INFRASTRUCTURAL DRAMATURGY AND THE POLITICS OF DISABILITY ART AND PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation draws on performance studies, critical disability studies, and critical infrastructure studies scholarship to investigate the infrastructural politics of contemporary disability performance. Throughout, I show how disability performance enacts modes of infrastructural inversion that reveal the politics and ideologies embedded within built, interpersonal, and administrative infrastructures. These inversions highlight how infrastructures provide uneven forms of support across different populations and contexts. I also illustrate the potential of disability performance to reimagine inequitable infrastructures in service of a more inclusive, accessible, sustainable, and just world—a world that enables disabled bodyminds and disability culture to flourish. This dissertation presents a series of case studies that closely analyze works of disability performance and explore how these performances intersect with infrastructures in both theatrical and quotidian contexts. To conduct these analyses, I develop a methodology of infrastructural dramaturgy; an approach that mobilizes the analytical potential of dramaturgy and critical infrastructure studies to emphasize infrastructural elements by attending to the context and composition of a performance. Using the lens of infrastructural dramaturgy, this dissertation engages with works like Alex Bulmer's *May I Take Your Arm?*, Kinetic Light's *DESCENT*, and Hanna Cormick's *The Mermaid*, among others, to investigate the infrastructural politics of sites and practices including sidewalks, access ramps, administrative protocols, and ways of organizing time. Ultimately, in this dissertation I surface the politics, priorities, and value systems embedded within infrastructures and query how they could be altered to better support disabled bodyminds and disability culture. I also illustrate how disability performance is a form of world building that can imagine and materialize worlds that are rooted in the tenets of equity, interdependence, and ethical care.

DEDICATION

To the artists, activists, and scholars named in these pages, for all that they do to build a more just world.

And to my parents, Lois Jackson and Ken Johnson, for modelling how to live with compassion, integrity, humour, and care.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This dissertation was written on two Indigenous territories of Turtle Island. As a settler on this land sometimes referred to as Canada, I want to acknowledge my presence as an uninvited guest on these territories, and to extend gratitude to the past, present, and future Indigenous peoples and elders who steward these lands and waters. I offer this acknowledgment as a way of locating myself in relation to this land, as a way of recognizing and naming the violence of colonization, and as a commitment to supporting efforts towards Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty.

I recognize that York University, where this project was conceived, is located on the traditional territory of many Indigenous Nations, whose relationships with this land long preceded the establishment of the university. The area known as Tkaronto has been caretaken by the Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Huron-Wendat. It is now home to many First Nation, Inuit, and Métis communities. I acknowledge the current treaty holders, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. This territory is subject of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement to peaceably share and care for the Great Lakes region.

I also acknowledge that much of this dissertation was written in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People who I recognize as the past, present, and future caretakers of this land. This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" which Mi'kmaq, Wəlastəkwiyik (Maliseet), and Passamaquoddy Peoples first signed with the British Crown in 1725. The treaties did not deal with surrender of lands and resources but in fact recognized Mi'kmaq and Wəlastəkwiyik (Maliseet) title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations. We are all Treaty people.

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Having spent the last few years contemplating the significance of infrastructural support I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the many relational, institutional, and administrative structures that have supported my time as a doctoral student.

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Finally, I could not imagine negotiating the world of grad school, or the world at large, without the love and support of my family. Mom, Dad, and Alan—the infrastructures of care that we build and navigate together are the most meaningful part of my life. *Thank you.*

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INTRODUCTION

INFRASTRUCTURAL INVERSIONS AND WORLD BUILDING IN DISABILITY PERFORMANCE

Let's begin by following the turtle—an innocuous and perhaps unexpected figure that can be traced through a disjointed genealogy of scholarly projects. I am thinking specifically of Baudelaire's figure of the *flâneur* who would meander through the arcades of late nineteenth century Paris guided by a turtle on a leash. As a detached, autonomous figure that could unhurriedly wander through the streets observing urban life, as Walter Benjamin describes, the flâneur, "demanded elbow room and was unwilling to forego the life of a gentleman of leisure" (54). Benjamin cites the slowness of the turtle walk as enacting a resistance to the increasing pace of modernity, noting that "The *flâneurs* liked to have the turtles set the pace for them. If they had their way, progress would have been obliged to accommodate itself to this pace" (54; original emphasis). Writing years later, and intrigued by Benjamin's brief mention of this "one minor figure in the city," Petra Kuppers invokes the turtle walk in her writing on disability performance (*Disability* 1). In Kuppers's hands, the turtle walk is crosscut with "meanings of disability as a social discourse" and she describes how the absurdity of the act pulls difference out onto the street and disrupts the usual rhythms and visuals of the city (*Disability* 1). In much the same way that disabled artists "question ways of doing, ways of knowing," Kuppers notes that the turtle walk is an event that "tweaks at conventions" of urbanity to become "a minor, tactical insertion into a systemic whole" (*Disability* 2).

Benjamin's and Kuppers's respective engagements with the turtle walk each highlight how unusual (and highly performative) events and activities can intervene in habituated ways of being and re-attune us to aspects of the world that had previously gone unnoticed. Similarly,

throughout this dissertation I consider how artistic objects and performance events can reveal hidden epistemologies, ideologies, and politics that have become entrenched in various kinds of built, social, and administrative structures. As such, although my dissertation does not *directly* take up activity of the turtle walk, it stands as a helpful allegory for framing the themes and foci of my project. My approach also resonates with a reference in one memorable passage in the prologue of Shannon Jackson's *Social Works*. Jackson seizes on Kuppers's reading of the turtle walk to emphasize it as a "cross-disciplinary art performance"—one that is "systemically engaged" in that it illuminates the systems that surround the action (5). For Jackson, it is not only that the turtle walk reveals normative modes of mobility and pace, but also that the event widens the aperture of the scene and "brings the enabling conditions of mobility into view"—in short, it calls attention to the things around the action that allow it to (or prevent it from) occurring (5).

Kuppers's and Jackson's analyses gesture to some of the politics that accompany the turtle walk. The figure of the flâneur has been justly criticized for its normative positionality and its inattention to differentiations across race, gender, class, and ability (Dreyer and McDowell; Heddon and Turner; Serlin; Springgay and Truman, "A Transmaterial"). To undertake a *flânerie* assumes a level of access to public space, leisure time, and economic security that is not equally available, and—as scholars like David Serlin have argued—takes for granted the functionality of the flâneur's body in a way that presumes ablebodiedness (198-199). So too does the consumptive and voyeuristic gaze that is so central to the activities of the flâneur rely on the ability to remain anonymous in a crowd—an anonymity that is often only available for people with normative embodiments, namely white, cisgendered, heteronormative, ablebodied men.[1]

[1] Springgay and Truman maintain that researchers must resist classifying the flâneur's movements as inherently radical—that there is a need to address the labour, violence, and restrictions that control the act of walking for certain people. They argue that researchers "must start recognizing that walking is not always a leisure activity and that particular bodies already labour over walking as work" ("A Transmaterial" 16).

Certainly, the peculiarity of walking a turtle goes some way to undoing the anonymity of the flâneur, and Kuppers's and Jackson's short descriptions of the event point to its potential to subvert the usual sights and activities of the city. The politics that interest me, however, and which are of particular relevance in this dissertation, are those that relate to and accompany the infrastructural context of events like the turtle walk. The infrastructural approach of this dissertation means that the politics of the turtle walk are not limited to only the human-turtle dyad. They can also be found in the duo's relation to their surrounding environment and the structures, materials, and practices that buttress the event of the walk. For instance, how does the materiality and organization of the street impact how human and turtle can comfortably traverse through urban space? Who is responsible for maintaining and cleaning these streets? What kinds of activities and behaviours are permitted in these spaces, how closely are they surveilled, and by whom? I anchor these infrastructural questions with a specific focus on disability performance, a genre that offers an entry point for thinking about how the processes of revealing, reconfiguring, and reimagining infrastructures might push the world towards becoming more inclusive, equitable, sustainable, accessible, and just.

The kind of artistic and performance materials I investigate in the following chapters cover a wide breadth of forms, including theatre, dance, site-specific performance, works of visual and performance art, curatorial practices, and administrative protocols. Performance, therefore, becomes a term that references both staged theatrical spectacles and quotidian events; positioning both as performative encounters that shape the world. As a central pillar to this dissertation, performance is a helpful frame for understanding the embodied, temporal, and relational aspects of these encounters, as well as the ethical stakes and responsibilities they elicit. This is because performance exists both within the world and tangential to it, "challeng[ing] the

lines that would demarcate where an art object ends and the world begins" (Jackson, *Social* 28). In one analytical direction, performance can be understood as an activity that is distinct from everyday life because of how it can delineate time and space, engage a relation between performer(s) and spectator(s), and employ particular forms of "twice-behaved" behaviour (Schechner 36). In another direction, however, as performance studies has long demonstrated, performance is also an activity that permeates daily life—it is something truly *in* and *of* the ordinary world in how it reflects social relations, enacts political meaning, and engenders the creation of identity, community, and culture. This is particularly true with regards to disability performance: a form *of* and approach *to* performance rooted in lived experience of disability and disability culture. Disability performance resists any singular definition, since it stretches across a wide range of aesthetic forms, personal identifications, political leanings, activist lineages, and artistic genealogies. It also emerges in a variety of settings: a term used to describe a staged theatrical work as much as it marks out the quotidian ways one might perform disability in a doctor's office or at a disability pride parade (Kuppers, "Performance" 390-391).

In this dissertation I use "disability performance" to designate artistic works situated within a variety of aesthetic forms and which include at least one of the following characteristics: are created or performed by disability-identified artists; engage with themes or concepts related to disability and impairment (such as embodied difference, access and inclusion, care and interdependence, stigma, ableism, disability justice, etc.); and/or consciously incorporate accessibility protocols into their presentation (such as sign language interpretation, audio description, relaxed performance protocols, etc.). In general, the works that I describe extend a lineage of disability performance that draws on the politicized understanding of disability, an understanding that emerged through a history of disability rights advocacy as well as more recent

developments in disability justice and crip activism.[2] In this view, disability is not a marker of deficiency but is a form of embodied difference that is creatively and politically generative—a way of being where "the disabled subject has asserted itself as having a viable, worthy, and intelligible body, as a body that matters, and as a life worth living" (Fritsch 48-49). I use disability as a shorthand to signal a diverse range of identifications of embodied difference, while acknowledging that this term cannot adequately capture the expansiveness of a community comprised of disabled, Deaf, Mad, sick, crip, neurodivergent, and chronically ill people. As such, my impulse towards describing disability community seeks to locate that community in experience and shared culture but not have it be bound by identity. I follow Eliza Chandler's evocation of disability community as "any time that community is enacted wherein people come together motivated by or through the desire to dwell with disability; a desire which is antagonistic to the normative desire to cure or kill disability" (*Disability* 3).

In line with this perspective, as a constituent part of broader disability culture—which references both the coalescing of a community and a genre of cultural production—disability performance has been used as a way of intervening in ableist societies that devalue and disregard diverse embodiments. Moreover, disability performance remains a critical part of the development of a disability politics that rejects the ways that embodied difference is positioned as tragic, undesirable, and in need of rehabilitation or cure. Kuppers notes how disabled performers, who are often all too aware of the many disparaging conceptions and representations of disability that circulate around them, use "the laboratory of the performance situation" as a

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[2] The term crip emerges from activist and artistic disability communities as a reclamation of the word cripple and a defiant marker of disability pride. Flexible in its application, crip is deployed as an adjective, verb, and noun and while it opposes the medial model it also extends past the social model to become what Robert McRuer describes as "an in-your-face, or out-and-proud, cultural model of disability" (*Crip Times* 19). There is also a close relationship between crip and queer, as both "ge[t] at processes that unsettle, or processes that make strange and twisted" (McRuer, *Crip Times* 23). For further engagement with the term see Kafer; Kuppers, *Eco Soma* 205n4; McRuer, *Crip Theory* and *Crip Times* 18-24; Sandal "Queering."

site to re-examine and repeatedly question these ideas (*Disability* 3). Bree Hadley demonstrates how artists with disabilities intervene in public space in order to "challenge cultural anxieties about corporeal and cognitive differences" as well as to "negotiate new ways of relating with self, others, and society" (*Disability* 27). In addition, as Chandler observes, disability arts "is vital to the disabled people's movement for its imaginings and perpetuations of new understandings of disability and new worldly arrangements that can hold, even desire, them" ("Disability" 458-459). Chandler's words resonate with how Patty Berne describes disability justice as "hold[ing] a vision born out of collective struggle . . . [with] disabled people visioning a world where we flourish, that values and celebrates us in all our myriad beauty" (qtd. in Piepzna-Samarasinha 21). Disability justice is a movement, framework, and practice developed by and centering disabled, queer, trans, and gender non-conforming people of colour.[3] It exposes how "ableism is inextricable from white supremacy, patriarchy, heterosexism, transphobia, colonialism, and poverty" and seeks to collectively dismantle all forms of structural oppression that devalue marginalized populations (Schalk and Kim 48). Disability justice draws on performance as a way of articulating itself, forming community, and—as Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha writes—conjuring a "prefigurative politics" that relates to "the idea of imagining and building the world that we want to see *now*" (149; emphasis added). What Kuppers, Hadley, Chandler, Berne, and Piepzna-Samarasinha point to is how disability performance, in whatever form it takes, has the capacity to reveal, intervene in, but also reimagine sedimented ways of being and/or structures that are antithetical to the flourishing of disabled people.

[3] The framework of disability justice was conceived in 2005 in the San Francisco Bay Area by disabled, queer of colour activists Patty Berne, Mia Mingus, Stacey Milbern, and Leroy F. Moore Jr. and disabled trans activists Sebastian Margaret and Eli Clare. The arts collective Sins Invalid coalesced around this framework shortly thereafter, following conversations between Berne, Moore, Amanda Coslor, and Todd Herman. For more on the history and practice of Sins Invalid see Kafai.

