. This chapter will shift gears, use some of what we already discussed, and branch out into new visual forms of self-expression. Before we do that, however, I want to take a step back and explore the idea of failure a bit more as failure is at the heart of what this chapter is about.

Carolyn L. Kane opens *High-Tech Trash* with “Western culture’s simultaneous embrace and denial of failure is frustrating” (1). I would go a step further and say that it has the capacity to kill. And yet, “life is what is capable of error” according to Foucault. If failure and error are what defines a life, then why do we regulate our responses to the reality of failure and only allow chosen few to fail freely and without consequence? To completely butcher Heidegger: if we think of life as a constant game of red light green light with failure being the start and success being the finish line, then it is worth looking at our extreme reactions a bit closer.

As I pointed out in the first chapter, Americans in particular seem often ill equipped to deal with depression because we are told early and often that the pursuit of happiness is not just our right but what we should strive for every day as Americans and as such, to be chronically unhappy or to be viewed as not actively trying to live a joyous life seems to be un-American. Likewise, failure/to fail seems contradictory to happiness and therefore should be viewed with a healthy dash of suspicion and from a distance. And yet, we are surrounded by failure. Even beyond the lives that are viewed as failures. Our technology is designed to fail so that we are forced to buy the newest, latest version to come out every six months. As Lauren Berlant and others have noted, since the 1990s optimism has been on the decline. We instead “cling to fantasies of what it means to be happy, but the reality of acquiring it is increasingly scarce” (Kane 46). Failure has become the norm, yet we refuse to acknowledge that as being true. So why not force the issue and create our own user generated failures and glitches?

Within this chapter I will be using two terms (glitch and error) almost interchangeably, yet it is important to take a second to define them: the original Latin meaning of error is "'wandering, implying an almost creative response to a dilemma" (Kane 14). Not all who error are lost. Like glitches and failures, what is deemed as error is culturally defined. Yet, I like the idea of error being creative – of being a response that might be unpredictable or outside the box but just right for the situation. Glitch, on the other hand, comes from "the German glitschen meaning to slip … and the Yiddish glitshen, meaning to slip or skid off course" (Kane 15). There is nothing inherently creative about a glitch, it is simply a deviation from the norm. Yet, we can use glitch to work our way through error – to expose an error in some creative and unexpected ways. Indeed, Kane quotes Olga Goriunova and Alexei Shulgin as saying that a "glitch is a singular dysfunctional event that allows insight beyond the customary, omnipresent and alien computer aesthetics" (15). Glitches are, at their core, "a flirtation with breakdown, chaos, and total immersion in technology, followed by a level-headed bait and switch" (Kane 16). Not all who error are lost. Some glitches might provide a road map.

Kane asserts that "where the human provides spontaneous responses to unforeseen events, the machine is only capable of what has been envisioned for it in advance" (20). With this statement she draws a firm line between human and machine, yet, I think she might be giving humans too much credit. Yes, humans are more capable of error in the classical sense, but we also exist within a cultural framework in which responses to failure or error are met with “what has been envisioned for it in advance” rather than any true creative response. For all that we, Americans in particular, love to profess our individuality we really aren’t all that different at our cores. And I don’t mean that in a hooky “we’re all the same” way the way that has been used to (poorly) combat racism and homophobia. I mean that within the sections of society in which we exist there are fundamental beliefs and responses that are formulated by these beliefs. This isn’t necessarily a bad thing, but it does mean moving the idea of a glitch beyond the screen into the real world. Ultimately, “failure [read: glitch] also tends to shut down a system or situation for more than a merely inconvenient length of time” (Kane 20). This can apply to a haywire traffic light or a protest. Both cause a “shut down [to] a system or situation for more than a merely inconvenient length of time” with those being inconvenienced being those who are not directly responsible for the glitch. The hacker or bug that makes the traffic lights go bonkers isn’t inconvenienced any more than the protesters are.

Who determines what is an error though? Kane mentions a series of YouTube videos that twisted children’s’ videos into what was deemed “disturbing and morally offensive, especially to children” (5). But “from a logistic perspective, these inserts prove the system is accurately following its own protocols” (Kane 8). From the perspective of YouTube’s algorithms and protocols, there is nothing wrong with seeing a video of Peppa Pig drinking bleach or Elsa getting it on with Spiderman. It is, to the programing, just another video and is treated the same as one of the Weird NHL or Bad Lip-Reading videos. It is human intervention (hacker intervention) that created the errors, and it is humans who labeled them as errors. YouTube was just YouTubing; it was reading the code the way it was programed to. “There is thus,” Kane states “something very right about the ways in which ill-intentioned programmers exploit oversights in the system” (6).

Truly, if “life is what is capable of error” then we require glitches, errors, and failures in general in order to determine not just what a valuable life is, but what qualifies as life to begin with. And it is that one word, “capable,” and its implication that terrifies us. It drives us to eliminate as many errors as possible. But, in a real way, glitches are “a necessary and often unconscious mode of structuring existence in a digital age which valorizes information, transparency, and speed against a political and historical background chock-full of noise, static, and breakdown” (Kane 9). They are necessary, but they should be covered up as much as possible. The YouTube hacks need to be taken down; the phone needs to be replaced when a new version is released. It is only through looking for and “revealing new insights at their seams” that we can discover what has been covered up (though those too will be swiftly dealt with) (Kane 11).

And beyond that, if “noise, error, accident, and disjuncture are the necessary and inevitable results of any communication exchange, whether internal or external, human or machine, or otherwise” what would it mean to flip that on its head (Kane 31)? What would it mean to purposely introduce glitches? How might we view error then? Would the idea of failure, of error in the uncreative sense, be as terrifying?

Visibly Broken and Ugly: The Disabled Body as Error and a Disability Aesthetic

In “The Body: An Abstract and Actual Rhetorical Concept,” Karma Chávez points out that “portrayals of physically able, white male orators’ attire, skin, attractiveness. And sweat rarely adorn pages of rhetorical scholarship" (247). He does not have to ask for stares; his body is assumed. As Tobin Siebers notes, "all bodies are not created equal when it comes to aesthetic response" (*Disability Aesthetics* 1). The body of the Other is created when placed against the image of the able-bodied white man. It becomes constructed of its minuses and is "lossy" in execution.

Siebers defines disability aesthetics as one which "embraces beauty that seems by traditional standards to be broken, and yet it is no less beautiful, but more so, as a result" (*Disability Aesthetics* 3). Disability aesthetics embraces disharmony and disqualification; it is fluid and grotesque. It is "the way that some bodies make other bodies feel" (Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics* 20).

The sight of a visibly disabled body prompts feelings of disgust and an urge to fix the unsightliness – what Kafer has called a "curative imaginary, an understanding of disability that not only expects and assumes intervention but also cannot imagine or comprehend anything other than intervention" (27). Ugly laws barred those who were visibly disabled from the public to preserve beauty and shield the eyes from the public nuisance of disability.

Unfortunately, "people with disabilities have forgotten how to suffer and be still" (Siebers, "Tender Organs" 41). Siebers goes on to say that the disabled body cannot be one infected with narcissism because it is so often reliant on the assistance of others. He sees a fundamental disconnect in the idea of being beholden to others and true narcissism. Maybe. I'm not sure I agree. From my perspective, we need to embrace opportunities to be narcissists whenever possible. To shove ourselves into the spotlight and force our selves to be seen. To ensure that eyes cannot just pause and skitter over our bodies before they quickly look away. Zines, as I argued in the last chapter, are one way to invite gawking eyes. They are useful democratizing tools in which we are encouraged to be as narcissistic as possible.

Our narcissism isn't for you. You may partake of it, we invite you to do so quite readily, but it isn't for you; it is for us. You will call us out when you run across this narcissism, and we will shrug and go about our lives.

There is an individualism to a claim of narcissism that I think upset Siebers; the narcissist is defined against himself and is an individual removed from others. This, admittedly, is a bit problematic for activism. Effective activism requires a united image and united goals. If the disabled are viewed as being too individual, the movement falls apart at the seams. Perhaps. That is definitely a possible consequence. But, when creating a disability rhetoric in the 2020s, is that such a bad thing?

Fact is, I want you to stare. I wouldn't dye my hair green or purple or pink or blue and wear what one of my friends has called "a truly obnoxious amount of red lipstick" if I wasn't comfortable with you looking at me. Staring immediately classifies me as a punk, as queer, as a disabled woman.

Staring is a natural human impulse: "we stare when ordinary seeing fails, when we want to know more. So staring is an interrogative gesture that asks what's going on" (Garland-Thomson, *Staring, How We Look* 3). The act of staring creates an intimacy. It "bespeaks involvement" on the part of both the starer and the staree (Garland-Thomson, *Staring, How We Look* 3). The act of staring, Garland-Thomson notes, is mutually beneficial. As you stare at me, you construct yourself in the differences you see between us. As I look back and hold your stare, I do the same. That's not to say that it is always a comfortable exchange. When invited to stare at a sight in person, we often refuse to hold our eyes on the staree for very long. That's what makes the advent of the photograph and social media so wonderful.

The picture allows for both parties to stare for as long as they like. There will likely still be some discomfort at some sights, but the relative privacy of a nonpublic setting alleviates some of this. But "when people with stareable bodies … enter into the public eye, when they no longer hide themselves or allow themselves to be hidden, the visual landscape enlarges" (Garland-Thomson, *Staring, How We Look* 9).

