2020 Abstracts – Conspiracy

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Hierarchies of Art, Sense, and Race: Feeling Statues in the Global Renaissance

I am not an art historian, but in this paper I will attempt to use the histories of early modern thinking about statues as a way to think about the intersections of ability, sexuality, race, and nation. Disability was at the core of the early modern understanding of a hierarchy of artistic forms, which aligned with an understanding of a hierarchy of the senses: because painting could be understood only through sight, whereas sculpture could be accessed by touch (and thus understood, and even produced, by the blind), painting was considered the higher art form. In this context, crip encounters with art were also queered, as the blind accessibility practice of feeling sculpture was also frequently seen as inherently sexual or erotic, and therefore more base than other modes of encountering art. The connection between blindness and tactile intimacy with sculpture was often emphasized; for example, in describing his sculpting practice, blind seventeenth-century Italian artist Giovanni Gonnelli was quoted as saying "I touch my model—I examine its dimensions, its protrusions and cavities, and try to keep them in my memory. Then I place my hand in the wax, and by comparison that I make between the one and the other, running my hand over them several times, finish my work to the best of my ability" (quoted in Hall, p. 151).

Of course, the practice of tactile intimacy with sculpture was never limited to blind artists and audiences, and, however base or lusty, the practice of touching and engaging with statues was popular throughout the Renaissance. Artists and collectors were frequently painted holding (fondling, even) sculptural busts, and records show that public statues were frequently groped to the point of damage. Indeed, the practice of touching sculpture, feeling it intimately as Gonnelli describes, is an adaptive strategy and artistic technology for the blind, but can further function as erotic/sexual practice for anyone, a potentially queer form of attention to art that centers embodied engagement. This is especially the case in situations where sculptures allowed for tactile intimacy across the boundaries of sex or gender. Consider, for example, this loaded description by the fifteenth-century sighted sculptor Lorenzo Ghiberti, who describes a tactile encounter with a classical roman sculpture that he calls a "statue of an hermaphrodite the size of a thirteen-year-old girl." Faced with this queer figure, who has both breasts and a penis, Ghiberti shifts from visual to tactile engagement, provocatively reporting, "This statue had very many refinements, which the eye could not perceive, but the hand could detect by touch." Even for the sighted, then, the adaptive strategy of touching could reveal an elevated status for the sense of touch, which could yield both artistic understanding and, potentially erotic engagement.

Ghiberti's encounter with this Roman statue not only allows for a queercrip reading about tactility, but further opens avenues to talk about globality and race. Dramatizing the archeological unveiling of the classical sculpture, Ghiberti's *Commentarii* allows a kind of artistic tourism for his international readership. And the statue itself, recovered and repaired, is dazzlingly white, as are all the other statues being groped in the paintings of the period. Recent

scholarship has discussed this whitening of classical statue, a colonialist intervention that erased the fact that the original statues were brightly painted. The paper therefore concludes with attention to the raced embodiments of felt sculptures, with attention not only on painting and sculpture, but also to performed statues on the early modern stage, including the statue scenes in *The Winter's Tale* and *A Game at Chess*.

Rachel Ellen Clark, Wartburg College (rachel.clark@wartburg.edu)
Cripping Witches in the Early Modern World

Although scholars including Ronald Hutton and Wolfgang Behringer have situated early modern witchcraft in a global context, fewer scholars have investigated links between witchcraft and disability in the early modern world. This paper will use Robert McRuer's work as a springboard to imagine how cripping witches in the early modern world reconfigures our understandings of both witch persecutions and disability in the foundational period of early global proto-capitalism.

To ground this argument as much as possible in embodied experiences, I will explore a number of early modern witches from the Atlantic world who are depicted as impaired—first, in a pair of examples from England. Elizabeth Sawyer, who was executed for witchcraft in April 1621, is sympathetically depicted in the play *The Witch of Edmonton* as missing one eye and using a cane as a mobility aid. In addition, Elizabeth Clarke, Matthew Hopkins's first victim in the massive East Anglia witch-hunt of 1645-47, had only one leg.[1] These English "witches," with their impaired bodies and supernatural powers, defy and exceed the abled/disabled binary.