Building on this work, I show how disability performance can both intervene in and reimagine the world in relation to infrastructure. Drawing on insights from critical infrastructure studies, in this dissertation I argue that infrastructures are essential to world building projects because of how they structure, support, and orient the relations and activities of everyday life. Infrastructures—in both material and ephemeral forms—impact and organize our habits, routines, domestic tasks, commutes, social connections, labour pursuits, and leisure time, and are also fundamental to the provision of social, political, and economic services. Because infrastructures are critical to how humans construct and sustain worlds, to make any change within our current reality demands that we rethink and reorganize their existing configurations. But what exactly *is* an infrastructure? Rather than conceived as a singular 'thing,' infrastructures are better thought of as composites of intersecting and interdependent practices, systems, regulations, objects, procedures, standards, and technologies. Jessica Lockrem and Adonia Lugo describe infrastructures as "the systems that enable circulation of goods, knowledge, meaning, people, and power." Generally, they are secondary structures that facilitate *other* forms of action or movement to occur; "enablers" whose purpose "is not to pursue their own ends, but rather to create the conditions that promote the achievement of wider societal objectives" (Filion et al. 3). Although often imagined to be a term exclusive to built structures, infrastructures can be found across material, social, affective, cultural, technological, digital, administrative, and organizational domains. That is, in addition to being surrounded by physical infrastructures like roads, sidewalks, sewer systems, and electrical grids, our lives are also shaped by more ephemeral infrastructures in the form of social conventions, organizational practices, technical standards, and interpersonal relationships. As Keller Easterling notes "The shared standards and ideas that control everything from technical objects to management styles constitute an

infrastructure" (16). I therefore consider infrastructure to be a broad term that describes the many material and immaterial systems and structures that scaffold human engagement and activities in the world. The infrastructures that I discuss in this dissertation include built structures, interpersonal relationships, and administrative practices, each of which enact particular kinds of spatial, temporal, material, affective, and political effects. Tracking these effects shows how infrastructures form the netting that underpins our lives and, as Henry Petroski succinctly describes, become "blueprints against which we gauge the world" (22).

Critically, however, these blueprints, their effects, and their politics are not always visible or immediately apparent. Despite their ubiquity, infrastructures often go unnoticed since they tend to operate in the background of daily life, just as the prefix '*infra-*' implies.[4] Although "the popular imagination might recognize infrastructure as the mundane mechanisms within, beneath, and supporting the maintenance of quotidian life" the work of many critical infrastructure scholars has been to "foregroun[d] the agency, performativity, and dynamism of infrastructure" (Howe et al. 548). Likewise, performance is a form and a practice that has the potential to refuse the invisibility of infrastructure. The dual nature inherent to performance—as something both in the world and tangential to it—offers just enough distance and perspective to become a kind of analytic crowbar in relation to infrastructure. Performance pries open the box to reveal where and how infrastructure operates, and to expose its embedded political and ethical frames. Whether in the form of a staged spectacle, a living installation, or a turtle walk through the city, performance proffers moments of "infrastructural inversion" that reveal how different forms of infrastructure are operating in the world (Bowker 10). This revelation provides an opportunity to interrogate infrastructure's politics, ideologies, and norms. Such interrogation is necessary

[4] From Latin 'infra,' meaning below.

because, as Akhil Gupta argues, "There is no such thing as politically neutral infrastructure" (66). Moreover, Filion and colleagues note that infrastructures not only integrate societal functions but are also "factors of partition that advantage certain interests at the expense of others" (3). Infrastructures, therefore, are inherently uneven and inequitable in their usage and effects. Using performance to attend to the hidden infrastructural politics in/of contemporary life is one way of ensuring that the world we are building is increasingly equitable, diverse, and socially and economically just.

Further, because built, administrative, and social infrastructures have enacted significant forms of discrimination, exclusion, and oppression against people with disabilities, I find disability performance to be a particularly relevant genre for interrogating the exclusionary or unjust aspects of infrastructure. To that end, I canvass a wide swath of disability performance as a way of thinking broadly about the relationship between disabled bodyminds[5] and different forms of infrastructure, and as a way of revealing the politics that are lodged within various kinds of infrastructural objects, relations, and systems. I analyze each performance through a lens of infrastructural dramaturgy, a method of performance analysis that investigates the infrastructural issues and politics that accompany and live through different forms of performance (described in more detail below). This analysis attends to both the performance work itself and the work's surrounding context, while also elucidating critical insights about the infrastructural politics that impact people with disabilities. Bringing these infrastructural politics to light situates the performances within specific sociopolitical contexts, and thus offers insights into the sociopolitical imaginings and constructions that fashion the world. Here, I draw on disability performance's capacity for world building—what Chandler describes, as noted above,

[5] Following Margaret Price, I use the term bodymind to indicate the entangled and inseparable nature of body and mind.

as “new worldly arrangements”—as a means to rework, reimagine, and ultimately transform infrastructures in ways that make them more just, sustainable, and supportive in relation to disabled bodyminds (“Disability” 458). In other words, disability performance not only unearths infrastructural inequities, but offers alternatives. By considering the kinds of infrastructural politics that disability performance reveals, as well as how it shifts our relation to different infrastructures, I query the kinds of practices, experiences, and ethical responses such shifts provoke, positioning these as forms of infrastructural inversion that are ultimately acts of world building.

This project holds three primary objectives. Most generally, it aims to demonstrate how performance—as both an act of artistic/cultural production and a methodological frame—can be an entry point for revealing and investigating the many material and immaterial infrastructures that scaffold contemporary life. To do so it draws on a critical infrastructure studies perspective to develop a form of performance analysis that I term ‘infrastructural dramaturgy.’ This approach is applied across varying contexts to this dissertation’s primary object of study: disability performance. The second objective is to investigate the ways that disability performance—as a delineated but decidedly broad performance genre—reworks and reimagines infrastructures through acts of infrastructural inversion. I position this as a form of world building that thinks beyond notions of individualism, progress, and productivity to instead fashion worlds that are rooted in interdependence, justice/equity, and care. Though this approach considers the ways that infrastructures might become more accessible, inclusive, and sustainable, it also troubles these terms and equally engages with the moments of antagonism, tension, and impasse that these performances surface. The final objective of this project is to conceptualize infrastructures as more than just static objects and sites, but rather as dynamic meeting points for various social,

political, cultural, and material relations. This perspective recognizes the co-constitutive interactions between disabled bodyminds and infrastructure, and conceptualizes how—alongside more concretized acts of performance— infrastructures *themselves* perform in ways that unearth the infrastructural relationships and infrastructural politics that exist within various artistic, cultural, and social settings.

In line with these three objectives, this introductory chapter seeks to map the theoretical terrain of this project, outlining a selection of scholarship that has furthered my thinking around the infrastructural issues related to disability performance. I begin by defining (and noting connections between) the three main objects of my study—performance, infrastructure, and disability. I then present a literature review organized around four dominant characteristics of infrastructure: i) its secondary or backgrounded nature; ii) its relational nature; iii) its political nature; and iv) its capacity for world building. In this review, I draw on scholarship from performance studies, critical disability studies, and critical infrastructure studies that engages with infrastructural issues or perspectives. In the second half of this chapter I devote attention to the methodology and scope of the project. I conclude by providing a brief outline of the chapters to follow.

THE INTERDISCIPLINES OF PERFORMANCE, CRITICAL DISABILITY, AND CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE STUDIES

Performance studies, critical disability studies, and critical infrastructure studies are 'inter-' or 'trans-'disciplines: fields that draw together a variety of methodological approaches and disciplinary orientations around their object of study. The expansive focus and shifting

nature of these three fields make them challenging disciplines to define and work within.[6] However, the broad purview of these fields is also a strength because it opens up many entry points for analysis. I mobilize working, cursory definitions of the keywords from each field so as to retain a sense of each term's irreducible and uncontainable nature.

Performance studies is a field that "takes performance as an organizing concept for the study of a wide range of behaviour" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 43) and which draws on 'performance' as both its object of analysis and a methodological approach. This broad scope has engendered both praise and criticism.[7] Ric Knowles notes that it oscillates "between, on the one hand, taking a certain set of behaviours—performances—as its purview, and on the other constituting and analyzing everything as performance" ("Afterword" 384). This breadth leads Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett to describe performance studies as a "postdiscipline of inclusions" (43), and Henry Bial and Sara Brady to wonder if it is "properly a discipline at all, or is it a kind of way station, an academic version of Grand Central Station, where ideas and idea-makers brush up against each other on the way from one place to another?" (2). The lack of clear limits on what constitutes performance means that performance theorists study artistic forms like theatre, dance, music, and performance art, and also investigate a diverse array of contemporary and historical events, expressions, encounters, discourses, practices, and objects that are situated across social, cultural, political, economic, and digital domains. The boundaries of performance are constantly contested and redrawn by artists and theorists (Bial and Brady 59), and it emerges

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[6] Indeed, while writing this dissertation I often turned to Bial and Brady's poetic description of the unknowability of performance studies when I was feeling unmoored from the boundaries of the discipline. They write: "To be a performance studies reader is to work without a net, to walk on hot coals, to search in a dark alley at midnight for a cat that isn't there. Like the lovers on Keats' Grecian urn, performance studies readers are eternally in pursuit" (1-2).
[7] In *Professing Performance* Shannon Jackson shows how the multiple and divergent intellectual and institutional genealogies of theatre and performance studies have led to the term being understood differently and deployed inconsistently.

differently depending on cultural location (D. Taylor 3) and disciplinary situatedness (Jackson, *Professing*).

Diana Taylor notes that she finds the very indefinability of performance studies reassuring and describes the field's unbounded nature as its "greatest promise" (15, xvii). I too appreciate performance studies' breadth and feel that its range of objects, events, practices, and encounters allows for new epistemological means with the potential to unseat rigid disciplinary divides. Performance studies does not constrain social or cultural meaning, but approaches performance as "a complex layering of narrative, site, body, and matter that ultimately refuses to privilege any one form of knowing" (Levin and Schweitzer 35). The capaciousness of performance studies offers the chance to move between the theatrical and the banal, the micro and the macro, the live and the mediated, all the while paying equal attention to the many discursive, structural, material, and embodied acts that constitute a range of performative encounters. At the same time, to cast off the bounds of any definition and read everything as performance risks misrecognizing the meaning, efficacy, and impact of sociocultural events and practices beyond their aesthetic relevance. Dylan Robinson (Stó:lō/Skwah) voices an important critique of performance studies in relation to Indigenous cultural practice, noting that the desire to position Indigenous ceremony and tradition as "performance first" effaces the functional and cultural significance of these practices as forms of politics, history, and law-making (212). Robinson identifies a colonial impulse in performance studies that would "min[e]" Indigenous cultural practices for their "performance resources" (212). His critique is a necessary counter to the capacious range of the field and underlines the necessity of paying careful attention to context and positionality in any performance analysis.

The performances that I analyze in this dissertation are primarily those that are conceived within an artistic frame like theatre, dance, or performance art. They are staged works that organize bodies in time and space, invite some form of witnessing or spectatorship, and draw on heightened forms of address that help distinguish them from everyday encounters. However, the *range* of form, approach, and content within the performances that I consider is vast. This is partly due to my personal interest in multidisciplinary work that stretches the boundaries of artistic form and that consciously blurs the line between 'performance' and 'everyday life.' It also, importantly, reflects the fact that many disabled artists choose to create across disciplines so as to provide multiple entry points and modes of sensory engagement with their work.[8] I appreciate how disability performance exceeds formal and artistic boundaries, and focus my analysis on how these varied forms/genres/types/approaches are taken up by disability artists in ways that relate differently to infrastructure and highlight different infrastructural politics.

Disability studies has also sought to retain an openness to the definition of disability to account for how the term has become "attached to such diverse experiences and meanings, and produced such a wide range of social, political, and personal consequences" (Adams et al. 31). Initially emerging from sociology and social policy, as the field of disability studies coalesced it signalled a recognition of disability as an experience and issue that could offer critical traction outside of the purview of medical and rehabilitative fields. Disability studies understands disability not as an individual malady housed within an impaired bodymind, but as an experience that is socially constructed and which varies across time and space in accordance with political, socioeconomic, cultural, and historical contexts. This social model of disability distinguishes

[8] Yo-Yo Lin, a New York-based, Taiwanese American artist who works across disciplines like dance, sound, performance, and animation, cites interdisciplinary practice as a disabled practice and describes how "most disabled artists are interdisciplinary because of the nature of our evolving bodies—the ways we move through the world, we're always adapting" (qtd. in NowThis News 00:01:05-17).

between 'impairment' and 'disability'; locating the latter in the oppressive, ableist, and disabling systems and structures that prevent impaired bodyminds from flourishing (Finkelstein; Oliver, *The Politics* and *Social Work*). Thinking of disability as a social construction positions it "not as an isolated, individual medical pathology but instead as a key defining social category on a par with race, class and gender" (Kudlick 764). The social model has helped to unify people with disabilities as a rights-seeking minority group and has brought a renewed interest in identifying and remedying the social, environmental, and infrastructural barriers that discriminate against disabled people.

The social model is not without its detractors, and critiques against it have emerged alongside a more recent critical turn in the field.[9] The scholarship I engage with in this project can primarily be situated under this banner of critical disability studies, which has begun to rethink the conventions of disability studies in accordance with postmodernism (Shildrick, "Critical"), identity politics and intersectionality (Ben-Moshe and Magaña; Erevelles, "Thinking"; Goodley; Mollow, "Identity"), cultural models of disability (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary*; Snyder and Mitchell; Waldschmidt et al.), global and postcolonial perspectives (Meekosha; Nguyen; Puar), and other critical theorizing of race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, and power (Erevelles, *Disability*; McRuer, *Crip Theory*; Minich, *Accessible*; Mollow, "Unvictimizable"; Samuels, "Examining"; Schalk, *Bodyminds*; Schalk and Kim; Tremain). This critical reflexivity within the field has broadened the concept of disability, not only in terms of the kinds of embodied experiences and identifications accounted for, but in how disability has moved beyond being an object of study to also emerge as a mode of theorizing (Minich,

[9] The primary critique of the social model was that it too strongly discounted the experiences of impairment and thus glossed over distinctions between specific experiences of disability. See Crow, "Including"; Fritsch; Shakespeare and Watson; Wendell.

“Enabling”; Schalk, “Critical”) and a space for cross-movement and coalition politics (Kafer). I seek to retain a dual understanding of disability: as a particular and individualized embodied experience and relationship to the world and also as a lens or way of framing how we understand the world. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson offers a poetic description of disability as “the etchings left on flesh as it encounters the world”—a description that captures the varied transformations of our bodyminds that arise from encounters with particular environments (“The Case” 342). Thinking of disability in this way means it is important to attend to how specific impairments give rise to particular ways of being. At the same time, disability can be understood as a method for framing and interrogating the systems of power that organize and hierarchize bodyminds according to standards and normative ideals. The duality of this definition means that individual identities, locations, and experiences both matter significantly and are generalizable. It means that disability is particular and situated while also being everywhere. It means recognizing that while identifying as disabled can be politically and personally meaningful, it is imperative to “mak[e] room for those who do not or cannot recognize themselves in crip” (Kafer 16; see also Ben-Moshe and Magaña; Puar). This dual understanding of disability also aligns with my positioning of disability performance: as both a practice that emerges from the experiences of disability-identified artists, as well as a performance genre that takes up themes related to disability, but which may not directly map onto or reflect an individual experience or identity.

