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To watch the stories presented in our paper, go to https://vimeo.com/album/3853805.

*Following the prompts, type in the password "*futurities.*"* Please note: these videos are

intended for readers only and are not for public screening.

In The Politics of Aesthetics (2006), Rancière asserts that art can be political when it helps us imagine a world wherein things are arranged and meaning is made differently. Rancière is speaking back to the argument that aesthetics is pure and purely about satiation of the senses by positioning art as possessing the potential to become political. For Rancière, art, like politics, centres on ways of reconfiguring the world. When art reveals ontological reconfigurations, disrupting the field of what can be seen, said, and done, it is, or becomes, political. Any aesthetic act can be political when it affects, and effects, a re-ordering of the world.

This paper thinks through how narrative films co-created through our critical arts-based research, Project Re•Vision (Rice et al. 2015), honour disability histories, advance disability legacies, and enact crip futurities. We follow Rancière's claim that in art—Re•Vision's narrative films—we can locate gestures toward different futurities, crip futurities, wherein embodied differences are made to mean differently. Throughout Feminist, Queer, Crip (2013), Alison Kafer interrogates how disability has been rendered the site of "no future" in many cultural and material ways. In this article, we take up Kafer's demand that disability be recognized as a site for political engagement by interpreting the films created through Re•Vision in ways that render life with difference as livable and claim a crip-feminist futurity as desirable. We are animated by the way Kafer figures disability into feminist imaginings of the future through the cyborg, described by Donna Haraway as "guid[ing] us to a more livable place" (2004, cited in Kafer 2013, 103). Throughout we hold close Kafer's provocation: "Can claiming crip be

a method of imagining multiple futures, positioning 'crip' as a desired and desirable location regardless of one's own embodiment or mental/psychological process?" (13).

Storytelling and Curation in Feminist Disability Arts

Our analysis features 12 short films created by women-identified and trans people living with mind/body differences. Produced by Re•Vision, these micro documentaries uncover the hidden histories of bodies that are typically on display for public consumption but rarely attended to for the stories we/they have to tell (Rice et al. 2015; Rice, Chandler, and Changfoot 2016). Re•Vision is an assemblage of research projects dedicated to exploring ways that misrepresented communities can use the arts to advance social justice. To date, we have generated an archive of 250 films and have held numerous filmmaking workshops led by disability-identified artists and allies.

Re•Vision works in unique ways with members of aggrieved communities and allies, both of whom are located in systems implicated in oppression; we build filmmaking workshops led by disability-identified artists to (temporarily) shift intersecting power dynamics operating in people's lives. Drawing on activist art traditions, we approach art not only as research but also as activism—in its power to disrupt norms, create understanding, and open possibilities (Raphael 2013; Rice 2014, 2015). We understand the videos produced as specifically disability art, defined by Rose Jacobson and Geoff McMurchy (2011) as "a vibrant and richly varied field in which artists with disabilities create work that expresses their identities as disabled people" (1). We recognize that disability art takes many forms and that community artists create

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activist art, as do professional artists. However, we distinguish arts-based research from professional/studio-based arts creation in recognition of differences in the purpose and quality of work created by studio-based artists and that of others without formal training or long-term immersion in artistic practice (Cahnmann-Taylor 2008). Our work thus supports and initiates both professional/studio-based and participatory/community-based art practice and brings artists, academics, and community members together to examine the possibilities of art for knowledge generation, cultural creation, and social change (Rice, et al. Forthcoming).

We have curated the films created through Re•Vision's methods into three sets animated by the themes: histories, legacies, and futurities. These temporal themes span multiple histories—body histories, disability histories, maternal histories, medical histories—as well as diverse activist legacies—the intersectional feminist legacies of Octavia Butler and Audre Lorde, the disability rights legacies of "nothing about us, without us" (Charlton 1998) and the feminist activist legacies of "the personal is political." We consider how a deep and renewed engagement with these temporalities allows us to imagine new kinds of feminist-disability futures, asking audiences to reconsider the very terms by which normative understandings of "the future" are stabilized. In what follows we treat our films to descriptive analyses that relate back to these themes, giving equal weight to each so as to honour Re•Vision's purpose: to open up representational fields to the possibilities of living with disability. It is the plurality of these varied and diverse articulations of difference that enacts the dynamic potentialities of crip futurity.

The films showcased are formatted using closed captioning and audio description to enhance audience access, though we acknowledge that these translations are inevitably fraught. We recognize difficulties inherent in developing an audio description practice that is artful without diminishing the affective impact of visual rhetorics, and consistent with filmmakers' intentions. Yet grappling with such translation difficulties has enabled us to discover some of the ways that access—how a person might find their way in—can be a generative process. As an example of how an accessibility feature can be integrated into a film's meanings, attend to the closed captioning in Vanessa Dion Fletcher's film, which not only reproduces her frustrated relationship with literacy standards but also productively marks what we might otherwise call textual (spelling) errors as sites for meaning-making.