Second, from the Americas: In the records of the Salem witch trials, the enslaved indigenous woman Tituba concludes her first day of testimony on February 29, 1692, by claiming to be blind and at least pretending to be "dumb", probably in order to avoid having to implicate anyone else. We know very little about Tituba outside of the records of the trials. However, we do know that on this occasion, blindness and dumbness both served as her defenses and were understood to have been caused by devils. Tituba's possibly feigned disability allows her to bring her testimony to an end for the day and provides one example of crip resistance.

Third, from France: In "Of the Lame or Cripple," translated into English by John Florio in 1603, Michel de Montaigne describes meeting a woman who has been imprisoned for witchcraft. While visiting a prince's court, the prince showed Montaigne "tenne or twelve prisoners of that kinde; and amongst others an olde beldam witch; a true and perfect sorceresse, both by her vglines and deformitie."[2] In this case, the woman's "deformity" makes her, ironically, a "true and perfect" witch. Moreover, he clearly understands the witch as a figure to be considered alongside "the lame or cripple," a category that includes Martin Guerre.

Ultimately, we need to crip both early modern witches and our histories of witchcraft because the ideologies of state control that underlie witch prosecutions in the early modern Atlantic world operate, in some senses, surprisingly similarly to today. McRuer explains that cripping "exposes […] the ways that bodies, minds, and impairments that should be at the

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[1] James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1997), p. 128.

[2] Michel de Montaigne, "Of the Lame or Cripple," in John Florio, trans., *The Essayes or Morall, Politike and Militarie Discourses of Lo: Michaell de Montaigne, Knight of the noble Order of St Michaell, and one of the Gentlemen in Ordinary of the French King, Henry the third of his Chamber,* vol. 3 (London: Val[entine] Sims for Edward Blount, 1603; STC 18041, accessed through Early English Books Online through the Renaissance Society of America, 12 May 2019), sig. Fff4v.

absolute center of a space or issue or discussion get purged from that space or issue or discussion," usually "in the service of the smooth functioning of a globalized neoliberal capitalism."[3] We have seen plenty of scholarly attention to the gendered bodies of accused witches in the early modern world, to their class status, to their religious practices—but not to their disabled bodies. By cripping witches, we can better understand not only disability and embodiment but also developing global systems and discourses of witch persecution in the early modern world.

<div align="center">Bibliography</div>

Barounis, Cynthia. "Witches, Terrorists, and the Biopolitics of Camp." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 24.2-3 (June 2018): 213-238. Provides a queer-crip analysis of camp in the 2015 Robert Eggers movie *The Witch*, a horror movie set in Puritan New England.

Bearden, Elizabeth B. *Monstrous Kinds: Body, Space, and Narrative in Renaissance Representations of Disability*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2019. Deploys passibility as a way of thinking about early modern bodyminds.

Juárez-Almendros, Encarnación. "The Disabling of Aging Female Bodies: Midwives, Procuresses, Witches and the Monstrous Mother." *Disabled Bodies in Early Modern Spanish Literature: Prostitutes, Aging Women and Saints*. Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2017. 83-115. Examines witches from a disability studies perspective.

Row-Heyveld, Lindsey. *Dissembling Disability in Early Modern English Drama*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. Analyzes feigned disability on stage.

Schalk, Sami. "Reevaluating the Supercrip." *Journal of Literary and Cultural Studies* 10.1 (2016): 71-86. Argues that a more nuanced use of the term "supercrip" is necessary to allow for thorough and complex analysis of supercrip figures in a variety of narratives.