This dissertation’s third field of study, critical infrastructure studies, is similarly broad in scope. The ubiquity of infrastructures means they appear straightforward; however, the concept of infrastructure is wide-ranging to the point of being unwieldy. Brian Larkin describes how infrastructures’ “peculiar ontology lies in the fact that they are things and also the relation between things”—specifying that this ability to shift between being object and system make

infrastructures “conceptually unruly” objects of study (“The Politics” 329). The boundary-crossing ontology of infrastructure—as something that can be material, social, and philosophical (Howe et al. 549), as well as increasingly technical/digital (Edwards et al.)—means that infrastructure as a concept “has a capaciousness and scope that makes it both an infinitely useful concept and a concept that is open to facile misinterpretation or to being encumbered by overuse” (Howe et al. 549). Susan Leigh Star identifies the specific methodological challenges of studying infrastructure, not the least of which is its ability to exist across scales from the micro to the macro. This flexibility of scale challenges the capability of any researcher or single research study to understand infrastructure holistically (Star 383).

Earlier I described infrastructures as consisting of a combination of objects, technologies, standards or regulations, and practices or procedures. As Stephen Slota and Geoffrey Bowker write, infrastructure “is not so much a single thing as a bundle of heterogeneous things” (531), and these bundles arrange and configure the world in particular ways. As a means of definition, Star and Karen Ruhleder propose eight common dimensions of infrastructure, many of which I discuss at points throughout this dissertation. These include embeddedness, transparency, reach or scope, learned as part of membership, links with conventions of practice, embodiment of standards, built on an installed base, and becomes visible upon breakdown (Star and Ruhleder 113). I use these dimensions to guide my analysis, however my focus is primarily related to what infrastructures *do* and the kind of politics and ideologies which they hold. AbdouMaliq Simone writes that infrastructure surrounds us, exists in-between us, but also “exerts a force: not simply in the materials and energies it avails but also the way it attracts people, draws them in, coalesces and expends their capacities” (“Infrastructure”). In other words, infrastructure acts upon us in particular ways, shaping our views and our experiences. It is through infrastructure that we are

enabled (or not) to do certain things and live in certain ways. Recognizing this, performance theorists and disability scholars have drawn on infrastructural issues as a means of explicating some of these politics and to detail the ways that infrastructures shape their object of study. I detail some of this scholarship here, considering it alongside critical infrastructure studies, and thematically organizing it around four dominant characteristics of infrastructure. This scholarship outlines the theoretical terrain of my project and "sets the stage" for the topics covered in the case studies to follow.

i) Infrastructure's Backgrounded Nature

Infrastructures are often background structures that operate below the surface or behind the scenes and which are usually put in place prior to the activity that they facilitate or enable. This quality is highlighted by Slota and Bowker who describe infrastructure as "refer[ring] to the prior work (be it building, organization, agreement on standards, and so forth) that supports and enables the activity we are really engaged in doing" (529). In this rendering, infrastructures are supportive, exist prior to, and are secondary to the actual activity that is of chief concern. The secondary nature of infrastructure is further exacerbated because they are often literally hidden from view, as in the case of infrastructures like sewer systems or server farms—things which are "sunk into and inside of other structures, social arrangements and technologies" (Star 381). This leads to infrastructures being undervalued in and of themselves, something that can also be compounded because, as Susan Leigh Star observes, infrastructures are assumed to be "singularly unexciting" and "frequently mundane to the point of boredom"—hardly the makings of a stimulating research topic (377).

Further, even when infrastructures are visible, they often fade into the background because they are *intended* to operate in as much of a self-sustaining fashion as possible (Harvey

84). To this end, Bowker and Star describe how infrastructures are "learned as a part of membership" within a community and that—regardless of their initial visibility—once their function and attributes are learned and naturalized, they become so familiar that they no longer warrant attention (35). Therefore, often the only moments when infrastructure does become visible is when it ceases to work as expected. As Shannon Jackson describes, there are "wider apparatuses of labor and infrastructure [that] support our self-figuration, but often it is only when there is a break in their service that we register their presence" (*Social* 7).

To counter their secondary nature, an important aim of critical infrastructure studies is to foreground infrastructure by enacting what Geoffrey Bowker describes as an "infrastructural inversion" (10).[10] This analytical move aims to make infrastructures visible through a "figure-ground reversal . . . which brings the background to the foreground" (Hetherington, *Infrastructure* 6). Infrastructural inversions "struggle against the tendency of infrastructure to disappear" and involve "learning to look closely at technologies and arrangements that, by design and by habit, tend to fade into the woodwork" (Bowker and Star 34). We can draw a parallel to artists who seek to make visible the "backstage" operations of performance—indeed, Star cites Erving Goffman's work and draws on the metaphor of "going backstage" as a way of describing the act of uncovering the invisible parts of infrastructure (385). In many performance traditions, the mechanisms behind and around performance are intended to remain invisible and hidden from the audience, lest they ruin the conceit happening onstage. Other approaches to visual, theatre, and performance art have highlighted the mechanisms of performance as central

[10] Bowker initially coined the term infrastructural inversion in his monograph *Science on the Run*, which discusses the organizational framework of the oilfield company Schlumberger's infrastructural approach in developing scientific research. The term is explained in more detail in *Sorting Things Out*, co-authored with Susan Leigh Star. Interestingly, to explicate the term Bowker and Star make a comparison to the arts, citing an argument by Howard Becker in *Art Worlds*. As they note, "Most history and social analysis of art has neglected the details of infrastructure within which communities of artistic practice emerge. Becker's inversion examines the conventions and constraints of the material artistic infrastructure and its ramifications" (34).

forces in meaning-making or as a mode of social critique. A well-known example from theatre studies is Bertolt Brecht's concept of the *verfremdungseffekt,* which deploys acting, staging, and narrative techniques (such as "the direct and indirect use of narrator, the conspicuous use of songs, masks, placards and images set in a montaged narrative sequence") in order to defamiliarize the theatrical act so that spectators retain a critical awareness of both the performance and its connection to society (Brooker 191). Shannon Jackson has considered how visual artists have used performance techniques to expose and comment on the institutional structures of the art world. For example, in *Social Works* Jackson cites Andrea Fraser's performance *Museum Highlights*—in which Fraser personifies the role of the museum tour guide—and notes how the performance bears a strong resemblance to the acting technique championed by Brecht. By depositing live performance into a museological context, Fraser defamiliarizes the act of the guided tour and thus reveals the infrastructures (such as the discursive and embodied labour of tour guides) that scaffold the site.

Jackson's work has been important for showing how performance is used as a mechanism to reveal the necessity of infrastructural support on both aesthetic and social systems. My dissertation is most indebted to Jackson's articulation of the concept of an "infrastructural aesthetic" in performance—an aesthetic where social goals and artistic forms collide in ways that make visible the "public and material contingencies of everyday existence . . . exposing the non-autonomy of persons and the interdependencies of worlds" (*Social* 211-212). She advances this concept by tracking the "social turn" in artistic practice and arguing that performance is particularly adept at foregrounding systems of support. This is because of performance's inherent reliance on the coordination of bodies across time and space (14) and because it "both activates and depends upon a relational system" (30). For Jackson, focusing on the convergence of the

social and the aesthetic in performance leads to an "infrastructural politics of performance" that celebrates performance's capacity for "disruption and de-materialization," without losing track of its emphasis on "sustenance, coordination, and re-materialization" (29).

Alongside *Social Works*, Marlis Schweitzer's *Transatlantic Broadway* has also shaped my thinking on the concept of infrastructure. Schweitzer conducts a historical study of the development of Broadway and charts how different kinds of "infrastructural performances" engendered the development of this musical genre (36). Drawing on actor-network theory (ANT) and new materialism, Schweitzer focuses on the transnational flows of hidden networks, administrative practices, and material objects that contributed to the development US commercial theatre in the years leading up to World War I. Her work makes critical linkages between infrastructure and material studies, contributing to a turn to new materialism in theatre and performance studies scholarship.[11] Further, like Jackson, Schweitzer seeks to unearth the often-occluded infrastructural elements around performance. Part of the significance of *Transatlantic Broadway* is that it attends to practices that are often overlooked because of their mundanity, recalling Star's concern that infrastructures are understudied because of their "singularly unexciting" nature.[12] For example, Schweitzer examines the administrative practices of the twentieth century "modern office"—practices that were of critical importance to the ways in which goods, information, and bodies circulated to support the development of Broadway and, which, Schweitzer argues, are "as much a site of performance as the many theatres [they] labor[ed] to fill" (105). As I discuss in Chapter Three on administrative practices in relation to

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[11] It is also worth noting that disability studies recently experienced its own materialist turn. See Crilley; Mitchell et al.; Walsh.

[12] As Schweitzer notes, "*Transatlantic Broadway* foregrounds the infrastructural acts of human and non-human actors, complicating historical tendencies to privilege the loudest, most visible actors, typically white, middle-class adult males" (5).

disability arts, administrative and organizational systems are equally infrastructural and hold as many infrastructural politics as physical systems like sewers and electrical grids. Schweitzer's analysis surfaces the gendered and classed labour politics of the Broadway offices, thus demonstrating how a social justice agenda can be revealed by "study[ing] the understudied" and "valorizing previously neglected people and things" such as the mundane infrastructural systems and practices that permeate everyday life (Star 377, 379).

My dissertation dovetails with Jackson's and Schweitzer's work in how it seeks to surface the hidden infrastructures that support artistic practice and social life. However, my research diverges from their projects in key ways. While Schweitzer's new materialist focus has fostered my awareness of the importance of the materiality of infrastructure, I primarily elect to focus on human interaction with infrastructure. To that end, while my dissertation continues the theme of infrastructural support present in Jackson's *Social Works*, I do so with a specific emphasis on the inequalities that emerge between disabled bodyminds and infrastructure. Though Jackson makes a few key references to disability (including, as mentioned, her engagement with Kuppers's reading of the turtle walk), her interest is primarily on relational art and tracing how artists have drawn on performance as a mode of social practice in order to emphasize human dependency on systems of support.[13] This leads to Jackson's generative retooling of long-standing debates related to the autonomy/heteronomy of the art object, and her analysis of how these debates are reflected in the dis/avowal of social supports. I agree with Jackson that "political art discourse too often celebrates social disruption at the expense of social coordination" and that to disavow our reliance on infrastructural and institutional support means

[13] In addition to Jackson's reference in *Social Works* to Kuppers's writing (4-5), disability is foregrounded in her reading of Vivian Sobchack's work (5-7), and she makes reference to disability performance in relation to prostheses and support (37). Disability also emerges as a theme in Jackson's discussion of Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset's *The Welfare Show* (188-204).

"we lose a more complex sense of how art practices contribute to inter-dependent social imagining" (14). The disruption that disability performance seeks, however, is not built around rejecting systems of support. As I show throughout this dissertation, many disabled artists already consciously and necessarily integrate support into their aesthetic frames. My research focus on disability performance orients my analysis in different ways from Jackson because the infrastructural politics surfaced by these performances are complicated by how concepts of autonomy, support, and independence register differently when situated within a history of disability activism, art, and scholarship.

ii) Infrastructure's Relational Nature

Schweitzer's *Transatlantic Broadway* is a significant text for how it emphasizes the relational quality of infrastructure. Schweitzer draws on Robin Bernstein's formulation of the "scriptive thing" to discuss how specific objects (such as promotional materials) and infrastructural assemblages (such as the telegraph) orient human movements and actions. Bernstein defines the scriptive thing as an object that "broadly structures a performance while simultaneously allowing for resistance and unleashing original, live variations that may not be individually predictable" (69). As Schweitzer notes, "Such things do not force humans to interact with them, but rather encourage or suggest certain uses" (152). This focus has furthered my thinking on the materiality of infrastructure and the differing ways that it exerts a force on its users, enabling and dissuading different possibilities for action.

Thinking of infrastructure as a scriptive thing leads us to consider the relation between user and object as the site of experience. In "Steps Toward an Ecology of Infrastructure," Susan Leigh Star and Karen Ruhleder position infrastructure as fundamentally relational and, following Yrjö Engeström's chapter "When is a Tool?," argue that rather than asking *what* is an

infrastructure, the more necessary question is to ask *when* is an infrastructure. Infrastructure, in this formulation, is more than merely an object ready-to-hand, but rather becomes itself "in relation to organized practices" (Star and Ruhleder 113). Extending this notion further, Slota and Bowker argue that "There is no system that is inherently infrastructural; there are only observed infrastructural relationships" (531). Attending to how humans relate to infrastructure is a key component for "thinking infrastructurally" (Chu 353). Infrastructures are "without absolute boundary or a priori definition" and not limited to static objects, systems, or structures; they emerge through our relation to them (Star and Ruhleder 113).

The relation between infrastructure and disabled bodyminds is often pronounced because of the absence of appropriately supportive infrastructures. For example, Arseli Dokumaci's concept of "microactivist affordances"—developed from James Gibson's ecological theory on the possibilities afforded by a given environment—describes the (often mundane and ephemeral) practices created and enacted by people with disabilities to replace "whatever affordance fails to readily materialize in their environments ("People" 98). Microactivist affordances range from specific ways that disabled people might interact with objects, move through the world, or engage with daily routines ("Vital"). Dokumaci has also investigated the ways that people and relationships become affordances, a focus that connects to my discussion in Chapter One of performances that enact interpersonal and relational forms of infrastructure.[14] Dokumaci positions these activities as "activist" because they are transformative actions that build a different kind of relation to the world. This resonates with Aimi Hamraie and Kelly Fritsch's

[14] During her ethnographical fieldwork in Turkey with people who have chronic pain and mobility-related disabilities, Dokumaci learns from one participant that his father would carry him to and from school each day because there was no proper road, transportation system, or wheelchair access to support his mobility. The lack of infrastructure led to a new relationality between father and son—a relating that became its own form of infrastructural support, called forth by the material conditions of the duo's daily life. See Dokumaci, "People."

development of crip technoscience, a term used to describe "politicized practices of non-compliant knowing-making" in disability communities (4). Hamraie and Fritsch describe how "Crip technoscience conjures long histories of daily adaption and tinkering with built environments" undertaken by disabled people, particularly forms of protest that sought to remake the material world (5-6). This work points to the ways that infrastructural systems are built, contested, and remade in relation to disabled bodyminds. This is exemplified in the case studies that follow, which show that while infrastructures might offer possibilities to the user (that is, seek to "script" the encounter), they ultimately emerge not as a given object or system but in relation to use.