We frame these stories, providing context and interpretation, not to ignore curatorial tradition but to deliver on an ethic of disability curatorial practice, which privileges and anticipates non-normatively embodied people when thinking about how art and audiences interact. We acknowledge that when we create art, we "loose [it] into the world," freed from our intentions or interpretations as artists, with a desire to spark a conversation (King 2003, 10). However, a disability art ethic further recognizes that when we who embody disability/difference make artwork that represents ourselves, we are freeing these images into a culture rich with tropic representations of difference. We are contending with ableist logics through which these re/images will be read; with an art history full of normative representations of mind/body difference; with an ongoing history of being on display, in freak shows, reality TV shows, and examining room tables. And this contention is risky—loosing re/images of disability is risky. Mediating

these risks requires us to intentionally disrupt traditional curatorial practices by offering a framing of the work.

Time Travels: Queering and Cripping Time

We begin our analysis by outlining the historical origins and contemporary operations of disablism, a theme that is animated and a logic resisted in many of these films. By disablism, we refer to the definition offered by Fiona Kumari Campbell (2008), "The set of assumptions (conscious or unconscious) and practices that promote differential or unequal treatment of people because of actual or presumed disabilities" (para 3). Replacing a negative ontology of dis/ableism with an affirmative ontology of difference, our disability justice-informed discursive-materialist understanding aims to understand mind/body difference as an expression of the vitality and volatility of life. An affirmative ontology attempts to make meaning of difference beyond the yoke of ableist/normalizing logics. We understand this project to be urgent: nothing less than people's access to the category of the human is at stake—in the past, now, and in the future.

Notions of futurity, like those of the past and present, are rooted in theories of time, which seek to apprehend how temporality is conceptualized, measured, and valued. Western conceptualizations of the life course, for example, chart the emergence of the autonomous adult from an unruly childhood and adolescence as part of a desired trajectory toward maturation (Halberstam 2005). Normative time thus might be understood as the expected life course of the unmarked (white, western/ized non-

disabled, middle class, straight, cis-gendered male) human subject—from childhood into adolescence, adulthood, productivity, partnership and progeny, retirement, and death. This is a highly gendered life course narrative as it elides social reproduction. Linking the individual with the collective, it connects the stability of the family to a nation-building past, and entwines these privatized gendered relations with the reproduction of the nation. Ultimately, the normative life span reflects and reinforces a hopeful story of western culture itself, one premised on belief in human progress and perfectibility. Feminist theorists have argued that the taken-for-granted logics underpinning western notions of time—personal lifespan and historical periodization—are deeply intertwined and "irredeemably bound to notions of teleological progress" (Browne 2014, 7).

Theorizing against any progressive (or dystopic) narrative of time—narratives that typically render disabled lives as regressive or 'out of time'—Victoria Browne argues that such storylines not only "close off the past" to contingencies and alternative readings but by assuming that certain trajectories are inevitable also "close off the future," including crip futurities, to instabilities and a range of possibilities (2014, 17). By delimiting readings of past and future, the progressive (or regressive) narrative delimits our understandings of what constitutes personhood and what is possible in the present. Theorizing selves and worlds as imprinted with past events and expected futures has significant ethical implications as it enjoins us to take seriously the effects of "the stories we tell ourselves about what constitutes the past, what counts as progress and what 'humanity' means" (47). This imparts a different sort of responsibility to time, one that pushes against framings of crip time as limited or deviant and that commits not so much to imagining a better future but to making the world a more livable place as we live it.

Since the negative implications for those who disrupt the normative standard are multiplicitous, critical theorists have challenged normative constructs of temporality that are tied with it. Dubbing the conventional life course as "straight time," Jack Halberstam (2005), Lee Edelman (2004) and José Esteban Muñoz (2009), "queer" time in ways that refuse reproductive futurity and re-imagine temporality in order to speak to alternative "here and now" possibilities of queer relationalities and communities falling outside normative or teleological framings of the future. Building on and apart from queer temporalities, feminist disability scholars Kafer (2013) and Ellen Samuels (2011) work to "crip" queer time to centralize disabled lives and disability temporality; lives that do not follow a normative lifespan; people who are not perceived as adults regardless of chronological age; whose material existence threatens the dominant temporal narrative arcs of perfectibility and progress; and those who, like Samuels, a disabled queer mother, desire to crip and queer rather than reject reproductive futurity entirely. Here, feminist, queered time becomes non-linear, not marching on unabated toward a singular future, but instead multidirectional, plural, even circular, a lived time that "foregrounds the experiential, relational, and discursive aspects of temporal existence" (Browne 2014, 26).