Miles Drawdy, University of California, Berkeley
"the World, &c.": English Deaf Pedagogy and The Global Imagination

Conscious of his impending death and with his customary air of self-importance, the celebrated English mathematician John Wallis (1616 - 1703) published a letter to Mr. Thomas Beverly in which he outlined his method for teaching the deaf and dumb to understand a language. This method consisted of creating an impressive (and theoretically exhaustive) nomenclator. Beginning with the parts of the body ("Head, (hair, skin, ear,) Face, forhead, eye…"[4]), the nomenclator categorically organizes the names of things, practically serving also as a dictionary and a grammar. The basic organizing principle of such a book should be, Wallis explains, both visual and relational:

> And these [names] digested under convenient Titles; and placed (under them) in such convenient Order (in several Columnes, or other orderly situation in the Paper,) as (by their Position) best to express, to the Eye, their Relation or Respect to one another. As,

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[3] Robert McRuer, "Introduction: Crip Times," *Crip Times: Disability, Globalization, and Resistance* (New York: New York UP, 2018, pp. 1-54), pp. 23-24.

[4] John Wallis, "On Teaching Language to the Deaf (1698)," in *Teaching Language to a Boy Born Deaf: The Popham Notebook and Associated Texts*, ed. David Craam and Jaap Maat (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 283.

Contraries or *Correlatives*, one over against the other; *Subordinates* or *Appurtenances*, under their Principals. Which may serve as a kind of *Local Memory*.[5]

Touching upon the instruction "of *Places*, and *Countries*, which are convenient for him to know"[6] Wallis offers an example column: "*London, England, Europe, the World, &c.*"[7] In this paper, I consider the "&c." in order to explore how the project of deaf pedagogy in seventeenth-century England situated the figure of the deaf man within an emergent discourse of globalism.

Literary criticism of the past three decades has reiterated the persuasive claim that beginning in the late sixteenth-century the English language came to be appreciated as a cultural resource and rebranded as a national language. In this paper, I argue that seventeenth-century deaf pedagogy offers a counter-history to this critical narrative. From its earliest articulation, the project of deaf pedagogy was international in scope. Unlike Thomas Mowbray who felt imprisoned while abroad, the deaf man's lack of a native tongue permitted him a relative degree of mobility—even if such mobility were merely hypothetical. The decision of which language the deaf man was taught to speak was always only a matter of convenience. Moreover, stories of the deaf man who was so adept at lip-reading as to be able to parrot any language encourages thinking of the deaf man as, in a sense, multilingual. Finally, a cultural fascination with the deaf man's facility with gestural communication underwrote certain theories of universal language, most prominently those developed by John Bulwer (1606 - 1656) and George Dalgarno (1616 - 1687). The deaf man allows for the imagination of a language unconstrained by political and national borders.

By situating the figure of the deaf man between emergent discourses of globalism and universal language theory, I ask, "Where is the global in universal language?" Considering the work of Wallis, Bulwer, and Dalgarno, I here argue for the philosophical, cultural, and linguistic importance of the deaf man—and disability more broadly—to a new orientation of England with respect to that tantalizing and promising "&c."

Christine M. Gottlieb
"Hard Hearts": Dis/ability, Race, and Religion in Shakespeare's Venice Plays

When Lear asks, "Is there any cause in nature that make these hard hearts?" (3.2.80-81) he is questioning if hard-heartedness is natural, biological, essential. Is a hard heart an immutable anatomical fact, or do hearts harden (and soften) over time, socially and dynamically? While Lear's question about his daughters' hard-heartedness can be related to gender and Lear's pervasive misogyny, Shakespeare also applies this inquiry in his Venice plays: *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Shylock's supposed hard-heartedness is explicitly linked to Jewishness when Antonio says: "You may as well do anything most hard / As seek to soften that than which what's harder?— / His Jewish heart" (4.1.79-81). In *Othello*, racialization is problematically intertwined with the hardening of Othello's heart, which he describes as "my heart is turned to stone" (4.1.202-3), when he decides to murder his wife. If hard-heartedness is construed as a physiological and emotional difference—a difference that makes someone less humane and less human—then ableism is at play in accusations of hard-heartedness. *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello* explore both essentialism and the social dynamics of oppression and manipulation in their representations of hard-heartedness. Douglas

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[5] Wallis, "Teaching Language," 283.
[6] Wallis, "Teaching Language," 286.
[7] Wallis. "Teaching Language," 286.