Dokumaci's and Hamraie and Fritsch's work highlights how new ways of moving, being, and living can emerge out of the frictions between the disabled bodymind and its environment, as well as in response to the presence or absence of infrastructural supports. Infrastructural conditions also give rise to particular kinds of artistic expressions, which is emphasized in Kirsty Johnston's and Bree Hadley's writing on disability theatre in Canada and Australia, respectively. Johnston's work serves as an important touchstone for the focus of this dissertation in that it helpfully demonstrates how disability theatre developed in relation to existing artistic infrastructures while also creating new infrastructural systems that specifically responded to the needs and desires of disabled artists. In *Stage Turns*, Johnston reviews a selection of the companies and performances that contributed to the coalescing of disability theatre in Canada, teasing out how the field emerged in tandem with the disability rights movement, the rise of disability studies, and against a backdrop of Canadian disability politics. The context in which Johnston positions these histories is of particular interest to me, because—while her analysis does not neglect issues related to representation of disability—like me Johnston is also invested

in the structural and material surrounds that configure such representations. As such, her analysis is most focused on the driving impulses behind disability theatre, the dramaturgical and infrastructural mechanisms that support it, and the critical and spectatorial responses it receives. A similar infrastructural focus is found in Bree Hadley's "Disability Theatre in Australia." Taking an ecologies approach, Hadley attends to how the country's current and emerging disability theatre is influenced by a "range of upstream production infrastructure, downstream distribution infrastructure, general public infrastructure, as well as specific arts production practices" ("Disability" 307).[15] Hadley's work is instrumental for showing how a wide range of infrastructures—from policy and funding to education and training—organize the disability theatre ecology and influence public perception of disability. As one example, Hadley notes how austerity measures have resulted in the Australian government primarily funding the margins of the disability theatre ecology, namely the "superstars rated as excellent in mainstage aesthetic terms" and community art that engages "non-careerist therapeutic participants" ("Disability" 317). The resultant lack of funding for disability artists not on these margins—those whose work is often artistically innovative and invokes a more radical politics—risks bifurcating the ecology into two distinct streams and obscuring alternate narratives of disability beyond "disabled people as inspirations and/or charity cases" ("Disability" 318). Johnston's and Hadley's work is importantly linked to their geographical context, and they each demonstrate how infrastructural issues influence individual works of disability theatre, narratives of disability, and orient the broader field of disability arts.

[15] Hadley's distinction between upstream and downstream infrastructure recalls Ric Knowles's discussion in *Reading the Material Theatre* of how the "conditions of production" and "conditions of reception" each influence how a performance is understood. I discuss this in Chapter Three in relation to administrative infrastructures.

Positioning infrastructure as relational also adds an important qualification to our understanding of the infrastructural inversion. Critically, because infrastructures emerge differently depending on people and circumstance, infrastructures are not *inherently* backgrounded or secondary in all contexts and to all users. In a performance context, for example, the lighting rig is not a background infrastructure to theatre technicians, nor is the ticketing system secondary to front of house staff. Infrastructural inversions, therefore, occur in accordance with one's position and relation to that infrastructure (Hetherington, *Infrastructure* 7; Larkin, "Promising" 186). As such, the work of infrastructural inversions is often—*but not always*—to foreground what is backgrounded. It can also be about revealing the uneven relations, politics, and impacts of infrastructure. Because infrastructural inversions depend on the position of the observer, to situate infrastructure as *always* and *only* "something that is built and maintained, and which then sinks into an invisible background" fails to capture the different experiences and the "ambiguities of usage" that these structures and systems evoke (Star and Ruhleder 112, 113).

Sasha Costanza-Chock provides a salient example of the uneven emergence of infrastructure when recounting their experience traveling through airport security as a nonbinary trans femme. Costanza-Chock notes the discrepancy between how the security officer and the scanning technology each perceive their gender. This discrepancy leads to Costanza-Chock's body being flagged as "risky" and "trigger[s] an escalation to the next level in the TSA security protocol" (3). This anecdote demonstrates how infrastructures are backgrounded and foregrounded differently depending on context, identity, and "compatibility" in relation to

infrastructure.[16] Because Costanza-Chock must submit their body to further investigation, surveillance, and scrutiny, airport security infrastructure is very present in their experience of travelling and becomes foregrounded in a way that it may not be for cisgender travellers. As Costanza-Chock argues, "Most cisgender people are unaware of the fact that the millimeter wave scanners operate according to a binary and cis-normative gender construct; most trans* people know, because it directly affects our lives" (3).

As such, throughout this dissertation I consider infrastructural inversions not only as a move from background to foreground but more so as a multidirectional inversion that provides the opportunity to investigate the politics and ideologies embedded within infrastructure. While working with this language of infrastructural inversion I remain attuned to scholars who have complicated the premise of this kind of figure-ground reversal. For example, Andrea Ballestero argues that there is a particular set of presuppositions that must be in place to allow for such inversions, since "Shifts between figure and ground do more than invert orders. They index a form of meaning transformation that speaks less of the contents of the figure or ground and more about people's capacity to effect the transformation in the first place; they reveal the capacity to effect a reversal" (23). Ballestero observes that to invoke an inversion assumes that there is a separation—a "sliver of space"—between figure and ground, and this assumption is troubled by conceptualizing infrastructures as relational (24). Ballestero's concerns are reflected in Laura Levin's concept of "performing ground," a mode of performance analysis that considers how the

[16] *When*, *how*, and *if* infrastructures are backgrounded also explicates their politics. As Brian Larkin argues, the in/visibility of infrastructures is not part of their ontology but is "made to happen as part of technical, political, and representational processes" ("Promising" 186). Larkin reminds us that infrastructure's appearance as spectacular, mundane, backgrounded, or visible can be imposed through the political (and often performative) "practice of occulting" ("Promising" 186). For example, for Larkin, the processes by which infrastructural knowledge is relegated to the domain of "experts" or a government neutralizes infrastructural debates through the imposition of technological or administrative logic warrant critical scrutiny in how they shift the levels of transparency surrounding infrastructure. We might also think of the literal ways infrastructures are concealed, as with the "antenna tree"—the process of disguising cell towers as trees (Parks).

human body commingles with its surroundings in both aesthetic and political spheres (13). Rather than invoke a simplistic inversion to foreground that which is backgrounded, Levin insists upon a more complex understanding of how the individuated human figure is enmeshed with and/or extends its environmental backdrop. Levin's work offers a way of thinking about how the human figure is constituted by and through its spatial and environmental situatedness, and embedded in such a way that it is not possible simply to flip between background and foreground. These nuances inform my own analysis, offering a helpful critical lens on the methodology of infrastructural inversions.

iii) Infrastructure's Political Nature

Infrastructures hold politics and ideologies that are embedded in their form and which circulate according to their use. Costanza-Chock's experience travelling, for example, exposes the gender politics that are encoded in the human and technical infrastructure of airport security. This infrastructure operates with the expectation of cisgenderism and its bias towards gender normativity reflects how all infrastructure "holds values, permits certain kinds of human and nonhuman relations while blocking others, and shapes the very ways in which we think about the world" (Slota and Bowker 530). It therefore important to interrogate how infrastructural politics and ideologies can engender uneven and unjust experiences of being in the world.

Built infrastructure is a crucial area for interrogating infrastructural politics because its biases can be obscured by the seeming neutrality of its materials and form. For example, Laura Levin and Kim Solga analyze how Toronto's cultural infrastructure was used to perform specific narratives that would position Toronto as a global city, one poised to take the "world stage." This global narrative was embedded into built form primarily through the renovation of the exterior facades of high-profile Toronto art institutions. Levin and Solga reveal the politics of this

infrastructural investment, which—although it was ostensibly about improving public space and public access to culture—did little to address actual access barriers like high ticket prices and limited leisure time (40). Levin and Solga's critique resonates with the observation from critical infrastructure studies that flashy infrastructural investment is often made by cities or nation-states in order to perform a particular image, even when it holds little utility or only benefits a select few. As Appel and colleagues note, "Shiny new airports with huge capacities are built in many countries although they only serve a tiny elite, whereas less glamorous infrastructures, which would actually be more useful to the poorer segments of the population, are ignored or overlooked" (19).

As Levin and Solga demonstrate, infrastructural politics can be overtly performed through infrastructural investment.[17] But it is also crucial to recognize that infrastructural politics can be insidiously woven into the fabric of the structure—"a form of politics beyond words" that is performed in varying levels of transparency via the arrangement/materiality of the infrastructures themselves (Barney 239). This is demonstrated by performance theorists who consider how performance has shaped (and been shaped by) urban and built infrastructure. For example, Michael McKinnie and Susan Bennett each analyze the relationship between urban geography and theatre to demonstrate how civic identity is formed through built infrastructure.[18] For both McKinnie and Bennett, urban cultural infrastructures "enable literal and figurative

[17] For example, at the time of this writing, the Canadian government has just announced a ten billion dollar infrastructure investment—spread across initiatives like broadband networks, clean energy, and agriculture—as a means of bolstering the economy following the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020. The unveiling of these infrastructural plans are discursive performances that relay promises "of forward movement, of accelerated transition from the past to the future" (Harvey 87)—exemplifying how certain kinds of infrastructural politics can be overly performed.
[18] McKinnie examines ideologies around civic-ness in Toronto—how theatre was used to smooth transitions of economic change and to uphold a kind of economic consumption that was portrayed as being "civically affirmative" (19). He also considers the relationship of theatres to their physical buildings and their connection to urban development, location, real estate, etc. Bennett focuses on Calgary and develops a methodology of "cultural topography." She chronicles a history of Calgary's built environment and cultural infrastructure to demonstrate how built space supported a particular kind of vision of "cityness" (44).

performances of place" that detail what kind of place a city *is* and what it desires to become (Bennett 43). Similarly, Marvin Carlson's historical study of the semiotics of theatre architecture analyzes the location of different theatres, the ways that theatre is situated within urban space, the aesthetics of the built space, and the internal organizational of theatrical venues (from their layout to their decorations) to understand how performance is accessed, experienced, and perceived as culturally relevant. Carlson shows, for instance, how the consolidation of royal power through the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance reconfigured how cities were organized and prompted theatre to move inside to palaces and aristocratic residencies, thereby accruing a status as a private and elite event.

Carlson's analysis demonstrates how theatre and performance venues are never neutral but are shot through with values, politics, and ideologies that often seek to consolidate power in particular ways. These uneven matrices of power and infrastructural exclusion within the built environment are made especially clear with regards to disability. As Tobin Siebers observes, "Public aversion to disability may begin with individual human bodies, but escalates rapidly to form a network of wider symbolism that includes nonhuman bodies, buildings, and many other structures found in the built environment" (70-71). Inaccessible built environments exclude disabled bodyminds, and lead to people with disabilities becoming what Rosemarie Garland-Thomson describes as "misfits"—a concept I explore in Chapter Two and which symbolizes how "the shape and function of [disabled] bodies comes in conflict with the shape and stuff of the built world" ("Misfits" 594). Petra Kuppers and Carrie Sandahl have each noted how the physical layout of performance spaces conveys the exclusionary politics built into the physical space. As Sandahl notes, "The layout of physical space tells us who is in it and who can participate and at what levels. Spaces also have controlled access, dictating the power

relationships based on who can and cannot enter where" ("Considering" 23). When the stage, rehearsal spaces, box office, and costume shop are inaccessible to those who use mobility devices, for example, this indicates that disabled people are not wanted in those spaces. Kuppers describes how her attendance at the theatre surfaces questions around who is present, who is absent, and how different bodies exist in and move through the space. As she notes, "The theatre is an apparatus, a machine, and alternative embodiments like mine make the supportive mechanisms appear behind the curtains" (*Theatre* 2).

iv) Infrastructure's World Building Capacity

Infrastructures of all kinds are susceptible to constant transformation, despite their tendency to appear rigid and unchanging. This constant transformation means infrastructure should be conceived as "a changing set of processes that are often lively, powerful, and uncertain" (Graham and McFarlane 12). Infrastructures' capacity for change opens the possibility that they can be rethought and rebuilt towards a better world. To enact any change, however, requires that attention be drawn to the specific ways that infrastructures are exclusionary and inequitable. Enacting such change is inherently challenging, since, as Jan Derbyshire observes in relation to mitigating inaccessibility and exclusion in Canadian theatre, "if a system works for you, why would you question it?" (266). Derbyshire contends that "even though theatre people are said to be good at imagining things for our creations, we seem to be deficient in imagining what we do not know, inside our theatre spaces" (266). In this dissertation I show how disability performance is able to address both of Derbyshire's concerns. First, my dissertation positions disability performance as a way of uncovering and questioning the uneven politics and ideologies within infrastructural systems, and second, my analysis is invested in how those revelations inspire new ways of imagining infrastructures so they can become more accessible, equitable, sustainable,

and just. I explore how an infrastructural lens on disability performance surfaces the many ways that disabled artists are engaging in acts of world building via the particular ways that they structure, relate to, and move through everyday life in relation to infrastructure. Eliza Chandler describes how artists engage in practices of re-worlding through which they "are generating and exhibiting new knowledges that will change worldly arrangements" ("Disability" 461). Chandler compares the work of artists Kent Monkman (Cree) and Carmen Papalia, noting how they each remake the world but through different vantage points. Monkman's paintings push for Indigenous resurgence by offering a counter narrative that rescripts histories of colonial settlement as colonial genocide, and Papalia's public performances allow him to take up space as a non-visual learner in contexts where his presence is (at best) unanticipated and (at worst) undesired. Together, these artists enact moments of re-worlding that intervene in the present, while also reimagining the conditions of the past and the future. A second, more infrastructurally-focused example of world building is Jan Derbyshire and Heidi Taylor's revision of the Playwrights' Theatre Centre's (PTC) playwriting program. Derbyshire and Taylor sought to redesign the program to make it more inclusive and accessible—transforming it into a "one size fits one" model that could "include the widest spectrum of creators possible" (Derbyshire 264). To do so required structural changes in audition and casting procedures, a commitment to working in accessible spaces, reconfiguring the program schedule, and attending to issues outside the program like public transit. Not all changes were implemented successfully, but the efforts to reconfigure the program towards more inclusive ends allowed the artists to imagine—and to start to build—new ways of working together. Derbyshire gestures to the world building potential of this initiative in noting that the most successful part of the program "was the creation of a shared space, filled with diverse participants who came together not only to reflect

upon the way we've always done things, but to experience what is needed . . . [for] full participation for artists of difference" (268).

Being in the business of creating imaginary worlds, performance is an important site for world building, and performance theorists and disability scholars have engaged with notions of world building in assorted ways and under a variety of terms.[19] Jill Dolan describes how the theatre is where she "first learned to articulate and sometimes to see realized my own hopes for some otherwise intangible future" (3). From this Dolan developed her concept of "utopian performatives"—the "small but profound moments in which performance calls the attention of the audience in a way that lifts everyone slightly above the present, into a hopeful feeling of what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically striking, and intersubjectively intense" (5). Dolan seeks to articulate why people choose to attend the theatre, and posits that it might be, in part, "to reach for something better, for new ideas about how to be and how to be with each other to articulate a common, different future" (36).