Feminist Crip Time: Histories, Legacies, Futurities

Drawing on these rich theoretical insights, we think with the narrative films created through Re•Vision to elaborate a theory of feminist crip time, one that unsettles ableist life trajectories by imagining a time and place for disability and difference. We offer a glimpse at the generative possibilities of replacing a fixed, linear understanding of

a "future perfect" with multiple, shifting, affective understandings of temporality that make space for, imagine, and enact futures—complex, partial, intercorporeal, diverse, irreverent—that include the bodies/minds often left out of normative renderings of personhood and of futurity.

Disability Histories

Disabled people, Mad people, and people embodying differences—connected by the ways that these body-minds are constructed as non-normative and as lacking vitality—have been, and continue to be, displayed in medical journals, charity campaigns, and as evil or pitiable tropes in novels and films. At the same time, minds/bodies of difference have also been sequestered away: hidden in institutions, hospitals, and group homes, and generally removed from the public eye. Publicly displayed and publicly contained, rarely are disabled bodies attended to for our histories and truths. As Eli Clare writes, "Just as the [disabled] body can be stolen, it can also be reclaimed" (2001, 363). In the act of reclaiming disabled, Mad, and different bodies, of making new meanings of difference, and of complicating standards of normativity that have cast embodied difference to the cultural periphery, the first films we introduce and analyze carry traces of and "talk back" to this fraught history.

We present four films that foreground the theme of disability history—how histories of being put on display and/or hidden away inform and impact storytellers' experiences today. This collective, intersectional history of bodies of difference, of spectacle and containment, of diagnosis and normalization, of invisibility while being gazed upon, mark the storytellers in intimate ways. In this first round we centre the theme

of disability history, however all of the themes—disability histories, legacies, and futures—are woven together in all of the films. If we think about each storyteller's narrative as something they create, rather than as something that objectively exists, we can recognize that any accounting of the self in time, of "lived time," or the "living present" (Walker 2014) is inevitably "a complex and fragmentary conjunction of plural pasts, presents, and futures" (Browne 2014, 40), an enfolding of past, present, and future into each other in the becomings they document. We witness in these films a dynamic interplay between past, present, and future, between memory, experience/observation, and possibility, as the storytellers' modes of temporal orientation.

We begin with health studies student Karima Dorney's How Do You Remember Someone?, (https://vimeo.com/album/3853805; password: futurities) powerful in its reclaiming and piecing together of fragments of her grandmother's life, a life veiled within her family's history. Her grandmother's photos, foregrounded throughout, reveal a woman full of life and self-possession, whose vitality is visually set against complex intersections of a violently abusive husband, unsupported mental anguish possibly caused by the gendered violence that she suffered, callous abjection and subjection to the medical gaze, and erasure from family memories. She entered a psychiatric hospital upon the birth of her daughter (Karima's mother) where the viewer is told her "slow murder" began with straitjackets and electro-shock. Karima's mother's childhood memories are "mostly of brutal violence" that included regular beatings and confinement in the basement. Her grandmother lived and died on Toronto streets and in shelters for 16 years. Karima gives voice to hidden, abjected aspects of her grandmother's life by piecing together their shard-like fragments. Karima also brings starkly into view the impacts of

the banal yet brutal force of violence in her life, the violence that followed her grandmother into the asylum, the violence that became institutionalized and administered through practices of containment, electro-shock, and the medical gaze, and how neglect followed her to the streets. Hers is a disability history, which reveals how gender roles, domestic abuse, and state-sanctioned incarceration, "treatment," and neglect was provoked by this woman's perceived non-normative behavior, causing her to be inflicted with many iterations of violence which were all too normative. This history illustrates a world in need of re-ordering, one that begins through telling a story which, for too long, has been silenced. Through aesthetic enunciation, this film enacts the emancipatory connection highlighted by Rancière, between representation and re-ordering (2006).

Through a sepia-toned photographic collage of a female-presenting body, professor Hilde Zitzelsberger's piece, My (Im)possible In/vulnerability, (https://vimeo.com/album/3853805; password: futurities) presents storytelling both as a trap and as a site of becoming in a meta-engagement with disability history. Hilde's examination of imperfections, of (im)possible in/vulnerability, is mirrored in the visual grammar of the film. In the story's images, body parts begin whole and partial, then fragment and layer on top of each other, blurring in and out of focus. The impossibility of naming and knowing the bodily self is evident alongside Hilde's attempt to name and know a kind of embodied truth that isn't fixed, rigid, or definitive. Taking us through (part of) her body history, the film exposes the consequences of identification through posing a series of rhetorical questions. What Hilde tells through such wonderings is a story about her discomfort inside and out of a range of identity categories, both offering and resisting. Beginning the piece, her nervous laughter interrupts and punctuates an

otherwise self-assured narrative delivery. The piece ends with a return to her laughter, this time a full infectious laugh that signals release, perhaps a release from the need for perfection, from any attempt to line the fragments up into a coherent whole.