C. Baynton has shown how ableism is deeply intertwined with other axes of oppression, including racism and anti-Semitism.[8] While Baynton focuses on American contexts, this paper will explore how racialization intersects with ableism in the global Renaissance by analyzing the nexus of racism, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia in Shakespeare's Venice plays.

Dawn Kaczmar

Much of medieval and early modern discourse on travel was also highly concerned with monsters: they illustrate and inform world maps, are common figures in travel narratives, and are the subject of wonder books. As Geoffrey Goodman wrote in 1616, "Monsters are rare and seldom appear to us . . . [although] Affrica be a fruitfull mother of monsters." If early modern travel is an enterprise concerned with knowledge-building, these monsters seem to lurk in the margins of the unknown. In her monograph *Maps and Monsters in Medieval England*, Asa Simon Mittman defines monsters as a "catch-all phrase which stands in for 'everything else.' Once proper people, plants, animals, divine and demonic beings have been accounted for, what remains are the oddities of creation, which I would describe here as the monsters." What, then, defines what "proper people" are? Because both disability and race are social constructions, we must ask: who constructed them, and why? What is the function of classifying and evaluating bodies? How are such bodies produced, rather than "discovered"? In this essay, I seek to answer this question by exploring the way in which disability and race in discourses on monstrosity function to invent a "proper person" through able-bodiedness and white supremacy.

I argue that monsters are precursors to taxonomical colonial projects of categorization and hierarchization of disabled and racialized bodies. As "unknowns," monsters produce simple binary oppositions between legitimate and illegitimate bodies. Both disability and race are produced by systems that operate by classifying and ranking human bodies— by rendering "unknowns" into classifying "knowns." Early modern maps and monster discourses thus also mark and arrange bodily variation according to geopolitical locations. As Etienne Balibar writes, racialization operates by "*classification*— that is, the reflection within the human species of the difference that constitutes it, the search for criteria by which men can be said to be 'men' . . . Such classification is presupposed by any form of hierarchical ranking." Similarly, Lennard Davis argues that disability is "a categorization tied to the development of discourses that aim to cure, remediate, or catalog variations in bodies." To sort out the way these systems interact, this paper explores bodily variations depicted as "monstrosity" in early modern travel texts to ask: how does a more global awareness in the early modern period inform the way writers thought about and constructed the body?

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Mary Lutze, Loyola University Chicago
"Medieval and Early Modern Religious Models of Disability: Miracle and the Disabled Body"

To date, numerous disability scholars have discussed the reverberations of religious influence over societal perceptions of disability. Especially in time periods significantly marked by the intermingling of religious belief and politics, such as the medieval and early modern eras, scholars have noted the ways that Christian tenets have affected societal interactions with the impaired. In an effort to address the complexity of disability perception, different models of disability perception have been adopted into the terminology used in disability studies. One notable advancement in the theory and discourse of disability studies has been Edward Wheatley's "religious model" of disability posited in *Stumbling Blocks Before the Blind*, where "citing the Bible, patristic writing, and historical documents, [he] posit[s] a 'religious' model of disability that preceded the emerging medical model" (*x*). *Stumbling Blocks Before the Blind* primarily focuses on the medieval era, marking the ways in which religion dictated perception as well as highlighting specific Biblical precedent in both the Old and New Testaments for medieval perceptions of impairment. Had the early modern era never featured a Reformation of religious beliefs, the medieval religious model of disabilities might never have been challenged by heterodox portrayals of disability and the disabled. However, the Protestant faith began with a schism and was commonly characterized as schismatic, if we take into account early modern Catholic propaganda; England's first divorce from the Catholic faith begot future nonconformity and schism. Because of this, the early modern religious model of disabilities becomes intrinsically dynamic – as it negotiated, explored, and ultimately accepted religious multiplicity (and diverse interpretations of the nature, cause, and appropriate responses to disability).