The infrastructural world building discussed in this dissertation aligns with Dolan's positioning of the utopic in that it too offers the sense of a different future "beyond this 'now' of material oppression and unequal power relations" (7). Importantly, however, I do not view the entanglement of disability performance and infrastructure as fleeting or partial in the same way that Dolan describes utopic performatives (6-7). For Dolan, the utopic is always in process, and the utopian performative is constituted "by the inevitability of its disappearance; its efficacy is

[19] In line with the infrastructural focus of this dissertation, my preference is for the term "world building." But similar terms—including world making, worlding, world design, possible worlds, and re-worlding—proliferate across scholarly, philosophical, and artistic domains. While it is beyond the scope of this project to parse through the distinctions and different genealogies of these terms, work on world building in media studies is a particularly interesting entry point into this discussion. See Boni; Wolf.

premised on its evanescence" (8). Though the performances I discuss may be ephemeral, considering them through a lens of infrastructural dramaturgy witnesses and traces the lasting material impacts and infrastructural reconfigurations they engender. Already in this section we have encountered examples of the ways that disability enacts moments of literal world building, such as Dokumaci's observation of the microactivist affordances enacted by disabled people, or Hamraie and Fritsch's discussion of how crip technoscience practices can remake material-discursive worlds. These acts are utopic, vital, and necessary. As Shayda Kafai reminds us through their writing on the disability arts collective Sins Invalid, the painful history of erasure and eugenics against disabled people makes the act of leaving material traces all the more urgent. Kafai references the title of Mia Mingus's disability justice blog—*Leaving Evidence*—as "a strategy and larger metaphor . . .[that] it is a profound and transformative act to leave evidence that we lived, that we struggled, that we thrived" (92). To that end, Faye Ginsberg and Rayna Rapp describe many ways that disability intervenes in the material conditions of everyday life, particularly in spaces that have historically excluded people with disabilities. Ginsberg and Rapp discuss how disability engages in the practice of "worlding"—a term they devise from two philosophical lineages of "world making"—as a way of describing how "disability worlds come into being, even in the face of continuing discrimination" (183).[20] They offer many artistic examples, such as the ways museums have transformed their exhibitions by including access features (such as audio description, Braille signage, programming for disabled people, or curating work by disabled artists) and the ways that theatres have integrated relaxed performance protocols into their shows (185-186). This resonates with another example in which Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha recollects a Toronto performance of the touring arts incubator

[20] Ginsberg and Rapp cite one lineage from philosopher Neil Goodman's *Ways of Worldmaking*, and the other from Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (183-184).

Mangos with Chili (an initiative for queer and trans artists of colour, co-founded by Piepzna-Samarasinha and Cherry Gallette). The show included sign language interpretation, childcare, fragrance free seating, wheelchair access, and many other elements that welcomed an audience of "cross-disability, parenting, and mixed-class community" (Piepzna-Samarasinha 155). This show was a material manifestation of Piepzna-Samarasinha's efforts towards a "prefigurative politics," since the structural access provided at the event allowed for people to attend who, as Piepzna-Samarasinha describes, were "the movement and the community I want to live in and make art for and with" (155).

A momentary aside: accounting for gaps, disconnections, erasures

The performances featured in this dissertation—as with these examples by Piepzna-Samarasinha, Ginsberg and Rapp, and Kafai—can be situated within a genealogy of disability activism that is not satisfied with merely positing the *possibility* of better futures for people with disabilities, but which is committed to enacting such futures through (messy, frictioned, politicized) material interventions.[21] While I often use the word "imagining" to describe the ways that disability performance opens space to consider new ways of engaging with, constructing, and relating to infrastructure, I want to be clear that the infrastructural possibilities wrought by disability performance should not be thought of as only representational or without material consequence. Rather, I invoke Hamraie and Fritsch's understanding of crip technoscience as a frictioned approach whereby disabled people undertake "practices of critique, alteration, and reinvention of our material-discursive world" (2). My approach uncovers the infrastructural and material traces

[21] Here I am thinking of direct-action protests such as the 504 Sit-in in 1977 and the Capitol Crawl in 1990 in the United States, as well as the events in Berkley, CA in the late 1960s when disability activists poured down cement and took sledgehammers to sidewalks in order to create accessible ramps and curb cuts.

left by disability performance—showing how it intervenes in and reimagines infrastructural systems in ways that can literally remake and reorient us to the world.

These performances also enact forms of world building that seek to counter ableist structures and support the flourishing of disabled people. Focusing on these activities is necessary to counter the dominance of other world building projects that would seek to further marginalize, exclude, and even eliminate disability from public life—what Rosemarie Garland-Thomson describes as "eugenic world building" ("Building" 2).[22] At the same time, I want to resist making unrealistic claims that disability performance can or ought to single-handedly and completely transform the structures that exclude or oppress disabled people. While I wholeheartedly believe in the transformative potential of disability arts practices—echoing Chandler that they can imagine and perpetuate new understandings of disability and the world—throughout this dissertation I also want to refrain from a simplistic narrative of transformation in relation to disability performance, and try to temper how effusively I describe performance's emancipatory or liberatory impacts.[23] As Tanya Titchkosky shows in *The Question of Access*, neither the embodied nor symbolic presence of disability guarantees access and inclusion for people with disabilities; disability can remain excluded even within the tenets and practices of inclusion (14).

Instead of understanding such limits as simply negative, I explore them with the aim of discerning how disability performance operates within the material realities of inaccessibility, or

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[22] For Garland-Thomson these are projects and initiatives that would seek to eradicate disability "through varying social and material practices that range from seemingly benign to egregiously unethical" ("Building" 2). Examples include inaccessible environments, medical technologies like genetic manipulation and selective abortion, and ideologies around who counts as a desirable citizen. Such practices fit under an ethos of what Alison Kafer describes a "curative imaginary," a concept I discuss in Chapter Four.
[23] José Esteban Muñoz offers a similar qualification in noting: "It is important to keep in mind that not all performances are liberators or transformative. Performance, from the positionality of the minoritarian subject, is sometimes nothing short of forced labor. […] Minoritarian subjects do not always dance because they are happy; sometimes they dance because their feet are being shot at" (*Disidentifications* 189).

the gaps, divides, and erasures that proliferate contemporary life. I heed geographer David Bissell's warning that the extreme popularity of relational theories in the social sciences (such as ANT, new materialism, and affect theory) risks overlooking the disconnections, gaps, and absences that are equally important parts of everyday life. This approach recognizes the ambivalence of infrastructure—which is a connective force but one that also, often, engenders moments of disconnection. For example, though it is often used synonymously with development, creation, and progress, and "presented in most planning documents as fulfilling an integrative role" (Filion et al. 6), infrastructures often exist in a state of decay, disrepair, or breakdown. Shannon Mattern argues that "Infrastructures fail everywhere, all the time" and that breakdown is now "our epistemic and experiential reality." This reality is also being driven by private interests that increasingly seek to disassemble networked infrastructure. As Graham and Marvin argue in their study on urban infrastructure, despite the usual rhetoric that positions infrastructures as public services which add cohesion and connection to cities, these systems are becoming increasingly fragmented as they are "'opened up' to private sector participation in the management and provision of services" (13). This constitutes an "infrastructural unbundling" that is reshaping social and spatial relations globally in ambivalent, uneven, and often destructive ways. At the same time, infrastructure has been a driving force of settler colonialism—a way of "carv[ing] up [Indigenous lands] into preserves of settler jurisdiction, while entrenching and hardening the very means of settler economy and sociality into tangible material structures" (LaDuke and Cowen 244). In this case, unbundling or creating gaps in infrastructure (through blockades, sits ins, dismantling) become desired forms of Indigenous resistance and resurgence that work against the violence of infrastructural connection that would further colonizing interests.

As such, the desire to acknowledge and celebrate connection—in other words, to focus exclusively on access, inclusion, and interdependence —can obscure the moments in which these are not available, or the contexts in which gaps and breakdowns can be politically enabling. As Judith Butler cautions, "The temptation to rejoice in interconnectedness . . . should be quickly tempered by the recognition that these forms of interdependency can be mired in conditions of inequality and exploitation" ("Human Traces"). In response, my approach aims for a balance between seeking out moments of connection and interdependence while acknowledging the gaps and inequalities that exist.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach of this dissertation is a mode of performance analysis I call *infrastructural dramaturgy*. Dramaturgy is a practice that is well versed in accounting for multiple layers of text, narrative, character, scenography, music, and physical action within a play or performance. This lends itself to my project in that a dramaturgical approach can account for the diverse and composite nature of infrastructure. I posit that this approach can also hold space for the dis/connections described above, the moments when different viewpoints or priorities sit uneasily alongside each other and from which spring moments of conflict or unease.

Dramaturgy's capacity to stay with uncertainty and unknowability makes it well-suited to the reality of disability performance as a practice that is entangled, messy, and ambivalent—a practice filled with conflicting perspectives and seemingly irreconcilable ideologies. Georgelou and colleagues, for instance, advocate for dramaturgy that resists the pull towards theatrical coherence, instead positioning it as a "catalytic" practice that "aim[s] at activating a process through interruptive and often destabilizing operations" (18). Rather than shoring up the

boundaries of performance, therefore, dramaturgy is a practice of expansion that can use moments of entanglement or discord to reflect on and develop new possibilities or alternatives.

To explicate this approach, I begin by citing a passage from Robert Sullivan's forward to *Underneath New York*, a book by Harry Granick that outlines the pipes and cables that make up the sunken anatomy of New York City. Sullivan provides an evocative image of Granick's approach:

> Imagine grabbing Manhattan by the Empire State Building and pulling the entire island up by its roots. Imagine shaking it. Imagine millions of wires and hundreds of thousands of cables freeing themselves from the great hunks of rock and tons of musty and polluted dirt. Imagine a sewer system and a set of water lines… (qtd. in Graham and Marvin 19-20).

Sullivan's image of pulling a city up by its roots and shaking its infrastructure free of dirt and debris exemplifies the notion of infrastructural inversion by describing the act of *literally* inverting a city in order to examine and better understand the structures that support and enable it to function. To my mind, this image is also an apt metaphor for the concept of infrastructural dramaturgy that this dissertation develops. Infrastructural dramaturgy is an analytical approach that considers the artistic work itself but also looks beyond the work to situate it within a surrounding web of infrastructural activity. Akin to the idea of pulling a city up by its roots, infrastructural dramaturgy considers what it means to invert a performance: pulling it up by its roots, shaking it, and examining the kinds of "wires," "cables," or "sewer systems" that might tumble forth.

On one hand, I hesitate at the extractive edge embroiled in Sullivan's imagining and bristle at how forcefully it demands visibility through the image of violently ripping apart

Manhattan Island. I hold that there is some value in the unknowability of performance and want to resist the colonizing mindset that would demand and assume a right to legibility. I am reminded, for example, of Billy Collins's rebuke of those who refuse to gently coax out the meaning of a poem: ". . . all they want to do / is tie the poem to a chair with rope / and torture a confession out of it . . . beating it with a hose / to find out what it really means" (58).[24] Earlier I cited Dylan Robinson's admonishment of performance studies, which is connected to a specific concern regarding the appropriation and extraction of Indigenous cultural practice for aesthetic or intellectual ends. However, I hear echoes of a similar sentiment in Collins's and Robinson's words, namely, a resistance to how the demand for knowledge, precision, and clarity can efface—or even violently erase—the essence of a practice. Geoffrey Proehl and colleagues suggest that an openness to the known *and* the unknown is a central part of a dramaturgical sensibility, and I seek to remain open to what is unknowable in my analysis (10). Despite these misgivings, I am committed to what might be gleaned by engaging with such an approach as outlined by Sullivan. What emerges when we shake loose the internal scaffolding that supports performance? How might this elicit different kinds of politics or ethical understandings than those which appear on the surface? Might this approach offer an entry point into uncovering and assessing the broader infrastructures surrounding the performance event? And—specifically in relation to disability performance—how might this approach allow us to include and take seriously the ways in which disability interacts with, rubs up against, and potentially transforms the different infrastructures that orient our worlds?

Dramaturgy

[24] Collins's poem was introduced to me by dramaturgs Mark Bly and Brian Quirt and remains an important touchstone for my own dramaturgical practice. It reminds us to engage with art by sensing its contours, feeling its textures, and attuning to its vibrations—allowing its meanings to unfold (or not) in their own time.

By situating their relationship in a disability frame, my research uncovers a natural synergy between the two seemingly disparate fields of dramaturgy and infrastructure studies. Though diverse in its application, dramaturgy is a field of study that is attuned to structure and context. It involves analysis of the composition of a play text or performance (Turner and Behrndt 3), as well as a work's historical and material backdrop, in order to understand how the elements of dialogue, character, narrative, scenography, and audience combine to form the whole. Dramaturgy also, somewhat confusingly, is a term used to refer to the process of doing dramaturgical work, or undertaking a dramaturgical analysis—that is, the word dramaturgy slips between being a noun and verb, referring to both concept and practice.

This multivalent use of the word stems from Western theatre history's narrative of the emergence of the dramaturg and dramaturgical practice. The first officially named dramaturg was the eighteenth-century German theatre critic and playwright Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781). In 1767 Lessing began his tenure as resident critic for the Hamburg National Theatre, an appointment which led to "the activity of the dramaturg [being] established as writing, critiquing, evaluating, and imagining a better future for the theater" (Profeta 4).[25] Two centuries later, another German theatre maker—Bertolt Brecht—developed the role of the production dramaturg, usually understood to be the person in the rehearsal room "charged with converting ideals into onstage realities" (Profeta 5). In contrast to Lessing's role as an institutional dramaturg, a production dramaturg is a member of the artistic team, a move that sought to "bring the dramaturges out from behind their desks, away from the piles of scripts and books and into the rehearsal room" (Turner and Behrndt 149).

[25] Lessing's biweekly publication *Hamburgsiche Dramaturgie* included a series of essays and critical reflections on play structure, acting, audience, as well as the future of German theatre and theatre criticism—work that linked the figure of the dramaturg to various literary and critical aspects of theatre. Even now, dramaturges often work under the title of "literary manager," thus noting the connection between dramaturgy and theatrical texts.

In recent decades, the field of dramaturgy and the notion of dramaturgical work has evolved and grown considerably, and dramaturgs can now be found across all artistic forms and within a variety of non-artistic milieux. It is also common that dramaturgical work occurs even without the presence of the named role of the dramaturg. For example, Georgelou and colleagues encourage a conception of dramaturgy as a collaborative and process-based practice that occurs in common space—a depersonalized and democratized form of dramaturgy that shares the dramaturgical responsibility across all artistic collaborators (16-17).[26] Pil Hansen articulates a similar kind of dispersed dramaturgical responsibility in the context of dance; describing how "dramaturgical agency" is not imposed by a singular dramaturg's ideas but rather emerges from collaboration between creators and in response to methods of generating performance (1).