The film's exposure of the slippage between embodied experiences and rigid identity categories points to both the difficulty of, and the need for, new understandings of how we name and occupy spaces of difference and vulnerability. How can we acknowledge and tell vulnerable histories without being collapsed into categories of otherness that perpetuate existing perceptions of what it means to be disabled, marginalized, vulnerable? How can we tell stories in ways that don't oversimplify how we work and love in the world, as both insecure and self-assured, broken and healed? More broadly speaking, how do we tell historical stories when we may not have access to our histories due to ableist, colonialist, and racist regimes? The story lands on a final evocative paradox: "I feel so much self-judgment when I reveal my failures, shame when I reveal my imperfections. But I feel so alive in my skin when I do." By refusing to resolve the paradoxes that mark her bodily experiences, Hilde offers new vocabularies for representing both embodiment and vulnerability, opening these categories to multiplicity, volatility, difference.

The third film in this section is Words (https://vimeo.com/album/3853805; password: futurities), wherein Indigenous artist Vanessa Dion Fletcher (Lenape, Potawatami) re/writes a disability history of defining encounters with the scripts of formal education, manifested in standardized tests and literacy norms. Using homophones to juxtapose her first-person experiences of a learning disability with the objectifying language of diagnostic tests, her film features a blank piece of white paper on which the

viewer sees a hand writing out words, or homophones, and sentences from a diagnostic report. The soundtrack consists of Vanessa's playing with the different meanings of homophones, "whole" and "hole," for example. The words Vanessa writes and speaks catalogue a history of perceived learning deficiencies, her abilities read as lacking within the prescribed boundaries of formal schooling. Yet by re-telling this history through word play, her words are wrested from the definitional tyranny of formal education; Vanessa's words become her own, their differential spellings become an act of reclamation and an artful opening to alternative modes of meaning-making. Through such play, she provokes us to consider how the language of deficiency limits children but how the magic of words also might open up other possibilities for being and becoming.

Like Hilde's catalogue of seemingly incongruous experiences of her body and subjectivity, Vanessa's disability history is both great and grating, an acknowledgment of the holes and fissures her experiences have produced and a representation of her enduring wholeness. Their stories provide the localized contours of what it means to live into the paradoxes of vulnerable embodiment and complex disability histories. Both stories acknowledge what it means to have doubled identity, where their complex histories are simultaneously sites of pleasure and pain, risk and possibility, silence and speech.

Disability-identified researcher Carolyn Pletsch's Untitled (https://vimeo.com/album/3853805; password: futurities) features a stunning but haunting array of photographs of Old Havana, an urban landscape which Carolyn identifies as "a city that while beautiful in many ways is crumbling." Carolyn is clear that, as a woman living with a progressive condition, she is Old Havana: a solid metaphor giving voice to fears around body, capability, future. In the photographs we see buildings that are

scaffolded, reduced to rubble, weathered, and marked by decay. Such imagery is routinely interspersed with images of Carolyn: alone, smiling, with family, her partner, child, and friends. Carolyn draws her family in for her audience, emphasizing their centrality in coping with an uncertain future. They are what enable her to declare— twice—with great clarity: "I do not relent." Also seeping through these photographs is rich colour, intense luminosity and epic beauty; but this quickly is countered by imagery of clean washing hanging on makeshift laundry lines. These speak to the monotony of everyday life: a rolling, continuous temporality to which progressiveness—a "strange word to describe this place" as Carolyn announces—takes on new meaning.

Carolyn's film powerfully makes visible stories of oft-painful and unpredictable embodiments. Such embodied stories of aging with episodic disability have been historically absent from disability rights movements, and can go awry in some feminist, queer, and critical disability studies' affirmative framings of disability as post-human possibility. Carolyn's story speaks against any totalizing teleology of crip temporalities as well as to the silenced politics of what Lisa Blackman calls "ordinary suffering" (2015, 25). It is uncomfortable—but encourages important questions. Carolyn's film reveals a need for a disability politics that recognizes decline, dying, and death as intimately political aspects of (disability) life and that, in turn, resists any narrative arcs premised on progress. We appreciate Carolyn's film for its embodied productions of disability that move us ever closer to a lived and material disability culture and justice.

Disability Legacies

The next set of films animates disability legacies. Recognizing and honouring disabled legacies is a powerful testament to disability as culture. Each narrative reveals how, as much as disabled people live with the ghosts of past traumas and oppressions, legacies of our disabled feminist activist, resistor, and rebel-rouser ancestors live on. We conceptualize disabled legacies differently from disability histories in two ways. First, disability legacies refer to how dis/ableist logics, which inform historical treatments of disability, live on. Disabled people, Mad people, and differently embodied people are still incarcerated (see Elizabeth Fry Society 2015); our behavior is similarly clarified as deviant under patriarchal, ableist, sanist, racist, and transphobic knowledge regimes and institutional structures that determine, in part, the terms by which we live our daily lives. It is dangerous to think that these methods of control and the logics that underpin them are of the past; indeed, they continue to shape our lives and labeled people still live in institutions throughout the world, including Canada.