Take a Picture, It Will Last Longer: Social Media and Photography

In *The Social Photo,* Nathan Jurgenson notes that with the advent of social media, "how we see, what we can see, what both social visibility and invisibility mean are changing" (2). Within digital spaces, we can demand to be seen, to be stared at. This is because we have a built-in audience clamoring for more evidence of our everyday lives. Before social media, "it had to be important or special or worthy to justify being seen" (Jurgenson15). It is disrespectful to the picture "to only apply traditional aesthetics to social photos" (Jurgenson12). They have the ability to be more if we let them. The key is to acknowledge that "images within the social stream evoke more than they explain" (Jurgenson15). So, photographs of disability are created and shared on social media, but they aren't meant to be translated. If you don't get it, no one is going to explain it to you.

But key for my purposes, “social photography, even or especially those photos that are filtered and framed and digitally augmented, can succeed at storytelling rather than fail at exactitude” (Jurgenson 17). Jurgenson puts forward the idea that a selfie isn’t always akin to a self-portrait and instead is a mood or place caught on camera: “a visual depiction of the idea of me” (Jurgenson19). They work as methods of identity construction as “the selfie lets us share that mirror-view, what we see when contemplating our self, considering what we are.” Our at-home, private no cameras selves are not any more real than those we construct and struggle to understand via our social media posts. Jurgenson states that “social media are part of ourselves; their source code becomes our own code” (63). Too often, we fixate on the idea of a singular identity, one that ultimately “fails to accommodate playfulness and revision” (Jurgenson 89). Sharing photographs online via social media allows for a whimsical rewriting – of roleplaying and trying things out.

Jurgenson’s social photo becomes an instruction manual for “how to see life when away from the screen” (28). And, ultimately, “to see the world with a camera eye, especially today, is to reposition one’s orientation to the world toward an expanding field of documentary possibilities. To see the moment as documentable is to take a certain kind of standpoint, specific to a place and time” (Jurgenson 36). Photographs taken on our phones and shared online become evidence; evidence that I did that, that I saw that, that I felt that. Really, photographs become ways in which we can “confirm the reality of our own lives to others and ourselves” (Jurgenson 79).

The Manic Depressive and the Tattooed Lady: Freak Shows and Their Uses

The freak is a constructed thing not occurring naturally: “when the body becomes pure text, a freak has been produced from a physically disabled body” (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 59). Within the space of the freak show, “the exhibited body became a text written in boldface to be deciphered according to the needs and desires of the onlookers” (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 60). Though the freak gazes back, there was not the give and take exchange happening that is an intricate part of the act of staring. The audience uses the sight of the freak as a yardstick with which they might work to construct their own identities, and then they move on, or the freak is shuffled off the stage. Within the space of the freak show, “the American is mobile, entering and exiting the show at will and ranging around the social order, but the freak is fixed, confined by the material structures and conventions of the staging and socially immobilized by the deviancy body” (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 65). The freak begins as “a frame of mind, a set of practices, as a way of thinking about and presenting people” but then becomes fixed and immobile when displayed for a horrified and tickled audience (Bogdan 3).

But the existence of the freak show creates an opportunity to consider the carnivalesque and photography.

I noted in the previous chapter that “Bakhtin’s carnivalesque promotes disruption and disintegration as well as embraces self-recreation and self-transcendence” (Yuan 184). Within the context of that particular quote, I noted that zines often act as a non-space in which the carnival takes place. Somewhere that disabled bodies worked to build individual c/rips of their disorders and disrupt the norm. According to Bakhtin, the grotesque never died at the end of the classical period but was instead shoved – rather violently – into “certain ‘low’ nonclassic areas” (*Rabelais and His World* 31). These sites were the local folk carnivals: the county fair. Within the context of folk culture, the carnival apes a quote from Delta Burke’s character in *Designing Women*: “I'm saying this is the South, and we're proud of our crazy people. We don't hide them up in the attic. We bring 'em right down to the living room and show 'em off. See, Phyllis, no one in the South ever asks if you have crazy people in your family. They just ask what side they're on” (*Bernice's Sanity Hearing*).

I’m noticing there are a lot of parallels between the rhetoric of mental disability I have been working towards and the South. I’m not sure if that is a result of my upbringing or because Flannery O’Connor’s comments on the grotesque indeed extend beyond the realm of fiction.

Regardless, inserting the grotesque into the public square and in the carnival space “is the corporeal embodiment of the carnival spirit and the carnival is the common festivity of the grotesque body. In this context, the carnivalesque is put forward as a postmodern strategy of evoking, celebrating, animating or conjuring the grotesque body” (Yuan 187). In that way, the carnival is a celebration of movement; indeed, “the grotesque shows that ‘the inner movement of being itself was expressed … in the ever incompleted character of being’” (Yuan 188). It is a playful site in which the grotesque transgresses boundaries and exists in transient states. It’s a playful site in which the freak is just as mobile as the audience that moves in and out of the auditorium: “’this carnival spirit,” Bakhtin projects, ‘offers the chance to have a new outlook on the world’ and initiates ‘a completely new order of things’” (Yuan 190). And, according to Kristeva, it directly challenges God. Recall that, in the last chapter I noted that Flannery O’Connor stated that the freak is recognizable in the South because “the general conception of man is still, in the main, theological” and the Southerner’s fear that he is genuinely “formed in the image and likeness of God” that creates the ghosts that instruct our concepts of the grotesque (44).

Within the context of the Bakhtinian carnival, we give Medusa the ability to laugh and to “write herself” and “write about women and bring women to writing from which they have been driven away a violently as from their bodies” (Cixous, “The Laugh” 875).

Within the context of the Bakhtinian carnival, we give Medusa the ability to laugh and write disabled bodies.

Photography is a medium uniquely positioned to document the carnival because, like the grotesque, it is a paradox in action as the picture is “both concrete and abstract, both a specific individual thing and symbolic form that embraces a totality” (Mitchell xvii). It is a singular moment that captures a fragment of a second, and within that photograph, time both stops and speeds up. In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes states that “death is the eidos of that photograph” (15). Each photograph, for Barthes, is death, resurrection, and everything in between. A photograph has no true meaning because its punctum differs from person to person. “We need to,” acknowledges WJT Mitchell, “reckon with not just the meaning of images but their reticent, their wildness and nonsensical obduracy” (10).

Mitchell points out that “people are afraid of images,” images make us anxious “because we cannot come to grips with the idea that “images are not words” and “are dense iconic (usually) visual symbols that convey nondiscursive, nonverbal information that is often quite ambiguous with regard to any statement” (140-141). The meaning of a photograph is often as clear as the meaning of a sentence (written or spoken) constructed by Victor Vitanza. There is meaning, but it is caked in mud, and often each person will come up with a slightly different interpretation: “photographs are things we look at, and yet, as Barthes also insists, ‘a photograph is always invisible: it is not what we see’” (Mitchell 274). Clear as mud. And within our individual selves, we will also have different interpretations: “I am divided, and at times my modes of seeing are so distinct from one another that they could belong to different people” (Elkins 41).

When uninvited, the punctum reverses itself onto the subject. Elkins notes that looking has the potential for violence, that “every photograph is a little sting…every glance hurts in some way by freezing and condensing what’s seen into something that it is not” (29). It is an urge to possess and create the subject – to turn them into something that the viewer is able to comprehend on sight: “there is no such thing as just looking” (31).

Yet, perhaps, we find ourselves in an ideal situation, a way in which we might take the violence and rebirth inherent in traditional photography and make it work to our advantage in digital realms.

Pics or It Didn’t Happen: Digital Photography, Memory, and What Is Real

With the adoption of digital photography, we no longer have to worry about the number of pictures we have left on a roll of film: “in this way, photography becomes more alive, immediate, and often transitory practice/form” (Murray 166). In other words, no longer do I have to rush to a one-hour photo lab to see how my pictures turned out when I am too impatient to wait. In other words, I could be taking pictures of anything and everything. The near-universal shift to the digital has created a “shift in our temporal relationship with the everyday image and [it] has altered the way that we construct narratives about ourselves and the world around us” (Murray 166). Just look at the rise of sites like Flickr, Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat. The rise of the so-called selfie culture and the ubiquitous “pics or it didn’t happen.” According to Susan Murray, “a user’s Flickr page works as autobiography or diary by layering an ever-changing or growing stream of photos on the page (174). Whereas prior to this digital revolution, we had only family photo albums to capture big events and family vacations, now we have the means to document everything from our breakfast to that day’s on-point makeup to concerts and sporting events. Each one of us carries with us a camera every day. Each of us allows friends, family, and strangers alike to gaze, gawk, look, and stare at our lives: “images, therefore, do not have to be so precious as it is possible to affordably and reasonably incorporate the taking of photos in your everyday life” (Murray 175-176).

In discussing war photography, Susan Sontag says that “something becomes real – to those who are elsewhere, following it as ‘news’ – by being photographed” (21). During my first year of the PhD program, I often wrote about girls who photographed and discussed their self-harm on social media; these weren't girls looking to glamorize self-harm; they were documenting, educating, and processing. People were up in arms, screaming for these sites to ban users who posted about self-harm. When I was the Vice President of the Students for Suicide Awareness group at the University of West Florida, I sat on the phone for half an hour waiting for someone to tell me why the personalize your M&Ms site wouldn't let me create "stop suicide" M&Ms for our yearly arts and music fundraiser event.

The image made it real.

The image scared them.