<u>Infrastructural Dramaturgy</u>

This breadth of dramaturgical work emboldens me to develop infrastructural dramaturgy as a mode of performance analysis concerned with "thinking infrastructurally" (Chu 353) in order to demonstrate how performance opens a space through which to attend to the infrastructural elements, relations, and politics of contemporary life. Infrastructural dramaturgy retains the notion of dramaturgy being about analyzing the *composition* of a performance, considering the elements and syntax that come together to constitute a performance. I also insist that these

[26] While Georgelou and colleagues promote this perspective as a means of advancing a certain political impetus within dramaturgical practice, it also exemplifies the way that dramaturgy functions today. For example, though the term is growing in use in North America, it remains more common to find people doing dramaturgical work under various other titles. This is exemplified in Brain Quirt's interview with three stage managers, which speaks to the dramaturgical elements of their role (see Quirt, "The Dramaturgy"). There is value in demarcating dramaturgical work under the domain of a dramaturg, which is exemplified by the ongoing professionalization of the field and the development of organizations like Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas (LMDA), which has chapters in Canada, the USA, and Mexico; the Dramaturgs' Network in the United Kingdom; and The Fence in Sweden. However, Georgelou and colleagues' disinterest in the role of the dramaturg is a helpful reminder that dramaturgy is not a special, cordoned off, or exclusive domain, but is an ongoing activity happening under different guises. It evokes Marianne Van Kerkhoven's assertion that "dramaturgy involves everything, is to be found in everything" and Adrian Heathfield's observation that "Wherever there is a performance taking shape there are a set of dramaturgical questions being asked and dramaturgical principles being tested" (qtd. in Georgelou et al. 17).

elements are *contextual* and located—happening in a particular setting and locale that holds particular sociopolitical resonance. As such, the analysis in this dissertation oscillates between composition and context. This framework is distinctive because it specifically seeks out and prioritizes infrastructural elements in its analysis. Infrastructural dramaturgy draws inspiration from the many observations that scholars have made about the characteristic attributes and elements of infrastructure, considering them as complex and responsive structures and systems that emerge through our relation to them and which orient our engagement with the world. This framework is indebted to the extremely paradoxical nature of infrastructures: how they exist in both material and immaterial planes, symbolize notions of progress even as they decay, and operate both in plain sight and as a hidden substrate to daily life. As such, the compositional analysis of the performances is not necessarily a list of usual dramaturgical components, such as narrative, setting, and character, but rather consciously prioritizes aspects of the performance that reveal, replicate, evoke, or highlight forms of material or immaterial infrastructure, or reveal or infrastructural politics. Likewise, the contextual analysis illuminates how the performances intersect with, engage, or refuse their infrastructural circumstances.

Composition and context converge at what I identify to be the three primary "impulses" that organize infrastructural dramaturgy. First, this approach considers the infrastructure of the performance itself—how it is constructed, how its elements relate to each other, and what its composition communicates. Second, this approach seeks to reveal the relations between performance events and the infrastructures against which they are situated. What kinds of material and immaterial infrastructures do these performances rely on? Are there any infrastructures that might impede the development, presentation, or reception of the performance? How are artists reimagining infrastructure through their performance work? Third,

this approach directly attends to the politics, priorities, and value systems embedded within those infrastructures—the often unseen or unaccounted for ideologies that the infrastructures themselves perform. Given the powerful ways that infrastructures shape our environments, our relations, and orient us to the world (often with uneven and unacknowledged consequences), revealing the politics and ideologies within these structures is necessary for ensuring they are contributing to the creation of a more just world. The potential of disability performance to reveal, reconfigure, and reimagine those infrastructures—in a sense, disrupting and reconstituting their 'dramaturgy'—is a central focus of this dissertation.

I understand these three impulses of infrastructural dramaturgy as inextricable and co-constitutive. As such, in the case studies that follow my analysis moves fluidly between describing the performance, its surrounding infrastructure, and its accompanying politics. Moreover, depending on the performance, one aspect of its infrastructural dramaturgy may take precedence. Though I elect not to make sharp distinctions between these impulses in my analysis, the first impulse of this approach most closely resembles what might traditionally be understood as a dramaturgical analysis, whereas the second and third impulses reflect an *expanded* dramaturgy. The latter follows a tendency in many artistic spheres whereby scholars and practitioners have called for "expanded" understandings of their creative practices—understandings that can account for the ways creative practice is situated alongside and engages with social and cultural issues. In the field of scenography, for example, McKinney and Palmer advocate for an approach that can "explain the diverse ways in which contemporary forms of scenography can operate or reflect the political, social, cultural or ecological impact that scenographic interventions can make through performance events" (1). Likewise, the field of dramaturgy has also "expanded" in recent decades, with scholars locating dramaturgy in various

non-theatrical contexts, and with many considering the political thrust of dramaturgical practice (Romanska 5-14). This work is couched under a variety of qualifying terms—alongside 'expanded' dramaturgy (Eckersall, "Towards"; Turner) one can also find analogous work described as 'new' (Eckersall et al.; Trencsényi and Cochrane; Van Kerkhoven), 'experimental' (Eckersall, "Locations"), 'postdramatic' (Kaynar; Lehmann and Primavesi; Tuchmann), and 'porous' (Turner and Radosavljević). All of these terms aim to address the way that theatre and performance is responding to contemporary social life through new aesthetic forms and content, often in ways that push it beyond the immediate confines of the proscenium.

Critically, my description of the infrastructural composition and context of these performances is not intended to be definitive or restrictive. Like Turner and Behrndt, I attend to composition in my approach, but I do not attempt "to pin down the meaning of a work once and for all" (4). Infrastructural dramaturgy is meant to be attuned to the many elements that constitute performance, while remaining expansive and open enough to reflect the fact that performance is "always in process, open to discussion through both rehearsal and performance" (Turner and Behrndt 4). Peter Eckersall describes dramaturgy as something that "expands categories, operations and the imagination" noting that it "should not be compared to an industrial process of 'straightening' theatre to make it more accessible, popular or commercial" ("On Dramaturgy" 242). In line with this perspective, I approach my analysis with a keen sense of what Stacy Alaimo describes as "epistemological humility" as a way of "keeping my own desires for comprehensive theoretical mapping in check" (*Exposed* 5). This is an approach that leans toward openness, not ossification.

As such, rather than a defined method of analysis, infrastructural dramaturgy is a way of orienting oneself to performance. Ric Knowles employs a similar methodological openness in his cultural materialist study in *Reading the Material Theatre*. He writes

> Although it employs a theoretical *method* then, of self-conscious and invested analysis, it does not attempt to create a theoretical template that can be applied to performance analysis in any context; rather it attempts to articulate and demonstrate an open-ended practice in which the theoretical approach, "object-of-study," and theatrical and cultural contexts are each both malleable and mutually constitutive. (22; original emphasis)

I value this methodological approach for the flexibility it affords my analysis, and for how it allows me to situate myself as researcher. A more prescribed method would both risk my own subjectivity being obfuscated in the analysis and risk re-inscribing an allegiance to a false sense of objectivity (and the accompanying power dynamics of that kind of epistemological stance) that is so prevalent in research. One of the strengths of the flexibility within humanities research is that it attempts to avoid notions of a universal truth, or what Donna Haraway has described as "the god-trick, of seeing everything from nowhere" ("Situated" 581).

When I engage with infrastructural dramaturgy as an analytical framework in the following chapters, the kinds of infrastructural elements and politics that I identify (both within the performances and surrounding them) are apparent to me because of my own perspective, experience, identity, and subjectivity. Disability and impairment have been present in my personal and familial life for many years, but disability as a politic and an identity is something that emerged in relation to my work with disabled artists. I have worked as a dramaturg and as an access support person for disabled artists since 2016 and this work has enlivened my artistic sensibilities, attuned me to the aesthetic and political complexities of access, and emphasized the

critical need for infrastructural support. Many of the themes in this dissertation have emerged from this engagement with disabled artists, performers, and cultural workers. My analysis is also importantly complicated by my own complex and shifting relationship to disability, impairment, and disability community. I do not claim the identity of disabled for myself because my white, cisgendered, visibly nondisabled bodymind does not bear the brunt of stigma or oppression. The unmarked positionality that I hold affords me many layers of privilege, safety, and access that allow me to navigate the world with more ease than I would otherwise. At the same time, I have lived in oscillating states of chronic pain for years at a time, experiences which introduced me to the ableism and strange disavowal of disability that exists in the medical system and in university accessibility services. I am also a caregiver for my father who has Alzheimer's disease, a role which continues to reconfigure my relationship to disability, activism, stigma, and allyship in complex ways that I still struggle to articulate.

While I do not wish to make the analysis *about* me, and therefore do not always noticeably insert myself into the analysis, what is important for me to articulate here as I outline this approach is that infrastructural dramaturgy is an analysis that would necessarily look different in the hands of another researcher. The analysis that follows is guided by my own disability politics—a perspective that is animated by the shifting presence and severity of my own impairments, my experiences as a dramaturg for disabled artists, the joys and pains of caregiving, and my continued learning about the various ways that ableism manifests in the world. These threads bind together to create my analytical orientation. This openness is precisely the point, and one of the strengths of infrastructural dramaturgy being an approach rather than a precisely delineated method.

Project Scope and Limitations

Acknowledging my positionality in relation to this project brings me to a few other qualifications related to the scope and limits of this dissertation. First, I want to recognize the importance of language and semantics related to disability for shaping and reflecting societal attitudes towards disability. I choose to alternate between person-first and identity-first language, which each relate to different models of disability and lineages of disability activism. Person-first language ("person/people with disabilities") emerges from the disability rights movement. It seeks to destigmatize disability by putting the person before the disability to counter the tendency for a person's impairment to become a defining characteristic. This language is used in disability legislation, in organizations like the United Nations, and by many disability organizations and associations. The latter ("disabled person/people") is the preference in many disability communities who see this language as affirming and validating to the ways that disabilities are inseparable from a person's identity. Identity-first language is also linked to a lineage of disability activism and disability justice movements, and some argue that it better denotes the socio-political conceptualization of disability (Titchkosky, "Disability" 137-138). Further, by repositioning disability as a verb rather than an adjective, identity first language also invokes the social model by reflecting the ways people are disabled by ableist, inaccessible, and stigmatizing environments. Recognizing the importance of both semantic lineages, and also noting that the artists in this project self-identify in different ways, I choose to use both approaches depending on the context and in accordance with the clarity of prose. However, given the activist groundings of most disability performance work that I examine here, my preference tends towards identity-first language.

Second, I want to note that the case studies in this dissertation are not representative of all types of impairments, disability experiences, or identities. I selected works of disability

performance with which I had some familiarity, that sparked my interest artistically, and which I felt offered an interesting perspective on infrastructural issues. I did not select performances from a desire to include representation of all impairments—not only do I feel that such an approach risks tokenizing disabilities for the sake of representation, but it also does not recognize the shifting, episodic, overlapping, and intersectional experiences of disability. In addition, while I believe that the specific experiences of impairments are of critical importance, both for how they orient people to the world and for the kinds of creative impulses to which they give rise, I am also aware that an undue focus on representation risks overemphasizing a person's impairment in ways that can be voyeuristic or infantilizing. At the same time, this approach means that this dissertation lacks representation from all parts of the disability community. My hope is that this gap can be addressed in future research projects.

Third, the works of disability performance that I engage with all take place in Western, English-speaking contexts. Aside from a few sojourns to Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, I primarily focus on performances/artists from Anglophone Canada. This reflects my own cultural, geographical, and institutional positioning and is also an attempt to contribute to the burgeoning but still limited critical discourse around Canadian disability arts, performance, and culture. Certainly, this geographical scope has been influenced by my own linguistic and cultural familiarity and the reach of my personal and artistic networks. I must also acknowledge, however, that it is in part due to my training in critical disability studies which—despite the call from many scholars to engage more fulsomely with contexts beyond the Global North (Erevelles, *Disability*; Grech and Soldatic; Meekosha; Puar)—remains north-centric. I regret that this dissertation does not make a larger contribution to these efforts to broaden the geographical and cultural scope of the field.

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

This dissertation progresses through a series of encounters with various forms of disability performance. Chapter One begins on the city sidewalk—the same site as the turtle walk—and examines performances by Rhiannon Armstrong (*Radical Rests* and *Public Selfcare System*) and Alex Bulmer (*May I Take Your Arm?*) that take place in urban space. In this chapter I position sidewalks as spatial infrastructures that enact a particularly revealing set of infrastructural politics, politics which are foregrounded by how these performances engage with sidewalks in atypical and unexpected ways. Armstrong and Bulmer reimagine their relationship to these public spaces, enacting moments of infrastructural inversion that highlight the sidewalk's uneven politics and insist that the sidewalk adapt to their individual embodiments. My analysis of Armstrong's and Bulmer's work leads me into thinking about concepts of interdependence and care, as well as the kinds of interpersonal infrastructures that arise to support disabled bodyminds.

From the sidewalks we then move onto the access ramp, an object which is the genesis to the works that I analyze in Chapter Two. In this chapter I examine three works of disability performance that foreground the built infrastructure of the ramp: jes sachse's *wish you were here*, Adam G. Warren's *Last Train In*, and Kinetic Light's *DESCENT*. Each of these works engage with the ubiquitous symbol of the ramp in different ways, and in so doing draw our attention to the inevitability of infrastructural decay, the politics of deferred maintenance, and the embodied and sensorial pains and pleasures of the disabled body moving through space. Drawing on Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's concept of "misfit," this chapter considers how each performance evokes differing relations between the disabled bodymind and built infrastructures.

It also teases out the ways that attending to the impasse—the moments when we cannot move forward—can elucidate oppressive but also radical politics in relation to disability and access.

We proceed inside for Chapter Three, moving into the theatre auditorium and the art gallery to consider various administrative infrastructures and access protocols within disability art and performance. This chapter discusses the protocols and practices related to relaxed performance, access aesthetics, and artistic administration, and surfaces critical questions on accessibility through its exploration of how disability artists and arts organizations are unseating and rethinking the normative conventions of art and performance. This chapter positions these protocols and practices as constituting an administrative infrastructure that both seeks to provide access to disabled artists and audiences, but which is also reconfiguring the very foundations of how art and performance is created, produced, accessed, and disseminated.

Chapter Four recalls the turtle walk by turning its attention to one of its most salient features—the way its leisurely pace disrupts and reorients our relationship to time. In this chapter I analyze three works by Hanna Cormick (*The Mermaid, Canary,* and *Little Monster*s), exploring how they evoke varied temporalities and encourage new temporal imaginings. I position time as an infrastructure itself, considering the politics that emerge when we interrogate the ways that the world is structured through time, and discuss how Cormick's works integrate the concept of crip time—a time that prioritizes and is responsive to disability and impairment. I also read Cormick's works alongside concepts of ecological time and intergenerational time, parsing through how this reorients our relation to concepts of past and future and evokes a sense of crip futurity. Here, time becomes an entry point through which to explore the environmental and disability justice politics in Cormick's work, and to investigate how her performances help illuminate the exclusionary politics held within normative temporal infrastructures.

I conclude with a short chapter that returns to jes sachse's work and explicates how their piece *Freedom Tube* embodies many of the infrastructural qualities discussed throughout the dissertation. *Freedom Tube* takes up the contrasting politics attached to the plastic drinking straw, which has been vilified for its environmental impact but celebrated within disability community for how it assists with eating, drinking, and self-administering medication. I consider how the shifting configuration of *Freedom Tube* and its need for constant repair and maintenance highlight inherent qualities of infrastructure, and further argue that the ambivalent politics provoked by the work exemplify the world building potential of disability art, performance, and culture.