The second way we take up the theme of legacies is through strengths and resistances of those who came before us, carving out new possibilities for life with difference, new possibilities for disability futurities. We approach this theme through a feminist crip lens and recognize that legacies stream from formative disability rights and justice activists, those who appear in our disability history as well as those who have been written out. We also recognize familial legacies; the ways knowledges and practices of resistance get passed down to us. We receive these legacies as bequests from the past, are enlivened by them, and draw on them for power and strength as we battle to make the world a more livable place, forging new meanings of embodied difference and a world capable of embracing such legacies as we do. According to Muñoz, "queerness [and

disability] should and could be about a desire for another way of being in both the world and time, a desire that resists the mandate to accept that which is not enough" (2009, 95-6). We conceive of disability legacies, drawing from the power of and within our past, as gesturing towards a different way of being in the world with difference. These films demonstrate that these two ways of framing disability legacies are intimately connected in the ways that oppression and resistance always are.

In her Litany of the White Noise (https://vimeo.com/album/3853805; password: futurities), professor Jen Rinaldi characterizes her lingering experiences of disordered eating during times when she has been read through identities within which success has intersected with or hinged upon recovery: an eager traveler, an undergrad who turned boys' heads, a city girl with career ambitions. The work is organized around voice, represented synaesthetically as bursting light and colour throughout. This unbroken, stubborn consistency ties the filmmaker to her history, to who she was when under pathology, even when redemption narratives called for disavowals of the past. Uncomplicated interpretations of recovery make conventionally successful futures possible, for it is easier to gain trust, to convince people to have confidence in one's capabilities to pursue postsecondary education or to relocate, when intensive body discipline is hidden. The visualization of voice plays through photographs of place. These carry the promise of escape. But each space is filled with white noise, haunted by the recitation of body rituals, which illustrates how the structure of the recovery story can be destabilized by a presencing of mental disability, by its refusal to be left behind. Rather than being structured by a normative future, Jen's present, organized around reconciliation to embodiment, unsettles futures previously thought available to her and

gestures toward potentialities: learning from failure, finding community, meaning-making through body shame and reluctant acceptance.

In Puzzle Pieces (https://vimeo.com/album/3853805; password: futurities), disability-identified genderqueer artist mel g. campbell layers images of Black women against images of sidewalks, buildings, garbage, and tree-lined streets of a gentrifying neighbourhood. mel begins their story told in spoken-word: "I want June Jordan to be here. I want Octavia Butler to be here. I want Audre Lorde to be here," making present influential Black feminists of the 20th century, and ending with "my mothers, my mother, my mommy." Against the powerful legacy of mothers is the heteronormative patriarchy and conditional love of a disappointed father. Locating their self in a Womanist genealogy, mel brings us into the present pressing back against power that elicits a sometimes quiet, sometimes raging brokenness over which they struggle to "bring myself together." Beginning with their family history and matriarchal legacies that give them strength and a sense of place, mel embarks on telling a story of relentless oppression, of "daily fuckery," and describes increasing displacement within a city that is not built for differently embodied people due to gentrification and structural ableism. mel says, "I think of how I can pass" as non-disabled and shares that passing involves untold debilitating pain experienced in isolation. Yet, they learn that when chronic pain is disclosed physician-whitecoats disavow and position it as something experienced by "crazy, lazy, drug addicts who need to help themselves." From a mixed-income Toronto neighbourhood, from the experience of living with disability, poverty, homophobia, and imposed madness, and living as a disappointment, mel stretches "these broken joints clogged with memory" and "wipe[s] away tears and scar tissue."

At this point in the film, a reclaiming and clearing can be discerned that is not an overcoming, but a return to self through and amidst ableism, homophobia, poverty, racism, mad-bashing, indignities that are expressed daily and accumulated in body memory over generations. Living through and emboldened by personal and political legacies, this reclaimed self is poised and powerfully signals continuation with those in a long line who have persisted and resisted. While mel is silent about specific futures, the experiences they present in their film can elicit desire in the viewer for enacting different futures through living in the spirit of the Black feminists——mel's mothers—and the mother they want "here."