But, at the end of the day, we are just going to develop new tags and use acronyms to do the same work. What has really been accomplished by putting bans on the subjects we should be talking about most? I argue that even those posts that do supposedly glamorize issues like self-harm and suicide can teach us much if we let them: "the photograph is like a quotation, or a maxim or proverb. Each of us mentally stocks hundreds of photographs, subject to instant recall" (Sontag 22). Each photograph has something to teach us. Even if, ultimately, "the photograph's intentions do not determine the meaning of the photograph" (Sontag 39). Or maybe that should be 'even if.'

We want to see pictures of bodies in pain, and that scares us into creating prohibitions against them. "A photograph is supposed not to evoke but to show," according to popular opinion (Sontag 47). Yet, I fainted when my chiropractor showed me an x-ray of my back when I was in three days a week treatment after being hit by a drunk driver. Elkins tells us that even low-quality pictures of pain are difficult to view and that “pictures of the body elicit thoughts about the body, and they can also provoke physical reactions in my body” (138).

But we need these pictures even still, just as I need to look at my x-rays and come to terms with how my life has changed. And I can hear you now screaming that x-rays and photographs aren’t the same things. But consider this; you are wrong. X-rays are images that serve a diagnostic function, but they are just photographs that document pain and trauma at the end of the day.

From a Lacanian point of view, trauma cannot be comprehended – it is “a quasi-mystic entity that resists definition or description and cannot be grasped” (Werner 40). And perhaps it can’t if we insist on using traditional methods; of using realism.

And we return to the chaos narrative because “while narrative memories would commonly have a beginning and an end, the authors consider traumatic memories to be non-declarative and timeless” (Werner 47). Making photography the perfect medium through which to explore it.

Gone is the image of the happy-go-lucky-disabled person. Pain and loss are things that shouldn’t be divorced from disabled experience; disability is trauma, disability is often pain, disability is often loss. But if ever our stories are about catharsis, they aren’t for an abled audience to achieve catharsis.

Ultimately, the problem with trauma narratives is an issue of “a distortion of memory” (Werner 107). Memory itself is imperfect and incomplete, the glitching of a family photo simply brings this brokenness to light and forces the viewer to contend with it. Gerhard Richter did exactly this manually with his painting *Familie nach Altem*

Meister (*Family after Old Master*) where in the family is blurred, overexposed, and just generally obfuscated. While postwar photography and film sought to "challenge the viewer's relationship to the medium" by doing things such as Warhol's habit of leaving the viewfinder of a camera somewhat open allowing light to leak into some of the unprocessed film which created chaotic and uncontrolled glitches (Kane 57). Kane states that "by introducing randomness and chance, they seem to relinquish personal touch and put the onus of the work on the viewer and the context of viewing" (59). Fill in the blanks and white spaces for yourself; invent your own meaning. There is no one way to read a glitch, nor should there be. Therefore, there is no way to use the reading of one glitch as a roadmap by which you might read others and in fact it "shouldn't make sense to most of us" (Kane 65). Taking it a step further, artist Thomas Ruff goes so far as to say that "visually unclear shapes and objects speak a language of uncertainty that is in fact more accurate and 'honest'" (Kane 98). Glitches are accurate, honest, and completely incomprehensible to a general audience.

Writing cannot capture trauma narratives, but Werner reminds us that "it is not only language that can tell a narrative: objects, sounds and images, embedded in both documentary and fictional aesthetic practices, may also serve as approaches to traumatic narratives" (Werner 102). Anna-Lena Werner quotes Omar Fast, writer and director of *5,000 Feet is the Best,* as saying that "since both subjects appear to be stuck in a crisis, the narrative structure I chose deliberately mirrors their state of mind" (111).

Yet "by continuously blending and replacing … image fragments," we can tell stories of trauma (Werner113). When it comes to trauma narratives, Werner says that audiences work to “utilize open ended, infinite or looping narratives as strategies of confusion” (145). Stories of trauma don’t need to follow traditional narrative structures. Where words fail, we rely on images. Werner reminds us that “memory, like matter, is plastic, continuously morphing, and affecting by violence” (178). The fact is that “memories of violence are rarely straightforward records of internalized representations” (Werner 178).

Fragments and fragmentations are necessary when confronted by trauma. Glitches are “fragments of sensory chaos” (Kane 48).

Michael Shapiro compares the fragmented nature of trauma narratives to the Talmud: “just like the pages of the Talmud where the margins are often as important as what is being commented on in the center of the text” (7). Recall from the last chapter that white space is a space of infinite possibility – time slows down, speeds up, creates, and kills. And sometimes, what isn’t said is more important than what is.

In *Punc.tu.a.tion.s*, Shapiro looks at the work of Santu Mofokeng, a photographer from South Africa. He notes that Mofokeng “achieves his political effect by rendering things difficult to apprehend” because the ideal audience for Mofokeng isn’t global but instead very local: the township dwellers he photographs are his audience. Indeed, “in constructing scenes that are blurry and occasionally shrouded in smoke or mist, Mofokeng deliberately sought to ‘occlude rather than expose’ the black South African life world because for him the violence of apartheid existed not in what immediately meets the eye” (Shapiro 118). Mofokeng’s photographs “did not seek to demystify the townships” but then why should they (qtd in Shapiro 142)? If Mofokeng’s ideal audience is the residents of the townships, they do not need their homes translated and explained to them.

Mofokeng’s work evokes but doesn’t tell a story about apartheid. In a commentary on Mofokeng’s work Teju Cole admits that “when I first encountered [Mofokeng’s photographs] … I didn’t understand them. Something about them seemed unfinished, imprecise or wrong,” and they probably did because Cole was not a member of Mofokeng’s ideal audience (qtd in Shapiro 143). Cole was looking for a simple, straightforward set of pictures of “the infrastructure of South Africa and the lived experience of people under Apartheid” (qtd in Shapiro 143). Other photographers took simple photographs in which “emotion [was] kept to a minimum,” whereas, in Mofokeng’s work, emotion trumped traditional techniques and composition (qtd in Shapiro 143). In Shapiro’s terms, “Mofokeng’s punctums, the ambiguities and obscurities that disrupt the viewer’s usual receptive expectations (making it unclear what ‘meets the eye’)” is what made them worth further contemplation by those who just didn’t “get it” (143).

Faulty Technology: The Cyborg and Its Uses as Glitch Detector

In *The Riddling between Oedipus and the Sphinx*, Yuan Yuan says that “Haraway’s theory for cyborgs, more or less, renews, continues, and expands the discussion of the grotesque in the spirit of Bakhtin’s carnival and in terms of hybridity” (219). The cyborg figure remixes the Sphinx's figure and “starts another riddling game between identity and difference” (Yuan 220).

No knowledge and no bodies are ever innocent. Because of this, in *Feminist, Queer, Crip,* Alison Kafer posits that “a close crip reading of the cyborg is long overdue” (105). I agree.

Kafer argues that, rather than completely dismiss the figure of the cyborg “because of its ableist rhetoric and manifestations,” we should instead “struggle with” the cyborg and use it for our own political gains (106). She points out that the lived reality of the cyborg is radically different from the cyborg of popular fiction. For one, the practicality of cyborg technology is far from actually practical: “In a context in which most disabled people in the United States are un- or underemployed, and in which almost a third of disabled people live below the poverty line, many of these cyborg technologies remain out of reach of the people for whom they are imagined” (Kafer 107). And even when the issue of cost is set aside there is the fact that “adaptive technologies can be painful” (Kafer 107). Becoming a cyborg is no easy thing.

Yet, within Donna Haraway’s “A Cyborg Manifesto,” disabled people are not given space and have been “removed from the realm of the political, and presumed to play no active role in the category breakdowns that animate both the cyborg and the manifesto” (Kafer 115). The painful, expensive process of becoming a cyborg is something that is done to the disabled within the context of Haraway’s manifesto. There is no agency, no choice, just the curative impulse to fix and make normal. Kafer notes that “a cripped cyborg theory would then warn against easy celebrations of the technological fix; it would require a more complex and ambivalent relationship with technology” (119). A cripped cyborg theory is c/ripping cyborg manifestations; in other words, this means squinting at technologies and poking them with sticks even as we adopt them. We can see this in the ways that technologies like Prozac – and other medications – are “not clearly oppressive or liberatory. It is a contradictory mixture of both – sometimes one more than another, but always both” (qtd in Kafer 124). Haraway’s cyborg has a body that can be read as a map of power; a cripped cyborg theory means actually paying attention to the “ironic, doubled, contradictory responses” that come from reading the cyborg body (Kafer 125).

Kafer maintains that we need to reckon with and acknowledge the cyborg's history. She argues that the use of the cyborg by disabled folks is political. Yet, even as she says that cripping the cyborg “means recognizing that our bodies are not separate from our political practices; neither assistive technologies nor our uses of them are ahistorical or apolitical,” she seems to be hedging on the subject of a cyborg identity (120). For Kafer, “pushing the cyborg into an anti-ableist politics means refusing its reduction to the disabled body, refusing to use the figure to shore up binaries of normate/other or abled/disabled” (126). I don’t like this.

The cyborg isn’t an idealized identity. The process of becoming a cyborg is painful, expensive, and dehumanizing.

The cyborg draws attention to the glitch. Glitches are short-lived errors in technology: “with each glitched occasion, an in-between ceased to be a transparent mediation and revealed its conventions – even through their momentary absence – as something that manipulates and something that can be manipulated” (Boyle 94). The disruptive nature of the glitch exposes the boundaries of an object but still “does not reveal the true functionality of the computer, it shows the ghostly conventionality of the forms by which digital spaces are organized" (qtd in Boyle 94). And if the glitches will not occur naturally, we can cause them. And when we do so "glitches – as productive error – disrupt the seamlessness and intuitiveness of our electronic environments" (Boyle 117).