CHAPTER ONE

SIDEWALKS AS INFRASTRUCTURE

In her short essay reflection on the COVID-19 pandemic entitled "Space on the Sidewalk," Kirsten Bowen muses about walking on the tight and narrow sidewalks in her neighbourhood of South Philadelphia.[27] Bowen describes how she has become attuned to "looking out for our neighbors, literally" while out on her family's daily walks, since social distancing measures require "keen awareness and accommodation of others" (1). This awareness manifests in behaviours such as walking single file, hugging the curb to create space for people to pass, or pausing to let others take the right of way (1). Echoing the public health directives that proliferated during this time, Bowen describes this behaviour as "not only a civil act" but as "necessary for our health" (1). The essay then considers how a similar sense of community and care is enacted in a theatre context, but here I want to first linger on the space of the sidewalk. What might be uncovered by remaining with Bowen's original prompt and considering the kinds of encounters that take place on the sidewalk? What kinds of politics and relations are performed in this space as bodies pass alongside one another? How does our understanding of these spaces shift when they are considered infrastructurally, or when we explore the kinds of infrastructures that arrange, support, impede, or impact these encounters?

Sidewalks have long been identified as unique, varied, and even paradoxical spaces (Ehrenfeucht and Loukaitou-Sideris 460). The modern sidewalk (which emerged in the late nineteenth century during a period of rapid industrialization and infrastructural development in

[27] Bowen's essay is part of a collection solicited by the organization Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas (LMDA). At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 LMDA invited members to reflect on the pandemic, its relation to their dramaturgical work, and the transformative potential of theatre during this time of crisis. These essays are available to current LMDA members through LMDA's website: https://lmda.org/dramaturging-phoenix

the West) are public spaces under municipal jurisdiction that are primarily constructed as a means of enabling the mobility of the bipedal, walking pedestrian—their imagined ideal user (Loukaitou-Sideris and Ehrenfeucht 17).[28] At the same time, however, sidewalks facilitate a variety of other activities and uses. Urban theorist Jane Jacobs describes streets and sidewalks as a city's "most vital organs" (29), and notes how they allow for intricate and heterogenous improvisations between people—what Jacobs describes as "sidewalk ballets"—that are necessary for animating and safeguarding urban neighbourhoods (50).[29] Though sidewalks are intrinsically linked to circulation and mobility of pedestrians, Jacobs's writing evinces how they also serve a variety of other purposes, becoming spaces that engender and sustain relationships, communities, activities, and livelihoods.

In 2020, as the threat of the COVID-19 coronavirus swept across the globe, sidewalks became contentious sites where differing levels of risk tolerance were embodied and negotiated in real time. Sidewalks can be busy and crowded, particularly in urban centres where "[u]nwilled proximity to objects and others is a feature of public life and seems normal for anyone who takes public transit or needs to move along a street in a densely populated city" (Butler, "Human Traces"). The directives by public health officials to maintain a distance of six feet between oneself and others meant people had to (re)consider how they moved through public space—

[28] The historical development of sidewalks has been winding. The first record of their existence dates to somewhere between 2000-1990 BC in central Anatolia (now Turkey). They disappeared during medieval Europe, a time when "pedestrians did not have a separate space but mingled with horses, carts, and wagons on the roadway" (Ford, qtd. in Loukaitou-Sideris and Ehrenfeucht 15). Returning during the reconstruction of the city of London following the Great Fire of 1666, sidewalks have since evolved through a variety of forms, including the early trottoirs and boulevards of Paris and the unpaved footpaths of London. By the late nineteenth century, sidewalks were common in major European cities—having sprung up alongside other infrastructural developments like waterworks, bridge construction, and sewer systems—and had become representative of the ideals of modernity; facilitating, for example, the movements of the flâneur (not to mention the turtle walk).

[29] Sidewalk ballets involve an assortment of people who take to the streets while engaged in various tasks: conversing with each other, taking out the trash, sweeping the steps, etc. For Jacobs, this offers a sense of safety because it brings many eyes to the street that are united in a joint effort to maintain public peace. This informal network of surveillance and care undertaken by residents, in Jacob's view, improves the safety of streets much more than police presence.

dynamics that became particularly apparent on sidewalks, which, as Bowen's essay describes, are often not wide enough to maintain the requisite amount of space between bodies. The way different bodies moved through, took up, or made space for others on the sidewalk enacted varying levels of privilege and stark differences in how individuals sensed their right to public space. Sidewalks also became sites where people acted out conflicting responses to the pandemic. Though many people attempted to distance themselves in public space, others, insisting the pandemic was a conspiracy or a hoax, refused to practice social distancing and congregated in groups in the street to hold anti-mask protests. Though these politics appeared to emerge with force during the pandemic, people with disabilities have long negotiated the contradictions and contentions of the sidewalk. Devon Healey, for example, argues that the rhythm of blindness and the rhythm of the street are contrapuntal. While these rhythms do align in certain moments—as when blind people "pass" as sighted and become absorbed into the normative flow of the city—outside of these moments the harmony of walking in the city is discordant, it is "disrupted by blindness" (112). For sighted people, in contrast, "the rhythm of the city is often taken for granted and not heard and felt" (112). Healey draws on her own experience of blindness to describe how she constantly adapts and negotiates her actions and movements in the city and thus shows how sidewalk politics are ever present for disabled bodyminds who are "caught in the midst of conflicting rhythms wondering which to dance to" (110).

As the many activists who have long fought for sidewalk accessibilities (i.e., via curb cuts, ramps, widening, legible surfaces, etc.) and the artists whose work I examine in this chapter will demonstrate, disabled people's extra/ordinary use(s) of sidewalks can reveal how these sites are an infrastructure that is rife with contradiction, community, and conflict. Attuned to the

politics of the sidewalk during the exceptional circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic and also in more unremarkable moments, I explore the infrastructural meanings and politics of these sites by considering them as a spatial infrastructure that both enables and restricts particular kinds of actions or populations. Positioning sidewalks as spatial *infrastructures* (rather than just spaces) allows for more concerted attention to be placed on the structures, systems, and attitudes that underlie them, the ways they act as forms of support for other, higher order actions or activities, and on the uneven ways that they sustain quotidian life. Sidewalks' focus on facilitating pedestrian mobility means they directly invoke Brain Larkin's summation of infrastructure as "matter that enable the movement of other matter" ("The Politics" 329). As a spatial infrastructure, sidewalks are sites on which a variety of people and activities converge, as well as being material substrates that are managed and controlled via a combination of administrative measures, social norms, and design choices. As such, sidewalks are complex spaces where many different narratives and activities are navigated. They are sites where the relations between bodies can be dangerous, where access can be tenuous, but also where moments of solidarity and community can be enacted. The breadth of examples detailed in this chapter demonstrates the enormous range of encounters, affects, politics, and social meanings that can swirl around these narrow spaces of concrete.

Sidewalks are part of a myriad of infrastructures that people interact with in everyday life—quotidian interactions that Stephen Graham and Colin McFarlane argue has not received enough attention in scholarship on urban infrastructure (1). Exploring sidewalks in this way encourages a deeper understanding of their embedded politics and how, like all infrastructure, they "shape the rhythms and striations of social life" (Appel et al. 6). Like many other infrastructures, they arrange and structure actions: supporting some activities while preventing

others. They can encourage both spectacle and mundanity, the ordinary and the extraordinary. Some sprawl out in front of glittering storefronts, large suburban homes, or enormous skyscrapers, sites where one might encounter fashionable elites on a shopping spree or hurried business executives on their way to a meeting. But these displays of extreme wealth belie the fact that sidewalks are also everyday sites for socially and economically marginalized populations, including people for whom sidewalks are "space[s] of economic survival" (Loukaitou-Sideris and Ehrenfeucht 127-155). In this way sidewalks are infrastructures that represent the contradictory nature of urban space and are microcosms of the many conflicting relations, practices, and politics of urbanity.[30]

Acclaimed performers and disability artists Rhiannon Armstrong and Alex Bulmer have both created and performed works that take place on (or near) sidewalks. This chapter is built around close readings of Armstrong's 2013 *Radical Rests* and 2016 *Public Selfcare System* in London, UK and Bulmer's 2017 *May I Take Your Arm?* in Toronto, Canada. In each case the artist situates herself in public space, traversing the sidewalks of a major urban metropolis alone or with a single audience member in tow. Although their artistic approaches and urban contexts differ, both Armstrong and Bulmer query and reorient how people relate to each other in these spaces as well as to the spatial infrastructures themselves. Both artists reveal how urban

[30] Cities are highly paradoxical spaces. On one hand, cities can be heralded as bastions of progress, particularly in contrast to rural or suburban areas which are more often framed as anachronistic, sleepy, or resistant to change. At the same time, the idea that cities thrive because of the investment in technological or infrastructural development obscures how many cities "continue to face . . . problems of urban poverty, family dissolution, homelessness, worsening inequality, housing abandonment, crime, and the resegregation of public school systems" (Levine 13). The wide discrepancy between how cities are used and experienced by people remains an important nuancing within the interdisciplinary field of urban studies. Within this field, a focus on urban politics, or urban political theory, takes more direct aim at understanding these issues by focusing on their intersection with public policies, political interactions, and socio-economic issues. This approach emphasizes topics like governance, public and private influence, planning, development and gentrification, public amenities and services, quality of life, diversity, housing and the configuration of space, sustainability, and much more (Ward et al.). Given that projections expect that 60% of the world's population will reside in cities by the year 2030, understanding the infrastructures that support and structures cities—like sidewalks—is of extreme interest to planners and theorists alike (United Nations).

infrastructures can respond and adapt to individual embodiments, rather than the other way around. This reversal becomes a form of infrastructural inversion that centres the disabled bodymind and models more heterotopic ways of interacting with space. Closely attending to these performances reveals the hidden infrastructural politics of the sidewalk, especially when these artists refuse to engage with urban infrastructure in typical and expected ways. When the sidewalk does not support their mobility, when a thoroughfare cannot be passed through, or when the artist requires something other than what the built infrastructure provides, each reimagines how her body might exist in or relate to these spaces. In so doing, these performances illuminate key ways that sidewalks are designed and regulated through exclusionary and inaccessible means.

Reading these discrete performances together, I also aim to demonstrate how each emphasizes the sidewalk's *nonphysical* qualities. In her discussion of public space, Kristine Miller argues that "By focusing on the physical and the concrete, we often ignore nonphysical qualities—legal, economic, political, aesthetic—all of which affect a public space" (xi). Like Miller, I am concerned with how ideas, discourses, and perspectives circulate around common spaces like sidewalks and how they impact—often in insidious and unacknowledged ways—experiences of these sites. Armstrong and Bulmer each structure their interactions with audience members to consider how their engagement with spatial infrastructures propagate interpersonal, relational, and affective infrastructures of care and belonging. Certainly, the physical environment is not forgotten—the hard cement and shifting urban landscape mean that the built space in which these works take place refuses to be ignored. However, by enacting distinct performance gestures—narrating a personal history alongside a guiding arm, and lying together in a tight embrace—these performances bring *interpersonal* infrastructures to the fore. These

works both demonstrate how an environment is formed from more than just built infrastructure and material objects; it also emerges through relations, specifically relations of care. Each performance underlines how "Public spaces do not exist as static physical entities but are constellations of ideas, actions, and environments" (Miller xi). Beginning with Armstrong's work, in this chapter I attend to how each performance reveals different kinds of interpersonal and relational habits, discourses, and interactions concerning sidewalks and infrastructure, using the lens of infrastructural dramaturgy as an entry point for explicating the complex politics that exist within these spatial infrastructures.

RHIANNON ARMSTRONG'S *RADICAL RESTS*

On account of a neurological condition, Armstrong often needs to lie down and rest. Lying down in public space is an action that she undertakes with some regularity in her daily life, often quite suddenly and without warning. In 2013 Armstrong's cousin took a photo of her resting while on a family outing, and this sparked the creation of *Radical Rests,* a public performance and photographic series that performs and documents moments when Armstrong enacts this gesture of lying down in public, very often on, or near, the sidewalk. The series is comprised of a variety of images of Armstrong lying down in different outdoor and public settings—a way of "making visible the rests that those with disabling conditions have to take in public space" (Armstrong, "Radical").[31] In these photos, Armstrong lies on her back, looking upward, with her body stretched out along the ground and her arms either extended by her sides

[31] On her website Armstrong also describes the photos as echoing the activity of "planking," which became an online viral sensation in 2011. Planking involves being photographed lying face down in unusual or unconventional locations. These images often present the body in extreme and sometimes precarious environments, appearing to balance on the edge of a cliff or the top of a mountain, and are meant to be shared on social media. Though Armstrong enacts a similar corporeal gesture in *Radical Rests*, the intention is both literally and figuratively inverted. Armstrong lies on her back rather than her front, and the ethos of the activity is a restful counter to the adrenaline-filled activity of planking.

or her hands resting on her stomach. Though Armstrong is typically centred in the frame, the photographs differ in terms of the clothing she is wearing, the scale of the photo, and her proximity to the camera. The series captures moments of stillness and calm—simple moments of rest that together comprise a photographic collection of her supine form in public spaces like town squares, residential sidewalks, in front of shops, and so on.

Radical Rests can be situated in a lineage of diverse performances that have utilized the act of lying down in public. Chris Burden's *Bed Piece* (1972) and Tilda Swinton's *The Maybe* (1995/2013) each featured the creating artists spending extended periods of time lying down and resting or sleeping in the public space of the art gallery, their horizontal bodies open for public viewing. Tehching Hsieh's durational *Outdoor Piece* (1981-1982), in which he spent a full year outside as part of his One Year Performance project, led the artist to sleep in public. In *The Loneliness of the Immigrant* (1979) Guillermo Gómez-Peña wrapped his body in fabric and lay on the floor of a public elevator for 24 hours, a solo performance intended to metaphorize the painful transition of immigrating into a foreign culture. *Radical Rests* also resonates with more recent works like Eric Moschopedis and Mia Rushton's *Z's by the C*—a performance that began in 2008 as a protest against anti-loitering laws in which the duo organized large scale public napping events in various cities. The gesture of lying down in public has also been used in many works of disability performance. For example, from 2012-13 Liz Crow toured and performed *Bedding Out* to a number of venues in the United Kingdom. The show involved moving her personal bed into a performance space, spending 48 hours in bed there, and publicly performing what she describes as her usually hidden-from-view "bed life" (Crow, "Reflecting"). Cindy Baker's 2018 durational performance *Crash Pad* in Alberta, Canada also featured the artist resting on a bed in an art gallery space. And in 2016 UK-based Raquel Meseguer Zafe began *A*

Crash Course in Cloudspotting, an ongoing performance project and audiovisual installation based on collected stories from people who rely on resting in public spaces to manage chronic health conditions.