The final film in this thematic, Mother Risk (https://vimeo.com/album/3853805; password: futurities), created by professor Roxanne Mykitiuk, explores the intergenerational causes, consequences, and legacies of disability. It opens with the drumming and image of a fetal heartbeat. Roxanne confesses that "the TV ads caught me off guard asking…whether I had ever taken…Paxil, Prozac…during pregnancy, and, if so, whether the baby I had was born with a heart defect, cleft palate or limb defect…If so, you and your loved one might be eligible to be compensated for the harm." Locating her depression as a familial disease "formed from the double helix of maternal abuse and paternal neglect," Roxanne documents incidents of maternal abuse leading to depression. Pausing, and provoking us to contemplate the child(ren) through whom legacies of disability are passed down, the screen shifts to black, and in voiceover, she states: "My family doctor assured me that my daily dose: two of the green and cream capsules, was "safe" during pregnancy… I took the Prozac. What was the harm?" In the final sequence, the film turns from the use of past photographs to a present day video and opens with the

rhythm of bongo drums. A shot focuses on the hands creating music: one with a palm and five fingers, the other ending at the wrist with five tiny, fleshy nubbins. The shot pans back to show the storyteller's son, 15 years old, skillfully drumming. Roxanne sits across from her son, drum set between them, and places her hands tentatively on the drums to join in with his encouragement. As she clumsily learns the beat, he improvises and accommodates her rhythm. Together they play on—drum beats mingling with sounds of whooping and laughter. The scene is rapturous, filled with pure joy, and gestures towards a way of being where disability is not only welcomed, but creates the very conditions for a desired rather than harmed future.

These legacies make explicit the traces of the past, revealing how the material effects of histories continue to act as living forces shaping (not determining) the present and possible futures. At the same time, these legacies remain open to the very things that the filmmakers acknowledge and embrace: the vagaries and volatilities of human lives, embodiments, and relationships; the impactful histories of intersecting oppressions; and the reverberating influences of those from whom we draw strength, resourcefulness, and critical knowledge in our attempts to enact, even fleetingly, liveable spaces for disability and difference.

Feminist Disability Futures: From Dystopia To Dis-Topia?

Our third round of films foregrounds feminist disability futures. These stories productively engage with Kafer's call "to enter into theoretical discussions about […] futurity, but also to wrestle with the ways in which "the future" had been deployed in the service of able-bodiedness and able-mindedness" (2013, 29). Ideas about disability

inform many of our collective evocations of the future; in the cultural imaginary, disability often serves as a grim burden, a never-ending tragedy, a bleak horizon of pain and isolation, a fate worse than death, a literal dead end, an agreed-upon limit to our projected futures. Reflecting on histories and legacies, we in so many ways are told that disability is the antithesis of progression and, therefore, a disability future seems unimaginable.

In these films, we see a way into "dis-topia," where disability pushes into and productively disrupts imagined, deferred space. Utopia cripped functions as a shared envisioning of a future world—of overlapping future worlds—that is ideal only insofar as it is marked by diversity, complexity, fluidity. The term dis-topia playfully stands in phonetic relation to utopia's antithesis dystopia—the dys acting as a negation of preferred topos. While disability is not typically figured into utopian landscapes, it finds a home in any dystopian genre fiction fixated on the grotesque or abject. Conceived as outside this binary, dis-topia finds itself more closely related to the roaring chaos of Mad Max's open desert and motley crew than to the uniformity, sterility, rigidity of utopian paradise— what Lise Shapiro Sanders (2007) refers to as frozen time—for through dis-topia our futures may be built in response to disability, open to possibility rather than committed to perfectibility. What we theorize here is an alternative to the singular utopic ideal, which Kelly Fritsch calls "heterotopic imagination" or imagination for a multiplicity of spaces that "emphasizes incompatibility, discontinuities, temporal differences" (2015, 56).

We deploy dis-topia to crip time-space. Calling upon historical characterizations of disabled persons as outcasts, Garland-Thomson (2011) invokes the idea of mis/fitting to position disabled embodiments against and within their given spaces. Rather than

signifying particular bodies/minds, fittings and misfittings signal material and temporal

arrangements, mutually constitutive relationships between body and world that are

seamless and synchronized in the case of fitting or disjointed and out of sync with that of

misfitting: "the degree to which that shared material world sustains the particularities of

our embodied life at any given moment or place determines our fit or misfit" (2011, 596).

Embodied life is thus bound up in temporality to the extent that our experience of

misfitting or fitting depends on how the choreography of our embodiments with/in the

world plays out. Here "Shape carries story" (Walker Bynum cited in Garland-Thomson

2011, 595), meaning that the dynamic interaction of bodies with worlds becomes

narrative: our ever-changing embodiments join one moment to the next and one space to

another to cohere into story. Only if the stories our shapes carry are incongruent with

stories told of a shared world do we find ourselves out of joint with time-space. For

Garland-Thomson, the disjuncture of misfitting that exposes the privileges and fragilities

of fitting also produces critical consciousness from which a crip politics and praxis of

time might emerge.

     We begin this discussion with professor Patty Douglas' Walking the Line

(https://vimeo.com/album/3853805; password: futurities), a film that opens to a black

screen. An automated "attendance notification system" voicemail message, from Patty's

son's school, plays in the background as we see scenes of her domestic, family space.