Yet even when we are creating glitches "it is difficult if not impossible to know what exactly is being manipulated and for what purpose… glitch occurs through interpretation and is made when a file is converted from one application to another" (Boyle 118).

What the Glitch?!: The Usefulness of Broken Things/Breaking Things

In *Glitch Feminism*, Legacy Russell asserts that "within technoculture, a glitch is part of machinic anxiety, an indicator of something having gone wrong. This built-in technological anxiety of something gone wrong spills over naturally when we encounter glitches in AFK [Away From Keyboard] scenarios" (7). In her manifesto, Russell advocates for glitching as a way of making "abstract again that which has been forced into an uncomfortable and ill-defined material: the body" (8). The glitch, from a glitch feminist perspective, is glitch-as-*productive*-error; something we can use as a tool to "inform the way we see the AFK world, shaping how we might participate in it towards greater agency for and by ourselves" (Russell 8-9). Glitch feminism is about embracing the glitch as a positive. From this point of view, it provides ways to productively transgress and explore; it becomes a way of "claiming our right to complexity, to range, within and beyond the proverbial margins" (Russell 22). It is active and flowing within the marginalia. Indeed, Sean Cubitt calls the glitch “a small revenge, a tactical revolt of the material against its organization, of materiality against intent” (20). In this way the glitch creates a liminal event, “thresholds between internal and external” (Cubitt 22). And, even better, because glitches are errors, ultimately, technique counts for very little when assessing a glitched image.

The glitch shows us limitations; they “disallow any purity of repetition” (Cutbitt 25). They are accidents and evidence of the productive error. Glitches rely on “chance operations” (Zinman 100).

Bodies glitch in physical realms; exploring glitches within the digital realm allows us to make the margins visible. This is necessary because they are difficult to name until they show themselves, but they always exist waiting for “an accident triggering some form of chaos” (Zinman 73). They cannot be predicted and require giving in and embracing the chaos they cause.

Working within a glitch feminism framework allows us to embrace J Halberstam’s queer art of failure in a way disability wouldn’t otherwise let us. But, at the end of the day, glitches remain “illegible to the mainstream, the encrypted glitch seizes upon the creation of a self that, depending on the audience, can at once be hypervisible and simultaneously unreadable, undetectable” (Russell 85). We work within the glitch to create a visible depiction of error, yet this image is not meant to be understood by abled audiences. We encourage staring, but we refuse translation.

Glitching makes a thing difficult to read but not impossible if you have the proper codex. There is still a language and grammar of the glitch, and “the computer needs to malfunction properly in order to produce the abstracted image” (Zinman 108).

Forcing the Glitch: Digital Instability and Its Usefulness

The digital image is ideal for forcing glitches. Already, even before starting to glitch a file, the JPEG is a “lossy” document. By that I mean that that the JPEG itself uses a lossy method of compression, or “its compression logic enforces the removal of ‘redundant’ information, based on the sensitivity of a so-called standard human observer” (Kane 102). This is great in the sense that it doesn’t take nearly as much time to download a JPEG as it might other lossless images, it is fantastic in the sense that the “compression sequences is bare bones, it is much easier to tweak and degrade its rendering algorithms to produce visual ‘noise’” (Kane 103). But slightly differently, Daniel Palmer notes that “the JPEG format was designed to exploit the human eye’s differing sensitivity to chrominance and luminance, and specifically to discard information that the eye cannot easily see” (153). In other words, the JPEG image begins its existence as something that has invisible missing pieces that contribute to an altered picture. In fact, Jurgenson notes that “lower quality images sometimes tell better stories” as “the high-resolution photo invites a focus on the specific visual information in the image: what is being depicted and how” (19). And let's take a step back from the JPEG. We have to acknowledge that the photograph itself is hardly a stable thing because, according to Jurgenson, “photography is a technology of instability” (7). What’s more, the social photo/photography are “more fluid” because “their objecthood grows less and less relevant, existing primarily as information and flow” (Jurgenson 22).

Jurgenson argues that social photography “is a cyborg practice” (43). Photography is typically viewed as a thoroughly transparent medium. Unlike painting or sculpture, there is little that is subjective about a photograph. A photograph captures the reality of a specific moment in time. They can be, and often are, staged but they are still considered to be more authentic, more true, than other forms of art. Yet, the JPEG image with its “lossy” compression means that is can be manipulated. There are gaps and spaces “for a pause and reflection” (Kane 103). When those gaps and spaces are poked and prodded at “beauty returns as the unresolved truth of seeing and being seen” (Kane 103). But what of it? Are these glitched images meant to depict a truth? Or are they meant to make us question reality? Kane closes the fourth chapter of *High-Tech Trash* by asserting that “the more data we produce, the less meaning we find,” a fact which she seems vaguely horrified or at least saddened by (104). But in letting go of the idea of a universal truth – of a truly transparent medium – we open the door to allow the glitch to be used to c/rip.

In the first chapter of *Error: Glitch, Noise, and Jam in New Media Cultures* entitled “Revealing Errors,” Benjamin Mako Hill states that “technologies do not always work smoothly. A tiny fracture or a smudge on a lens renders glasses quite visible to the wearer” (Nunes 27). Yet, if we are going to use glasses as a method of understanding the visibility of errors, more often than not my mom has to be the one to point out smudges on my glasses to me – never mind how crazy I would make my high school winter guard captain the season we wore silvery eyeshadow, and she was forever seeing it on my contact lenses. So then, yes, fractures are always visible to both the glasses wearer and the rest of the world, but I'm unsure about "a smudge." Sometimes, yes, if a smudge is bad enough it is evident to all – but not always. Yes, "errors are an underexploited opportunity" but, at the same time, it is important to understand that errors are not universal (Nunes 30). I need to expand and explain that a bit more: the smudges on my glasses and the eyeshadow on my contacts were undoubtedly errors, but – and this is the important part – they aren't ones that I noticed until they were pointed out to me. Until I took off my glasses or took out my contacts, I was blissfully unaware. At that point I saw and acknowledged that there was something amiss, but until then, from my perspective everything was normal. Hill goes on to state that "each error is a stark reminder of the power that technology gives the designers of technical systems to force their own values on users and to frame – and perhaps to substantively change – the messages that their technologies communicate" (Nunes 34). Do I have to say it – put it in black and white – or do you see the point I am trying to make?

Just in case, I'll say it: from the point of view of the disabled smudges and stray makeup is part of the norm, but what they do (when they are pointed out) is make obvious that – to others – there is something very wrong. Visibility isn't always both ways, and when it isn't – when it has to be pointed out – it makes it clear that something is in need of correction for the sake of others. The smudges on my glasses make my mom ache to clean them (or force me to) and the eyeshadow freaked my captain out each week without fail. Yet, unlike a fracture or tear, neither impeded my ability to see – to function.

Likewise, executive disfunction is an error that I recognize on my own (a fracture) but hyperfixation is more akin to a smudge or stray makeup: all pointing it out does is to tell me that others would prefer that I curb or correct this behavior.

“The art of the machine,” Tim Barker points out in the second chapter of *Error* (“Aesthetics of the Error: Media Art, the Machine, the Unforeseen, and the Errant”), “here is an art in which the machine, after being built by human hands, is itself creative” (Nunes 42). To put in perspective for our conversation the human body “is itself creative.” This means, it exists – from the point of is creation on – in a state of error in both the classical sense and the Foucauldian. “The information we receive,” the ways in which we point out errors to others, or confirm the normalcy of others, “is largely reconstituted by the system it travels through” (Nunes 49). Remember the surveillance of the self and others that I have pointed out previously? The comic used in *Black Dogs, Blue Words* that depicted a woman googling something and a man asking her about her self-diagnosis? Removed from its typical system information will be read differently. Information/data that opens perfectly in a media player will glitch out when opened in Photoshop. Yet, we might keep trying to force Photoshop to open the file because that is the program that the world has told us ought to be used. And, at all times but especially now, the an error sits “waiting to be actualized by an errant system” – at any time one might become disabled (Nunes 51). Indeed, “there is always the potential that we will activate an error” (Nunes 52). There is no true translation of disability/error, simply readings that may resemble one another superficially.

It all, ultimately, comes down to the issue of communication: “to communicate, then is to perpetually negotiate semantic ambiguity, not to overcome it, constrain it, or push it aside” (Nunes 99). We get so frustrated though when confronted with the sheer idea of ambiguity. More often than not, if a black and white answer is not given half of us would pack our bags and go home. We would rage quit and declare the thing/person/situation stupid and not worth our time. But we can play with ambiguity. It’s hard to play with facts. There is and remains however (despite our frustrations and best efforts), “a degree of instability (iterability, entropy) in all acts of communication” and this tends to create its own natural glitches in understanding (Nunes 99). Glitching a JPEG just makes it visible. If we follow Derrida’s lead and view communication not “as a linear, closed loop system of transmission, but as a perpetual, open-ended system of meaning making” then it is inevitable that error (both in the classical an contemporary senses) will occur (Nunes 99). In fact, “cultures of noise [glitch] reveal how certain asignifying poetics might be productive and generative for certain communication goals” (Nunes 99). When we cease to view information as something that is or isn’t we allow for the creation of c/rips – of things that perhaps have an audience of one – without getting worked up over understanding. Cultures of noise, cultures of glitches, “not only embrace semantic ambiguity; they rely upon ambiguity for their success” (Nunes 102). We need these errors, these glitches, to occur.