In order to better assess the ways in which the Protestant Reformation impacted and altered medieval religious perceptions of disability, I created my own early modern religious model of disabilities. Because the early modern era was fraught with religious dissent and fluctuation, the early modern religious model of disabilities is conflicted and in flux. As the religious climate of early modern England shifted, so did society's portrayals of disabilities and the disabled in literature. The early modern religious model was first characterized in the sixteenth century by its purposed deviation from the inherited medieval model even as it ironically mirrored it to some degree. In the literature and society of the Middle Ages, with few exceptions, the disabled body was interpreted in the following ways: as a stimulant for charity, an opportunity for miraculous cure, a metaphor for sin in general, and, in its particular form, as symptom of and punishment for sinful acts. In this conference paper, I examine and expand upon one facet of the religious model – interpreting the disabled body as a site for potential miraculous cure – and juxtapose Catholic and reformed reactions to the disabled body in this light.

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Catherine Elliott Tisdale, UMass Amherst
"This heap of loathed deformity:" Diffusive Disability & the Cripped Epistemology of Early Modern Desire[9]

Studies in early modern disability have broken new ground, exploring histories of deformed births, counterfeit disability, monstrosity, prosthesis, and more; yet, desire and disability are rarely thought with together. As Lindsey Row-Heyveld notes in the final chapter of her book *Dissembling Disability in Early Modern English Drama* (2018), if we are "willing to acknowledge the desire of early modern people to break the boundaries of gender, race, and class identities through their use of disguise […] we must accept that this desire extended to disability as well" (214). While Row-Heyveld's work focuses on disguise and counterfeit disability on-stage, I shift focus to the nebulous nature of disability itself in the period, and one's ability to move in and out of states of disability.

I argue that the pursuit of traditional romantic love takes on, what I term, motions of disability. Motions of disability are bodily (and metaphorical) demonstrations of love that necessarily invoke early modern references to bodily inability including lameness, deafness, blindness, and deformity, thereby evidencing an intrinsic symbiosis between deformity and romantic pursuits of erotic desire. By examining motions of disability, I foreground somatic transformation as a register that generates productive overlap between multiple versions of embodiment that disrupt ontologies of the body and present speculative modes of somatic knowing. In doing so, I diffuse our parameters for disabled experience and demonstrate the fundamental role disability plays in early modern ways of thinking about the desiring body. This move to productively crip early modern epistemologies of desire briefly touches on Shakespeare's sonnets 78, 83, and focuses on reading the play *Fair Maid of the Exchange* (1607).

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Zainab Cheema
Cripping the Sovereign Figure of Early Modern Transcoloniality

If crip theory helps us to examine the intersection of disabilities/different abilities and asymmetries of power in globalization, can it also assist us in excavating the relationality between Renaissance figurations of sovereignty and colonialization? David Houston Wood and Allison Hobgood have turned to the medieval/early modern proto-medical humoral model to analyze the marital behaviors of Leontes and Othello from *The Winter's Tale* and *Othello*. In doing so, the political implications of representations of disability emerge in Shakespearean drama's gendered metaphors for the disordered embodiments of power and sovereignty (or the lack thereof). If Shakespearean figures of kingship are inextricably tied to the unstable margins of the early modern state's outward-bound expansion, the concerns with power demonstrated by his Jacobean plays productively interfaces with the verb form of "crip," which can be taken as "radically reinvisioning from committed anti-ableist positions, the taken-for-granted systems in which we are located" (McRuer 22). Accordingly, this paper explores the early modern contexts of disability as a positionality of political critique by exploring figures of disordered, disabled, and disabling sovereignty in *The Winter's Tale* and *Othello* against the backdrop of circulating print material on transatlantic coloniality between England and Spain in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth-centuries. If the humoral body enables transitiveness between environment and biology, how might we read concerns of colonial expansion in the bodily dys/function of sovereign figures such as Leontes? Similarly, given the similarity that scholars have often drawn between Leontes and Othello in their turn towards marital jealousy, what is the political significance between the equivalences that Shakespeare's drama draws between the sovereign of the body politic and its racialized Other? This paper will examine these questions in context to the translation and circulation of colonial ethnographies, medical tracts, and political treatises between England and continental Europe, in particular, Habsburg Spain.

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