The sudden appearance of the automated message reveals its presence and significance in

her life. As the message continues, we understand Patty as steeped in the everyday:

cleaning the kitchen, making toast. Then comes her confession: "I can't even get my kids

to school on time, and I am 45." Patty's story speaks about multiple violences, physical,

sexual and emotional, and to more subtle violences in her own psychologisation and diagnosis. Her film speaks loudest to the violence of everyday life as a parent with a disabled child in an intolerant world. This is depicted through her centring of the "lines": her "failure to keep within them," the "danger of stepping out of line," and "slip[ing] and slid[ing] outside of the line." Patty emphasises the extensive labour of performing normal, to appear to cope, and to live the obligatory "tightly controlled life." At the end she asserts: "No-one has ever called from the school to find out if we are OK." This line emphasizes the futility and anxiety-inducting effect of the impersonal technologically-mediated interruption of the earlier voicemail message repetition.

Patty's film emphasises the violence of neoliberalism as a tool of slow death (Berlant 2007); violence exacerbated by the processes of dis/ableism: a lack of compassion; tolerance over acceptance; inflexible systems; and routine observation and dehumanisation. Patty's desire to keep within the lines is a product of a neoliberal capitalist ideology that produces sameness. Difference, slowness, excess are shamed, denigrated, eradicated. To survive one needs to have pace—to be able to keep momentum and participate in routinized, extensive and repetitive labours that break down body-minds. Patty's setting of home, family, and mother/child relationships reminds us of the extent to which intense labour is required within our intimate lives—particularly for women and mothers, and routinely in the context of disability. Such a temporality—as Lauren Berlant (2007) reminds us—is degrading each of us slowly, working us all to death as "people are worn out by the activity of life building" (Goodley 2014, 32). Yet we ask: how can stories like Patty's mark and draw attention to these processes in ways that propel justice for disabled people and our families?

The second film in this set, Reading Blind, (https://vimeo.com/album/3853805; password: futurities) created by doctoral student Sheyfali Saujani, opens with the words "the worst thing about being partially blind, is not being able to read anything I want, any time, anywhere" simultaneously spoken by an electronic male voice and projected in text across a computer screen reader. We, the audience, are initiated to "reading blind." We are introduced to a childhood image of the filmmaker, announcing that she has always loved to read: "I ate books the way a greedy kid devours candy." Shifting to the present, we observe Sheyfali, wearing thick magnifying glasses, nose literally pressed into a book. She confides: "I couldn't accept my disability when I thought it meant I couldn't read." But, then, turning to the use of electronic and audio books, we encounter images of a bedside, a table set for a meal, food simmering on a stove, Sheyfali sitting in a garden and riding and waiting for the streetcar. In each location, she reads: "I like to read anytime, anywhere." Pausing she adds with emphasis: "*but I can't read anything and everything.*" Leading us through the expansive collection of the stacks of the university library, Sheyfali attempts to read, unsuccessfully, items from the collection through highly magnified glasses. She tells us that hundreds of millions of things don't exist in accessible formats. But, now that technologies remove some of the barriers to print, it is possible for her to identify as blind. In the closing frames Sheyfali recounts a question she is often asked, "If there was a treatment for your disability would you fix it?" Staring straight at the camera with a broad defiant grin on her face Sheyfali answers: "I have a question for you: if you could remove barriers to access would you?", provoking the audience to consider their role in this necessary re-ordering.

Told in the present, while referencing a personal/political past, Sheyfali's film invites a future whereby the embodied, shifting, impermanent experience of sight is decoupled from the act/cessibility and forms of reading. Her story reminds us of the temporality of embodied experiences of difference—that the nature of many impairments shift over time. Directing her gaze outward, Sheyfali provokes us to imagine accessibility as a collective desire rather than an individual accommodation. From this perspective, she opens up to us about how, for her, accessibility and disability identity are intertwined.

In Untitled (https://vimeo.com/album/3853805; password: futurities), a film that denies discursive framing in its title, disability-identified artist Janna Brown presents medical readings of her experience of madness, and their impacts upon her. Delivered one night spent in an emergency room, these readings are shoehorned into checklists of common symptoms, neatly reduced to the familiar and diagnosable to achieve intelligibility. Janna expresses humiliation over her exposure, and frustration over what in her story is lost or left out once it is contained. She tells us her madness does not abide, is persistently noncompliant. She takes on the work in response to these misfittings, to gather up the threads lost that night, to weave her story into something closer to her experience—something messy and out of focus. Janna's visual rhetoric speaks to what falls outside medical legibility. Awash in melancholic watercolour greens and blues, images of her recur—disheveled hair, folded arms, an intake of breath. Her embodiment of madness is never in sharp relief, never committed to a linear trajectory, never fully or clearly formed. Working through this haze of imagery, listening to her fragmented poetics, we reach something like the madness that eludes diagnostic categories, that is opened up to wholeness, or the range of experiences that falls outside the limitations of

available discourses. And this range is vast, for the film's dedication refers to our stories as a galaxy of stars, their multiplicity cosmic in proportion.