CHAPTER FIVE

FRAGMENTS AND GLITCHES AND A GROTESQUE CRIPISTEMOLOGY

Abstract: *Beginning as we did in the first chapter, the final chapter revisits and expands upon the current rhetorics of mental disability. From there begins an attempt to tie the rest of the chapters together by arguing that the methods used to write the self through zines and glitches begin to form the basis for a grotesque cripistemology: one that can be used to c/rip stories of mental disability and broaden the available narratives. Narratives that are constructed for ourselves.*

I feel like this dissertation has come full circle. I wrote the first chapter in Clemson detailing my unhealthy hockey related coping mechanisms and now, one neurotic grad student, two Stanley Cups, three trips to the Stanley Cup Finals, and four chapters later, I am writing this final chapter from Thunder Alley outside Amalie Arena, waiting to enter the game. I showed up. as I always did for Clemson games, hours early with the intention of working as I waited, soaking in the atmosphere and just being still for a minute – finding a Zen – just as I did sitting outside Death Valley waiting for the gates to open. Tampa is playing Boston, and, given that Boston is one of our biggest rivals, the atmosphere is anything but calm. There’s generally an average of a dozen penalties and at least two game misconducts every time we play Boston.

It’s paradoxical.

It’s wonderful.

My face is freezing, and my hair is a mess from the wind coming off the Hillsborough River. It's my birthday and I don't care about the cold. I'm sitting in front of the Cigar City Taproom without a care in the world. Instead, I am typing this and screaming the lyrics to "Thunder Struck" with a pack of University of South Florida frat bros.

Perhaps it is still an unhealthy coping mechanism. Or perhaps it never was. Perhaps it simply is. A fact of my life – part of what makes me me just as surely as my blue eyes and glitchy body.

Maybe it isn't a circle. I've always been rubbish at math.

Rewind: Re-hashing the Rhetoric

In a chapter of *Embodied Rhetorics: Disability in Language and Culture* entitled "On the Rhetorics of Mental Disability," Catherine Prendergast asserts that "to be disabled mentally is to be disabled rhetorically" (57). Taking up this claim, Margaret Price, in her book *Mad at School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life,* states that "to lack rhetoricity is to lack all basic freedoms and rights. Including the freedom to express ourselves and the right to be listened to" (26-27). It is all well and good, according to Price, to do the kind of activism that most disability studies scholars engage in on a daily basis, but "at the level of rhetoricity the system breaks down" (27). Furthering Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson's assertion that the subjectivity of the mentally disabled has been "brought to crisis" as those without mental disabilities began co-authoring the communication of the mentally disabled: where once the mentally disabled had limited language, they started being forced toward “communicating complexly using collaborative practices such as facilitated communication” (qtd in Price, *Mad at School* 27). According to Prendergast, Price, and Lewiecki-Wilson then, there is a fundamental disconnect between the mentally disabled subject and rhetoric. While it is undoubtedly true that a level of stigma plays into the fact that the mentally disabled are overlooked, there is also the lack of ability to tell one’s own story in a way that makes it accessible/acceptable to an abled reader.

Ultimately, mental disability itself is entirely rhetorical. In chapter one, I noted the less than scientific construction of the DSM. Kimberly Emmons states that depression, and by extension all mental disabilities, “is particularly vulnerable to the means of its own articulation” (1). Emmons illustrates her point by providing a brief analysis of a cartoon from the New Yorker. A woman sits at a computer reading something off the screen in the cartoon while a man walks by behind her. This man does not even glance at the woman or her screen; nevertheless, he asks her, “how’s the self-diagnosis coming?” as an example of the trend toward self-doctoring and “the migration of medical authority from doctor’s office to individual, computer-mediated reflection,” this cartoon is both amusing and poignant (Emmons 2).

Since the advent of Prozac in the late 1980s – and the 1997 law changes that allowed for its advertisement – there has been a drastic uptick in the amount of information about mental disabilities in the news, our popular media, and online. While not all of this information is helpful at getting the layperson to understand mental disabilities or chip away at the stigma those who have been diagnosed with a mental disability suffer from, this glut of information has caused a new trend of self-doctoring. Emmons calls depression and the like a “research project as well as, or perhaps more than, medical conditions” (3).

These new antidepressant advertisements turned mental disabilities from something whispered about in dark corners to something discussed openly. Suddenly depression was everywhere: in our radio and television ads and in our popular culture.

Once the floodgates opened and mental disability wasn’t quite as taboo a subject as it once was, our rhetorics began to shift. We no longer have to hunt for mental disability in the margins of our stories with only the occasional direct engagement of what it means to be mentally disabled shared openly. All of a sudden, you and everyone you knew could potentially be depressed. Constant vigilance became the order of the day. And because we had little reason to, most did not acknowledge this shift. After all, it had to be a good thing that people were starting to learn more about this scourge to public health. And in many ways, it was. People struggling with mental disabilities that had once gone ignored now had a vocabulary with which to describe their disorders and to seek help. Yet, we started building new rhetorics of mental disability without going back and examining old ones. We fell victim to the very thing that the use of the queer art of failure as a methodology would have warned us about: we replaced one history for another instead of supplementing the old with the new. We became pros at self-diagnosis and self-care.

Add to this the highly gendered nature of our understanding of mental disability; further, in *Black Dogs and Blue Words*, Emmons looks at the various ways that two different types of antidepressants – selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors or SSRIs (e.g., Prozac, Paxil, and Zoloft) and serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors or SNRIs (e.g., my new friend Cymbalta and my old friend Effexor) – are advertised. These advertisements, according to Emmons, "encourage readers to understand themselves as potentially ill and in need of intervention to perform socially" (37). She calls upon the wealth of advertisements for SSRIs and SNRIs – a majority of which feature a woman who is failing at her duties as a mother and wife – to illustrate the gendered language by which we discuss mental disabilities: "reading the self through direct-to-consumer advertisements such as those for Paxil and PaxilCR reinforces conventional notions of gender: restlessness and agitation become depression in a wife and mother; worry and irritability become chronic anxiety in an unattached woman" (Emmons 53). This exploration of the gendered rhetorics of SSRI and SNRI medication advertisements and their effect on our understanding of mental disabilities continues in Emmons' analysis of a 2005 print ad for Zoloft and a 2005 National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) pamphlet entitled Stories of Depression: Does this Sound Like You? Emmons continues to back her claim that the language we use to discuss mental disabilities is inherently gendered. In the Zoloft ad, we are introduced to a creature named Kathy who asks her doctor about Zoloft. As Emmons notes, the scenes depicted only offer "traditional gender roles and responsibilities. The discourse of depression both reflects and shapes larger cultural discourses about gender" (122). In the typical SSRI/SNRI ad, we are confronted with a familiar trope: that of the unhappy housewife. This discourse creates the idea of depression as a ‘woman’s illness’ and locks men out of the standard discourse surrounding mental disabilities.

And in the NIMH pamphlet mentioned above, the reader is given two stories: those of Brenda and Rob. While Brenda and Rob have both been diagnosed with depression, their experiences with depression are quite different. Brenda describes her symptoms as taking away from her ability to care for her kids and do well at her job; meanwhile, Rob states that he was often sad. He responded to this sadness by becoming overly aggressive and argumentative. For Brenda, depression was expressed as a lack of interest to do anything other than stay in bed all day, and she was motivated to get help after hearing a friend talk about her own struggles with depression. Rob’s depression also expressed a lack of desire to get out of bed, but what prompted him to seek treatment was his being fired from his job. Both Brenda and Rob entered talk therapy to learn how to deal with their depression. Still, while Rob claimed that seeking treatment allowed him to feel like himself again, Brenda noted that the result of her therapy was an ability to “enjoy life and my children” (qtd in Emmons 133). We see these tropes reinscribed again and again in memoirs of mental disabilities. Men’s depression is expressed as anger, and they are driven to seek treatment for their own life enjoyment. In contrast, women’s depression more closely resembles the old tropes of melancholia. They are pressured into seeking treatment for the sake of family and their ability to be a good wife and mother.

When antidepressants were allowed to be advertised, we watched sad white ladies become better wives and mothers after taking the medication du jour. We read about sad white ladies like them in the memoir boom of the 1990s and 2000s. And the more we did so, the more we were urged to ask our doctors is such and such was right for us.

Our norms shifted while we weren't looking following the proliferation of Prozac by and for the general public. Because of this widespread availability, the old norms began to be medicalized. What was once considered normal behavior at the loss of a loved one, a job, or a pet, was now no longer just sadness but depression. In this way, the language of mental disability began to implicate both the abled and disabled. And, while to an extent, this has always been true of disability (Rosemary Garland-Thomson, among others, has noted that if we live long enough, most of us will eventually become disabled), the largely invisible nature of mental disability makes it an incredibly slippery villain that must be vanquished as quickly as possible.

In *Prozac Nation*, Elizabeth Wurtzel brings our attention to the fact that, according to most research, only one-third of those with severe depression receive any form of treatment. Still, all have gotten lost in the new rhetoric. In many ways, Wurtzel's first book brings attention to a sort of trivialization surrounding mental disability in the age of psychopharmacology. When everyone is on Prozac, we tend to think of things like mental disability as being normalized. The flipside becomes the setting in stone of the new rhetorics that have been developed.

In the early days of Prozac, Peter Kramer, the author of Listening to Prozac, questioned the uses and limits of what he called cosmetic psychopharmacology. Kramer and others wondered to what extent and effectiveness drugs like Prozac allow those with depression to tweak and adjust certain undesirable parts of their personalities. To Kramer, this would be a godsend as it would give individuals complete control over themselves. Yet, that isn’t quite what happened. Rather than allowing those prescribed cosmetic psychopharmaceuticals full control with which they might construct their ideal selves, the drugs simply seemed to steer the mentally disabled back towards the baselines established by society. This self, the one manufactured by the use of these cosmetic psychopharmaceuticals and our norms, is more assertive and optimistic about life. To be anything less would be a personal failure rather than a medical glitch. After all, we are all responsible for our own self-government. The inability to be happy is an egregious sin in a country that founded itself on the idea of the pursuit of happiness being available to all. As a girl, my mom would send me off to school each morning with the directive to “make it a good day.” It used to infuriate me. I could no more make it a good day through sheer willpower than I could will the sky to be green and the grass blue. Yet, this cultural fiction that we must all be happy all of the time exists within both the abled and disabled.

Self-writing, as described by Foucault, allows for detailed self-government as the subject is encouraged to look back over their own writing in minute detail and observe the ways in which they might self-correct and better perform in the future. However, it also provides the opportunity to cast aside all expectations and develop new discourses.

Studies have shown that a lack of mental disability literacy can have devastating effects on the subject’s stigma – the lack of consistent mental disability rhetorics work to reinforce certain stigmas. These continued stigmas create a feedback loop wherein those who are mentally disabled might wish to see the stigma lessened – if not eradicated altogether – but are all too aware of the risk that exposure creates. This has helped establish specific modes of storytelling we are willing to abide by. We see this within many published memoirs of mental disability. Still, it has become all too obvious in the way we are quick to label discourse surrounding mental disability that takes place outside of this feedback loop. It doesn't take much for a post on social media, a book, or a television show or film, to be labeled as romanticizing mental disability. A quick Google search of "romanticizing mental illness" brings up page after page of links to articles, Reddit posts, and YouTube videos that condemn those who are supposedly romanticizing mental disability. And while I know that there are certainly some who do have a rather romantic notion of mental disability, these texts have created an echo chamber in which they can mark those who do not adhere to the established rhetorics of mental disability as deviant.

Yet, I have to ask, who is making these initial judgements? I can freely admit to having a fascination with beautifully tragic Byronesque characters (a consequence of reading Anne Rice in middle school), the self-destructiveness of Nancy Spungen and Sid Vicious, and just about all things gothic. I have an overt love for the grotesque and macabre. And it is entirely possible that if my LiveJournal posts were not hidden with a friends-locked account that even I can no longer access, someone might think that some of my posts contained elements of romanticizing. However, that was never my intention. And that seems to be the sticking point for me: it seems a rare thing for anyone writing about the scourge that is the ways we perform mental disability online and in zines to actually ask those who make posts and publish zines that could be read as romanticizing about their intentionality. Did they actually intend for their texts to be romanticizing mental disability? Or were they creating a modern Foucauldian hupomnemata from which they worked to piece together fragments of themselves to construct a whole?

Most mainstream disability narratives end up having to address the idea of failure – something that Halberstam champions as a queer mode, but ultimately one that hurts. Disability narratives cannot embrace failure when disability is already viewed as being a failure, no matter how much the idea appeals. Failure evokes a – as Kafer would say – curative time. Curative time has the abled asking how long you have been disabled and when you will be 'better.' Curative time cannot imagine a disabled future. The way around this is to embrace a crip time. To allow time to be unmoored and slippery. Crip time creates space and futurity. That is a terrifying idea to those stuck in curative time. But – at the end of the day – it comes down to a matter of perspective. Stories of disability told from the point of view of the abled family member, or those told by disabled folks that abled readers love, are those stories that frame disability as something to be heroically overcome. It must provide them with a feeling of catharsis, or the narrative has failed.

But our stories aren't about you, and they aren't for you. To continue writing narratives that do not embrace that idea is to harm the disabled reader. Because we are made, ultimately, of the things that exist outside of ourselves. The stories we hear, the things we read, and the images we see from the blacks we use to construct an 'I' that can be presented and performed. As time goes by, we switch out some blocks for others, and the self we built crashes down around us temporarily, but this is only natural; it is understood as a side effect of being alive. But the disabled subject is too often built by assumption and I-heard-from-somebody-who-heard-from-somebody. We are forced to work from the blank spaces and margins to c/rip our very existence.

We stare at one another and, from these stares, construct ourselves. We add and subtract, comparing ourselves to each person we happen across. We are sometimes told by local governments even to hide ourselves in attics and not be seen. But, if we force ourselves into the public eye, we stand a chance at making others rethink the norms we have grown accustomed to. A new arithmetic is needed to construct ourselves against the others we see on the street. Staring is volatile and holds within it the possibility for violence. If we invite the stare – if we co-opt the act of staring – we can negate that harm. To stare offers up the chance to embrace norms while creating the new. The stare operates in the gaps and unmoors the norm much in the same way crip time does. It creates room for possibility and futures.

Writing, figuratively, literally, whatever, "transforms the thing seen or heard 'into tissue and blood'" (Foucault, *Ethics* 213). Our embrace of social media has complicated all of this. Now we live lives that are more obviously fragmented. This means constantly reforming ourselves because we are "seeing" more and more people on a daily basis that we ever would have dreamed of in a pre-internet age. Our bodies have become archives of everything we have seen and experienced. We are collaged fragments glued together on a piece of poster board. But, no matter what, writing becomes a form of self-harm as it seeks to continue to name at the end of the day. The blood that constructs all that we are ends up splattered all over even as the practice forms our bodies "into tissue and blood."

The disabled subject possesses subjugated knowledges from which we can build cripistemologies. We can use mêtis's "cunning adaptive, embodied intelligence" to play shoots and ladders with rhetoric (Dolmage, "Metis, Mêtis, Mestiza, Medusa" 5). We can use mêtis's to evoke Medusa and c/rip our individual selves and diagnosis. Maybe we can even use Medusa to our advantage and freeze those who stare into place – to force them to look and recalculate.

Staring forces engagement with the curative time we are shoehorned into and asks the starer to reconsider entering a crip time zone. So, we offer ourselves over as stareable and attempt to use this to regain a sense of lost rhetoricity. And why shouldn't we stare and invite stares? In today's social media driven society we cannot avoid making ourselves stareable. We must offer ourselves up to the Foucauldian governmentality that rules our daily lives and creates our labels for us.

Pics or it didn't happen.

You haven't posted in so long I thought you were dead, lol.

As I noted in chapter two, through our bodies we are expected to perform these identities and tropes. And, perhaps by offering up our bodies for staring in this way, we can rewrite the old norms. We have no real concept of how we appear until we see others. Despite popular rumor, we haven't all become cyborgs, but we have become written by machines and aggregated by codes that decide what we should see based on what we post. As has been proven the last few years, it is possible to live almost exclusively in bubbles of the like-minded and like-bodied but human nature means that we cannot help to seek our others – those who are unlike us – or else we would have nothing to judge ourselves against. Nothing to get outraged over. Our social media habits have built ourselves in ways we would have never imagined possible in the past. And to run across the disabled body is to feel ill at ease with ourselves. Posting, writing, the disabled body is provocative in nature because the fact of its existence demands response. So it is largely through art that the disabled body is allowed to exist. Because what is art supposed to do but provoke response?

Embracing a disability aesthetic allows for the opening of the art world. It allows for the sign of the disabled body to become not at all unusual and opens up avenues for cripistemologies we might have never otherwise thought of exploring. Our selves are built from fragments, and yet it is impossible to break them down to individual parts. It is impossible to exist in a disabled body without putting yourself on display. Not anymore. And likely never again. It creates risk that we are forced to embrace unless we opt to divorce ourselves from society altogether because we must navigate the digital to exist as complete selves.

Embracing the Grotesque: Tying It Together

A grotesque cripistemology makes visible the paradox of being forced into a new world order that demands we make ourselves visible while being told that we shouldn’t draw too much attention to ourselves. The grotesque is a thing that dances along boundaries and manages to coexist in radically different world. Its mere existence opens itself to the concept of a cripistemology; it is just unfortunate that the negative image of the grotesque that haunts most minority rhetorics has largely kept disability studies scholars from properly embracing the grotesque.

But then, I read *Interview with the Vampire* at eleven. I spent my middle school and high school years learning how to navigate the internet in order to find the fanfictions hidden in dark corners away from the prying eyes of Anne Rice's lawyers. I never saw the 'grotesques' I devoured as anything other than utterly fascinating over the years. They opened windows to new worlds. They allowed for the contemplation of complex ideas in unique ways.

Cripistemologies demand that attention be paid to disabled bodies and not only that but that knowledges – individual knowledges built from experience – be constructed from these attentions. No single knowledge privileged over another.

The grotesque allows us to embrace the paradox that comes with transgression. A grotesque cripistemology exposes individual gaps and moments of transgression. An embrace of a grotesque cripistemology exposes that vanity of disabled writing. It prompts those narcissistic writers to speak for themselves and themselves alone while also being anxious about the work's reception or whether their work is important enough to justify its creation. A grotesque cripistemology allows for a cut and paste style of writing, one that throws its final product in your face despite its anxieties. Within the grotesque subject, we are able to make "alive some experience which we are not accustomed to observe every day, or which the ordinary man may never experience in his ordinary life," but even still, this character/subject retains an “inner coherence” a logic and rhetoric all its own (O’Connor 40).