Toward a More Livable Place

While the films we discussed re-order the world, giving way to different ways that embodiments can be made to mean, we end this article with two films that "guide us towards a more livable place". We do not conclude by describing what these livable futures are because they could be many things. We instead describe how disability art, as our discussions of these films demonstrate, is integral to disruptively re-ordering the world such that crip futures are, indeed, livable.

The first film, Value Village (https://vimeo.com/album/3853805; password: futurities), was produced by disability artist Jan Derbyshire. As the closing credits reveal, this is a story by "Mrs. Green" as told to Jan, who identifies as living with the experience of hearing voices, through pill bottles labeled with a prescription for "Mrs. Green" that Jan bought at Value Village (U.S. owned repurposed goods chain store known as Savers in the US). Throughout this film, Jan taps on and rhythmically shakes old pill bottles, playing them as musical instruments to accompany her as she sings, "You put the lime in the coconut and stir it all up, you put the lime in the coconut and call the doctor and woke him up and said, 'doctor, is there nothing I can take,' I said, 'doctor, to relieve this belly ache…" After singing, Jan holds up two of the pill bottles and spins them around to the audience revealing that these bottles hold sparkles and sequins instead of pills. Jan ends the film by looking at the audience and saying, "I can't help wondering if Mrs. Green was

onto something. If the world would be a more beautiful place if we were prescribed sequins instead of pills." By replacing pills with sequins, Jan is attributing new aesthetic signifiers to a cultural icon of a "return to wellness"—the pill bottle. With this visual swap she is re-ordering our understandings of distinctions between sickness and wellness, of that which facilitates wellness, and, ultimately, becoming possibilities for a beautiful, tenable, world.

In the second film, Shift (https://vimeo.com/album/3853805; password: futurities), created by artist-academic Eliza Chandler, Eliza describes the shifting temporalities she has experienced throughout her art practices, which correspond with her shifting in and out of identification with/in her disabled embodiment, though her impairment is always with her and easily read—through sight, sound, and touch—on her body. As the film shows footage of Eliza, moving around a gallery, tripping up stairs, trying to untangle string, attempting to roll film onto a spool layered on top of images of Eliza's weavings, sculptures, and installations, it reveals the intimate contradiction that once accompanied Eliza's desire to hide her disability, which despite her intentions not only came through her embodied experience of making art, but in the art itself. Eliza's disabled embodiment can be understood as leading her into a cripped art practice, resulting in a crip aesthetic— art whose form was created by, and thus engenders, the difference that disability makes. Aesthetics, according to disability studies scholar Tobin Seibers, is an individual judgment of what is satiating in form (2002). Displaying her difference as performance, and emerging from her "subject position" (Rancière, 2006), Eliza offers an opportunity to be satiated by a difference in form, which has re-ordering potential for how we culturally value disability.

At the close of the film, we see Eliza boldly appear in her performance art as she "finally decides to centre her disability proudly." Here Eliza parades down a busy street. We see pedestrians asking her to stop and pose so that they can take photos of her. In this decision, her disability does not give way to normalcy, rather it gives rise to a "soft rub," to a final intimate contradiction that viewers of this video might also share. This is the rub that comes from the embodied stirrings that may surface from noticing an unapologetic difference. This unapologetic difference calls attention to the vulnerabilities and strengths that emerge from having intimate embodied experiences of being put on public display. As this embodied relation is the one on which the film concludes, we assume that it is the one that animates Eliza's future art practice.

We end by inhabiting Rancière's words to think through how a more livable place can be enacted through a "re-ordering of the world" through art (2006). By connecting representation to this reordering, Rancière locates political, world-making possibilities in art declaring, as Daniel Williford puts it, that, "any aesthetic act is political when it effects a reordering of the social world" (2009, 2). Our last two films, as do all of the films discussed, mobilize such a reordering towards a crip futurity. Jan wonders about a world in which difference is lived with rather than medically treated. Eliza, too, wonders about a different kind of world in which we might find satiation in a difference, desiring the difference that disability makes to the artistic process and its resulting form. Neither video makes conclusive claims about what such a world oriented toward difference would look or feel like or what a feminist crip futurity would bring. Yet, in a culture in which disability has been rendered a site of "no future" (Kafer 2013, 10), perhaps imagining otherwise (Rice, Chandler, and Changfoot 2016) produces possibility for a

desired futurity where there was before no possibility or only abjected possibility. Through art, we can imagine a world where things, time, identities and differences are arranged differently. By enacting feminist crip futurity, in all of its multiplicities through art and aesthetic activity, we are also creating new political positionings with potentialities that re-order and interpret arrangements anew, enacting livable futures.

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