In our modern society, in which the norm is reachable, and no longer godlike, the idea that a body is so sufficiently outside the norm that it might be godlike is terrifying. The death of god opens up possibilities as it creates space for the grotesque to become a method of creation. It affords us a place in a Bakhtinian carnival where we can revel in a ‘low class’ underground built by the grotesque. A place to explore the slippery nature of language and meaning within the tradition of the folk carnival, no invitation is necessary. No invitation is needed to use a grotesque cripistemology to c/rip a diagnosis.

We can use zines to write these c/rips. They work within the spaces and gaps. They are “messy, complex texts” that frustrate and rewrite meaning (Buchanan xxiii). It creates an opportunity to upend power dynamics and create realities. Zines are made of and become themselves, ephemeral garbage meant to be thrown away after consumption. But we cling to the things that we should throw away just in case we need them to serve as touchstones through which we might access our memories at some point in the future. We use zines as a way to write the body, as a way to create “tissue and blood.” They allow us a kind of playfulness as the trash we use to create zines – or the zines themselves – become something else, something we can learn from. These zines embrace the idea of what Frank calls a chaos narrative. Fragmented narratives in a world in which we are continuously asked to spill our guts within character limits; we only tell our lives in fragments anymore. And these fragments are all disposable and replaceable after they have had their use. We can use these fragments to wipe away lines within the space of a zine. In the end, the zine works much as social media does: zines become invitations to stare.

But, to return to disability aesthetics for a minute, to us, a disability aesthetic is to embrace fluidity – to tumble toward the grotesque, which is good for me and my case for glitchy disability aesthetic. When the visibly disabled body prompts so much disgust and ill-ease, why shouldn't we occasionally play with other methods of visualization? It is understandable that not everyone is going to be comfortable with a grotesque label. But Yuan Yuan makes a convincing case for the new grotesque figure being the cyborg. And cyborgs glitch.

Pictures posted on social media allow viewers to stare as long as they like but also refuse translation. Social media has become part of our source code. Yet, in the disabled who rely on tech and medication, this is nothing new. While others have had their able bodies informed by these new methods of being – if we took away social media, they would not be at risk.

Exposing these imperfections makes me buy into Yuan's statement that the new grotesque figure is that of the cyborg. The cyborg is transgressive. It shifts around and between borders. The cyborg glitches – and we can use these glitches to our advantage to make visible that which we have been told is invisible.

The glitch is unnatural. It stares back and forces contemplation.

A Bakhtinian carnival promotes a sense of "self-recreation and self-transcendence" (Yuan 184). The public square is a place in which boundaries can be explored, and the carnival is recreated. To stand still, to be frozen, is a detriment. It is only by constantly crossing lines that we can dance over the lines within the grotesque label. The technological changes made to the body make for an argument for the medicated and augmented body, but society created the digital ‘I’ that has become necessary to perform. In viewing the social media forums that are most popular – aka the ones owned by Facebook plus Twitter – we constantly exist within the space of the potentially carnivalesque.

Digital photography becomes less of an issue of photo albums and more of a constant urge to document our lives. Social media photography is taking the place of the confessional and the first generation of social media – your LiveJournals and MySpaces – that are more text than image. When you subtract the layout that was Frankenstein-ed together those early social media sites that were more diary and less fragmented media.

Already digital photography is a thing that is compressed – a thing that has lost so much before we even see it. We use social media as an autobiography. Photography becomes real when it depicts trauma and tragedy.

There are ways around blocks and censorships that keep images that the public don’t want to see at bay. Alternative hashtags get developed, and these glitches become a way for disability to be seen but don’t provide a translation.

And that seems to be what I have been leading to for the past four years.

Glitches are obvious.

Glitches stare at the apparatus and wonder what went wrong while the disabled subject pokes and prods at the glitch, wondering what can be made of it. Trauma narratives distort narrative – glitches are a visualization of that distortion.

Cyborgs don’t often break, but the glitch's constant potential hovers behind them. My meds don’t forestall the idea of manic episodes. It allows for the edification of abled minds who don’t comprehend the idea that medications don’t completely fix the problems at hand.

My brain glitches.

My meds glitch.

My bipolar meds don’t keep mania from happening.

My anxiety meds don’t keep stress hives from breaking out all over my arms and hands.

Both are just enough to soften and delay; it does not end the idea of the death of the disabled subject even though that is the ideal situation for those existing in a curative time. Medication is a fix on the same level of aides and prosthetics. Becoming a cyborg means enduring pain. The pain that comes with becoming a cyborg: both before and after.

Glitches become a way for others to see the disabilities that are usually invisible. They become a way of telling trauma narratives and of making the fragmented stories that come from trauma clearer.

Or, clear in the sense that things that look messed up anyway.

While glitch feminism suggests that a glitch is wanted and that “we strive for oozing, challenging bodies full of seams. We want wild, amorous, monstrous bodies” (Russell 112); I argue that it is not so much a desire to break things that exists within the cyborg; rather, it is merely a fact of life. The aides made have turned our already monstrous bodies into the realm of the post human.

As a revolutionary document, I love the glitch feminist manifesto Legacy Russell has given us. Unfortunately, it falls victim to the same overlooking of disability as *The Queer Art of Failure* and Donna Haraway’s cyborg. In her manifesto, Russell implores her reader to make use of the glitch. She reminds us that “we cannot wait around to be remembered, to be humanized, to be seen. It is our responsibility collectively in fact, and, as we prompt social seizure, to bear witness to and for one another” (116-117). When I first read that, I cheered. Yes, the glitch is a tool – it is disinformation weaponized and aimed at a general populous who would otherwise overlook the disabled body. It creates an individual ‘I’. This is why I am so upset that Russell neglects the disabled and the limitations of our engagement with the glitch. Russell presents the glitch as wholly voluntary, as something that is revolutionary in its choice. That is not so for the disabled cyborg. The idea of glitching is not voluntary, but we can weaponize the glitch by making it visible. By creating artificial glitches, we force a recalculation, even if only for a moment.

To make use of a Tumblr meme: when Russell said, “perhaps the only course of action is to remix from within, specifically programming with the unseen or illegible in mind as a form of activism” (141) and “we are encrypted: how we are coded is not meant to be easily read" (147) and "what glitch feminism is proposing instead is this: we will embody the ecstatic and catastrophic error. If this is a spatial battle, let us become anarchitecture" I felt that (Russell 152).

When we create the artificial glitch, we can never create the same effects, just as each bodily glitch is never exactly the same. We have no idea what we are creating when we glitch, just as we have no idea what we are doing when we present our fragmented selves in zines.

Control is an illusion.

We remix our lives and then leave the reading to others.

This dissertation did not end where it was meant to. Hell, it didn't begin as it was meant to. It went completely off the rails right along with everything else in the spring of 2020. When I sat down to write, this is what came out. And maybe when I said that the last four years had been leading up to me writing about glitches, it was more true than I realized. I've gone down a million different paths searching for a way to write about mental disability rhetorics, but they all seemed to keep looping around back to here: fragments and glitches and a grotesque cripistemology. And the "and some more."

This was written with completely selfish intent; I wanted to find justifications for the way I engaged with the internet in high school – spilling out all of my thoughts on my LiveJournal and the epic showdown that occurred when someone printed the whole thing and gave it to my mom. And maybe I wanted to find an answer, something I could use to go back and paper over my digital footprints and provide some meaning to some of the stupidest things that I posted. Don’t we all wish we could do that sometimes?

There is so much I wanted to do and so much that still could be done. But I am trying to resist the urge to find singular rational reasons for some of the fragments and glitches that occur. Making sweeping assumptions is both fun and makes me feel nauseous. Someone should go back and look at the things I poked at and see if it truly is as random and chaotic as it seems to me or if there is a grammar to each glitch – to each collage of fragments. No matter how it is done, writing makes the things that surround us “into tissue and blood.” Maybe figuring out the methods of writing – the genres we use – is enough for right now, and trying to nail down the grammar is an entirely different project.

REFERENCES

Ahmed, Sara. “The Contingency of Pain.” *Parallax*, vol. 8, no. 1, Jan. 2002, pp. 17–34. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, https://doi.org/10.1080/13534640110119597.

---. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Second edition, Routledge, 2015.

---. *What’s the Use?: On the Uses of Use*. Duke University Press, 2019.

Alison, Jane. *Meander, Spiral, Explode: Design and Pattern in Narrative*. Catapult, 2019.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Translated by Helene Iswolsky, Indiana University Press, 1984.

---. *The Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays*. Edited by Michael Holquist, Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, University of Texas Press, 1981.

Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Edited by Richard Howard, Hill and Wang, 2010.

“Bernice’s Sanity Hearing.” *Designing Women*, directed by David Trainer, 73, CBS, 13 Nov. 1989.

Bogdan, Robert. *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit*. University of Chicago Press, 1988.

Boyle, Casey. *Rhetoric as a Posthuman Practice*. Ohio State University Press, 2018.

Buchanan, Rebekah. *Writing a Riot: Riot Grrrl Zines and Feminist Rhetorics*. Peter Lang Inc., International Academic Publishers, 2018.

Butler, Judith. *Giving an Account of Oneself*. Fordham University Press, 2005.

---. *Senses of the Subject*. Fordham University Press, 2015.

Can Science Explain Why We Tell Stories? | The New Yorker. https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/can-science-explain-why-we-tell-stories. Accessed 17 Feb. 2021.

Chavez, Karma. "The Body: An Abstract and Actual Rhetorical Concept." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, vol. 48, no. 3, May 2018, pp. 242–50.

Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong. *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media*. Reprint, The MIT Press, 2017.

Cixous, Hélène. "The Laugh of the Medusa." *Signs*, translated by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, vol. 1, no. 4, Summer 1976, pp. 875–93.

---. *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*. Translated by Susan Sellers and Sarah Cornell, Columbia University Press, 1994.

Cubitt, Sean. "Glitch." *Cultural Politics*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2017, pp. 19–33.

Davis, Lennard J. "Introduction: Disability, Normality, and Power." *The Disability Studies Reader*, edited by Lennard J. Davis, 5th ed., Routledge, 2017, pp. 1–14.

de Villiers-Botha, Tanya, and Paul Cilliers. "THE COMPLEX 'I'. THE FORMATION OF IDENTITY IN COMPLEX SYSTEMS." *The Political Subject: Essays on the Self from Art, Politics and Science*, edited by Wendy Wheeler, Lawrence And Wishart Ltd, 2001.

Dolmage, Jay. *Disability Rhetoric*. First Edition, Syracuse University Press, 2014.

---. "Disabled upon Arrival: The Rhetorical Construction of Disability and Race at Ellis Island." *The Disability Studies Reader*, edited by Lennard J. Davis, 5th ed., Routledge, 2017, pp. 43–70.

---. "Metis, Mêtis, Mestiza, Medusa." *Rhetoric Review*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2009, pp. 1–28.

Elkins, James. *The Object Stares Back: On the Nature of Seeing*. HarperOne, 1997.

Emmons, Kimberly. *Black Dogs and Blue Words: Depression and Gender in the Age of Self-Care*. Rutgers University Press, 2014.

Fee, Dwight. “The Broken Dialogue: Mental Illness as Discourse and Experience.” *Pathology and the Postmodern: Mental Illness as Discourse and Experience*, edited by Dwight Fee, SAGE Publications, 1999, pp. 1–17.

Fivush, Robyn. “Storying the Self: A View on Autobiography from Developmental Psychology.” *A/b: Auto/Biography Studies*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2017, pp. 243–46.

Foucault, Michel, et al. *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth: Essential Works of Foucault: 1954-1984*. The New Press, 1997.

---. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. Vintage Books Ed., Nov. 1988, Random House, 1988.

Frank, Arthur. *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics*. University of Chicago Press, 2013.

Frazer, Elizabeth, and Kimberly Hutchings. “Avowing Violence: Foucault and Derrida on Politics, Discourse and Meaning.” *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, vol. 37, no. 1, Jan. 2011, https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453710384359.

Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie. *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*. Columbia University Press, 2017.

---. *Staring, How We Look*. Oxford University Press, 2009.

Guruianu, Andrei, and Natalia Andrievskikh. *The Afterlife of Discarded Objects: Memory and Forgetting in a Culture of Waste*. Parlor Press, 2019.

Halberstam, J. *The Queer Art of Failure*. Duke University Press, 2011.

Jennings, Gabrielle, editor. “Getting Messy: Chance and Glitch in Contemporary Video Art.” *Abstract Video: The Moving Image in Contemporary Art*, University of California Press, 2015, pp. 98–115.

Johnson, Merri. “Bad Romance: A Crip Feminist Critique of Queer Failure.” *Hypatia*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2015, pp. 251–67.

---. “Label C/Rip.” *Social Text Online*, 24 Oct. 2013.

Johnson, Merri, and Robert McRuer. “Cripistemologies: Introduction.” *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2, Jan. 2014, pp. 127–48. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, https://doi.org/10.3828/jlcds.2014.12.

Jurgenson, Nathan. *The Social Photo: On Photography and Social Media*. Verso, 2019.

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

Kane, Carolyn. *High-Tech Trash: Glitch, Noise, and Aesthetic Failure*. University of California Press, 2019, http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv2rb75d5.9.

Kirschenbaum, Matthew. *Mechanisms: New Media and the Forensic Imagination*. The MIT Press, 2012.

Kutchins, Herb, and Stuart A. Kirk. *Making Us Crazy: DSM: The Psychiatric Bible and the Creation of Mental Disorders.* 2003.

Lane, Christopher. “The Diagnostic Battles: Emotions Become Pathologies.” *How Normal Behavior Became a Sickness*, Yale University Press, 2007, pp. 39–70.

Lee, James. “Ethopoiesis: Foucault’s Late Ethics and the Sublime Body.” *New Literary History*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2013, pp. 179–98. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.2013.0005.

Leoni, Federico. “From Madness to Mental Illness: Psychiatry and Biopolitics in Michel Foucault.” *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Psychiatry*, edited by KWM Fulford et al., Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 85–98.

Lewis, Bradley. *Moving beyond Prozac, DSM, & the New Psychiatry: The Birth of Postpsychiatry*. University of Michigan Press, 2006.

Lister, Martin, editor. “The Rhetoric of the JPEG.” *The Photographic Image in Digital Culture,* Taylor & Francis Group, 2013, pp. 149–64.

McRuer, Robert, and Merri Johnson. “Proliferating Cripistemologies: A Virtual Roundtable.” *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2, Jan. 2014, pp. 149–70. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, https://doi.org/10.3828/jlcds.2014.13.

Medina, Jose. “Toward a Foucaultian Epistemology of Resistance: Counter-Memory, Epistemic Friction, and Guerrilla Pluralism.” *Foucault Studies*, no. 12, Oct. 2011, pp. 9–35.

Mitchell, WJT. *What Do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images*. University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Mollow, Anna. “Criphystemologies: What Disability Theory Needs to Know about Hysteria.” *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2, Jan. 2014, pp. 185–201. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, https://doi.org/10.3828/jlcds.2014.15.

Murray, Susan. “Digital Images, Photo-Sharing, and Our Shifting Notions of Everyday Aesthetics.” *Journal of Visual Culture*, vol. 7, no. 2, Aug. 2008, https://doi.org/10.1177/1470412908091935.

Nada, Niko. *My Therapist Dumped Me For Being An Alcoholic And Yet I Don’t Feel Any More Artistic*. [Zine] Oakland, CA

Nunes, Mark. *Error: Glitch, Noise, and Jam in New Media Cultures*. Bloomsbury Academic & Professional, 2012.

O’Connor, Flannery. “Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction.” *Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose*, edited by Sally Fitzgerald and Robert Fitzgerald, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970.

O’Gorman, Roisin, and Margaret Werry. “On Failure (On Pedagogy).” *Performance Research*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2012, https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2012.651857.

Piepmeier, Alison. *Girl Zines: Making Media, Doing Feminism*. NYU Press, 2009.

Price, Margaret. “Her Pronouns Wax and Wane: Psychosocial Disability, Autobiography, and Counter-Diagnosis.” *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1, Number 2009, pp. 11–33.

---. *Mad at School : Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life*. University of Michigan Press, 2011.

---. “The Bodymind Problem and the Possibilites of Pain.” *Hypatia*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2015, pp. 268–84.

Pryal, Katie Rose Guest. “The Genre of the Mood Memoir and the ‘Ethos’ of Psychiatric Disability.” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 5, 2010, pp. 479–501.

"Qikiqtarjuaq." *Cabin Pressure*, directed by David Tyler, 3.01, BBC Radio 4, 1 July 2011.

Russell, Legacy. *Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto*. Verso, 2020.

Shapiro, Michael. *Punctuations: How the Arts Think the Political*. Duke University Press, 2019.

Sheldahl-Thomason, Strand. "Foucault and the Use of Exposure: Discipline, Ethics, and Self-Writing." *Review of Communication*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2019, pp. 225–40.

Siebers, Tobin. *Disability Aesthetics*. Illustrated edition, University of Michigan Press, 2010.

---. "Tender Organs, Narcissism, and Identity Politics." *Disability Theory*, University of Michigan Press, 2008.

Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. Picador, 2001.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Acting Bits/Identity Talk." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 18, no. 4, Summer 1992, pp. 770–803.

The Art of Immersion: Why Do We Tell Stories? | WIRED. https://www.wired.com/2011/03/why-do-we-tell-stories/. Accessed 17 Feb. 2021.

The Psychological Comforts of Storytelling - The Atlantic. https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/11/the-psychological-comforts-of-storytelling/381964/. Accessed 17 Feb. 2021.

Tremain, Shelley. *Foucault and Feminist Philosophy of Disability*. University of Michigan Press, 2017.

Watts, Eric King. "'Voice' and 'Voicelessness' in Rhetorical Studies." *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, vol. 87, no. 2, June 2009, pp. 179–96.

Werner, Anna-Lena. *Let Them Haunt Us: How Contemporary Aesthetics Challenge Trauma as the Unrepresentable*. transcript publishing, 2020.

Wilson, James, and Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson, editors. “On the Rhetorics of Mental Disability.” *Embodied Rhetorics: Disability in Language and Culture*, Southern Illinois University Press, 2001.

Yuan, Yuan. *The Riddling between Oedipus and the Sphinx: Ontology, Hauntology, and Heterologies of the Grotesque*. UPA, 2016.

Žižek, Slavoj. “Language, Violence and Non-Violence.” *International Journal of Zizek Studies*, vol. 2, no. 3, 2008, pp. 1–12.