In comparison to many of these works, from within and beyond disability arts and culture contexts, *Radical Rests* is strikingly simple. Unlike other works of disability performance that take place in public space, *Radical Rests* does not rely on any form of shock value, nor does it seek directly to confront or destabilize its spectators (cf. Hadley, *Disability*). This is a performance of subtlety; as Armstrong lies quietly it might almost be possible for a passerby to miss the performance, to pass it by unaware that it is happening. And yet, as Armstrong stretches out on the ground—perhaps along a stone wall that flanks a sidewalk, or in the centre of a city square, or nestled up against the edge of a set of stairs—passerby's come to notice something peculiar, something out of place. What draws their attention? Because spatial infrastructures like sidewalks are constructed as a means of facilitating mobility, rather than impeding it, the act of lying down is incongruent with the public setting of the action. A dissonance emerges from the way that Armstrong's stationary body clashes with the mobility typically associated with sidewalks, paths, town squares, and other spaces intended as thoroughfares. Everything from the materials used, the unavailability of seating, and the proximity to roads or green space imply that these spaces are to serve mobility, not to support the kind of extended pause or rest that Armstrong performs. Armstrong draws attention because she thwarts the sidewalk's intended use; in short, *she is using the space incorrectly*. Gregory Blair recounts how various artists use their work to question cultural norms, expectations, and use of public space. Citing works by Christian Philipp Müller, Santiago Sierra, and Keri Smith, as well as a performance by his student who similarly laid down in public, Blair notes how these artists' unanticipated presence

in (or misuse of) certain spaces constitutes them as a *persona non grata*—someone who is decidedly "out of place" in relation to behavioural or spatial norms.[32] This leads to their bodies being policed; in different ways each piece "examine[s] how power is exerted through the control, circumscription, and taxonomy of places and behaviors" (Blair 99). Similarly, in *Radical Rests* Armstrong's misuse of space risks colliding with the regulatory measures that govern these spatial infrastructures. Despite the simplicity of the gesture, therefore, I contend that the complicated infrastructural politics that arise from the space of the sidewalk mean there is something more complex at play here. What are the ways that we might interpret this gesture, and what kinds of infrastructural understandings does this gesture elucidate when it takes place on the sidewalk? In the following I explore how this work opens up a space for questioning how spatial infrastructures are regulated, how they are made in/accessible to different bodyminds, and how they invite and dissuade specific forms of engagements and types of activities.

Regulation of Spatial Infrastructures

Sidewalks are heavily regulated through a combination of state and corporate interests and in both overt and insidious ways. Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris and Renia Ehrenfeucht articulate how "[m]unicipalities enact ordinances and regulations to define acceptable uses of sidewalks, and cities and corporate actors employ design and policy strategies to achieve particular effects" (10). These regulatory and structural actions seek to contain the kinds of activities that happen on sidewalks, allocating them as spaces that are designed "in pursuit of unfettered pedestrian mobility" (Blomley 473). For example, in 1993 a Seattle judge upheld a sidewalk use ordinance that prohibited sitting or lying on sidewalks during business hours, an attempt to safeguard

[32] Blair's analysis includes Müller's *Green Border* (1993), Sierra's *Remake of group of persons facing the wall and person facing into a corner* (2008), Smith's 2016 book *The Wander Society,* and a performance by his student Jamie Smith titled *Spatial Intervention* (2014).

sidewalks as solely for “circulation and movement of goods and persons” (Feldman, qtd. in Blomley 472). Evelyn Blumenberg and Ehrenfeucht describe how similar kinds of “sidewalk control strategies” have emerged on Las Vegas Boulevard (a.k.a. “the strip”), where the city controls public space through regulations as wide ranging as: prohibitions against activities like begging, prostitution, and sleeping; designating sections of sidewalk as “no-obstruction zones”; and restrictions on the time, place, and manner of activities like newsstands and parades. Though enacted under the guise of pedestrian safety, Blumenberg and Ehrenfeucht argue that these measures are intended to “exclude or minimize the effects of undesirable behavior such as panhandling, vending, homelessness, handbilling, and political protests” (310). This echoes the obfuscation that Rosalyn Deutsche locates in the interdisciplinary field of the “urban aesthetic.” Deutsche argues that this aesthetic—which includes ideas and theories from artistic, architectural, and urban theory domains—frames its discourse via notions of “openness” and “accessibility” even as it is structured by exclusionary measures that are mired in conflict (xiii).

Sidewalk regulations have also sought specifically to control and exclude people with disabilities from public space, perhaps most clearly exemplified by the “unsightly beggar ordinances” of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the United States. Known colloquially as “the ugly laws,” these ordinances banned disabled people from appearing in public. In Susan Schweik’s careful analysis of the ugly laws she traces the historical, cultural, and textual emergence of this legal thrust, which aimed to remove from public space “any person who is diseased, maimed, or mutilated, or in any way deformed” (1). Disobeying these ordnances came with a hefty fine, thereby ensuring disabled people were kept from public view. Now, although people with disabilities may not be legally banned from appearing in public space as blatantly as they were under the ugly laws, the discrimination of these historic acts still resonates

through social and economic inequities, exclusionary and unsupportive social policies, and disparaging public attitudes towards disability. These work together to exclude people with disabilities from public life and to position them as "absent citizens" (Prince).

Disabled people are also absented from public space because of inaccessibility. Sidewalks that are uneven or in disrepair, which lack curb cuts, or which are obstructed by garbage bins or unshoveled snow can prevent people with disabilities from navigating public space. This can have wide-ranging implications, including impacting levels of social acceptability for disabled people. Sunaura Taylor explains the connection between access and acceptance while on a walk with philosopher Judith Butler as part of the documentary *Examined Life.*[33] As the pair (st)roll through the streets of San Francisco, Butler asks Taylor (a wheelchair user) what it means for her to 'go on a walk.' Taylor responds that she goes on a walk everyday (using that phrase even though she remains in her chair) and credits the high levels of physical accessibility across the city of San Francisco as what enables her to do so. She explains that access to the built environment (via accessible public transit, curb cuts, and accessible buildings) is key for developing social acceptance of disability because it allows disabled people to be out in public, visible to others. This visibility allows non-disabled people to familiarize themselves with disability and to become more aware of it as part of the human experience. By the same token, the absence of people with disabilities from public spaces like sidewalks can paradoxically stall changes that might make these spaces more accessible; when non-disabled people navigate spaces without issue, the inaccessibility of spaces and infrastructures remains invisible. This becomes a self-fulfilling logic that wraps around onto itself: disabled people

[33] *Examined Life* is a 2008 documentary (and corresponding book) directed by Astra Taylor (Sunaura Taylor's sister). The documentary follows eight philosophers as they discuss central concepts of their work while moving through spaces that hold meaning to them and their ideas. Butler is the only philosopher to be joined by a guest, as she invited Sunaura along with her to discuss the topic of interdependence.

cannot access public space, so fewer disabled people are in public. Because there are so few disabled people in public, there appears to be no need to make spaces any more accessible than they already are. But this logic misses the fact that people with disabilities are the world's largest minority. In 2010 people with disabilities comprised an estimated 15% of the population, amounting to over a billion people (World Health Organization 7). The refusal to improve public accessibility recalls another kind of status quo logic that often emerges in the presence of disability. This logic solidifies around a collective resistance to change and becomes part of the refrain that 'this is how it's always been done,' or what Tanya Titchkosky describes as "stories-at-the-ready" that normalize certain ways of doing things and which explain away the absence of certain kinds of people (*The Question* 71).[34]

Visibility in *Radical Rests*

Part of the importance of *Radical Rests* is that it refutes these logics by making the disabled body visible in public space. When Armstrong visibly asserts her body in public, centering disability and impairment by prioritizing her need for rest, she counters the violent erasure of nonnormative bodyminds from the public sphere. Her presence demands that diverse embodied experiences—particularly disability, impairment, injury, and illness—be present and accounted for, rather than being hidden away. In this way the work resonates with events that use performance tactics and the strategic positioning of bodies to enact what Susan Leigh Foster describes as "choreographies of protest" (395). This includes, for example, how social justice groups and movements have used die-ins as a means of protest, an event which "involves

[34] Even more insidiously, inaccessible infrastructure can contribute to the internalization of ableism, even for people with disabilities. Recounting her childhood ideas around disability, Sunaura Taylor notes how—despite the progressive views of her parents and her homeschooled education—ableism seeped into her childhood because of the built environment. As she explains "ableism crept its way into my family's home and my own self-perception because it was embedded in the environment around me: in the stairs, curbs, and narrow pathways that perpetually reminded me that my body wasn't right and wasn't welcome" (*Beasts* 23-24).

protesters lying down motionless in public spaces to represent dead bodies en masse and bring attention to a cause by interrupting people's daily lives with simulated death" (Goldberg 131). Environmental groups, AIDS activists, Black Lives Matter, and others have used the spectacle of bodies lying down together as a way of protesting practices of violence and/or inaction, drawing attention to a cause, and physically enacting a reclamation of public space.

Though *Radical Rests* takes up the same physical gesture, and Armstrong's body is similarly publicly visible, the singularity and subtly of the performance means that it does not draw the same kind of attention as these group spectacles. In this way it more so aligns with works like VALIE EXPORT's photographic series *Body Configurations in Architecture* (1972-1982), in which the artist positioned and contorted her body against architectural forms through the city of Vienna. These photos extend a lineage of feminist site-specific performance and the art form of urban mimicry (Levin 147-148). EXPORT's body traces the lines and the curves of the built environment in a way that exposes and critiques the incompatibility of the female body within a city designed for (and bombastically signifying) the "universal" male citizen. The singular and understated approach to *Radical Rests* also distinguishes it from disability performance and protest actions like the "capitol crawl" protest in Washington, D.C in 1990, which found disability activists abandoning their wheelchairs and mobility supports and crawling up the 83 steps that lead to the US Capitol building. This action was intended to symbolize the widespread discrimination against people with disabilities and to encourage the United States Congress to sign the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA) into law. More recently, in 2014 in Montreal, a similar form of protest was taken by the Performing Disability Working Group at Encuentro, the biennial conference of the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics. As a means of protesting and drawing awareness to the inaccessibility of one of the conference's

major venues (La Sala Rossa), group members climbed and laid across the venue's stairs, forcing other attendees to literally step over their bodies in order to access the performance space above. Concurrently, the group organized an ad-hoc "Open Non-Mic" outside the venue on the sidewalk—an alternate performance to the scheduled events happening upstairs that drew further attention to how disabled attendees and their allies were excluded on account of the venue's inaccessibility.[35]

Though Armstrong's performance differs from these examples in that she is not simulating death as a means of protest, she does not take up the range of poses or significant locations displayed in EXPORT's work, and she does not overtly draw attention to herself, her engagement with urban space is similar in how its visibility makes clear a discord between body and environment. The performance centers the experience of rest in a way that highlights the dissonance between Armstrong's embodiment and these spatial infrastructures that are imagined to be sites of extreme movement and mobility. Because the performance comes out of Armstrong's need to care for herself physically, when she lies down in public space and misuses the spatial infrastructure, she brings a level of awareness to the discriminatory and ableist perspectives that assume and expect certain levels of mobility and physical capacity. As with the works previously mentioned by disability artists Crow, Baker, and Meseguer, *Radical Rests* brings into public view the experience of a bodymind that requires intermittent, unpredictable, and potentially high amounts of rest throughout the day. These artists have incorporated the act of resting into their work by connecting it to their own embodiments and performing it as a form of resistance to the societal drive for constant productivity and overwork. Rather than public erasure or disavowal of their bodymind experiences, these performances *emphasize* the body's

[35] For more on these events (including how they led to the creation of Critical Disability Studies Working Group at Concordia University) see McAskill.

need for rest. Similarly, *Radical Rests* refuses to replicate the assumption that all bodyminds can pass easily through public space, or that all bodyminds must use space in a certain way. It therefore makes visible not just the disabled bodymind in general, but also the particular bodymind that is incongruent with the dominance of "sociocultural values and practices that prioritise mobile bodies of those characterised by societally defined norms of health, fitness, and independence of bodily movements" (Imrie 1641). Disabled artists frequently use their work to 'call out' these obfuscatory norms. In addition to works like *Radical Rests,* for example, Shannon Finnegan's *Do you want us here or not?* draws attention to the ways that museum and gallery spaces are designed for certain kinds of (able) bodyminds. The exhibit consists of bright blue benches, chairs, and bench cushions that are covered with white lettering and phrases like: "I'd rather be sitting, sit if you agree" and "There aren't enough places to sit around here, sit if you agree" and "Museum visits are hard on my body, rest here if you agree" (Finnegan). Works like *Do you want us here or not?* and *Radical Rests* insist that actions like lying down in public are only considered to be a misuse of the space from an ableist perspective that assumes specific kinds and levels of mobility and physical capacity.

Identity and the Limits of Visibility

Armstrong describes her act of resting as radical, and in many ways it is. It is notable that she counters the erasure of disabled bodyminds from the public sphere by visibly prioritizing her need for rest. But Armstrong's moment of pause is also *possible* in a way that it may not be for others. "Thinking infrastructurally" in relation to *Radical Rests* means that the gesture of lying down cannot be abstracted from its spatial and infrastructural context (Chu 353). This perspective brings to bear the fact that the bylaws and ordinances that regulate spatial infrastructure like sidewalks do not impact everyone to the same extent or in the same way. In

the “pursuit of unfettered pedestrian mobility,” the ideal sidewalk user would be able to move quickly and easily through space, using the infrastructure to facilitate their mobility without obstructing the mobility and movement of others (Blomley 473). Users that relate to the sidewalk in other ways—particularly when they obstruct movement—are undesirable and always imagined to be in conflict with the proper functioning of the infrastructure. Regulations then emerge which specifically discriminate against specific groups of sidewalk users. For example, ordinances that prohibit sitting or lying down on sidewalks are a veiled attempt at enacting punitive measures against people without secure shelter, as well as those who seek economic security through activities like panhandling. As Leonard Feldman observes, “The contemporary criminalization of the (conduct of the) homeless concerns neither exactly their idleness nor their offence against God for shirking productivity but their willful violation of the behavioural norms of public space” (50). The “violation of behavioural norms” that Feldman identifies is the act of lying down, a gesture that is antithetical to the proper use of the sidewalks. Regulations are therefore imposed which insist upon a certain kind of comportment, and thus limit the spatial infrastructure of the sidewalk to specific users who adhere to behavioural but also embodied norms—in this case, remaining vertical and in motion. As Feldman goes on to note, “Personal responsibility and civility are equated with “standing,” while homeless people “lounging on public sidewalks,” profane outlaws of public space, defy communal norms and ignore the needs of upstanding citizens-in-motion. To become an upstanding member of this community requires literally “standing up” (50). This dovetails with the morality associated with standing and erect posture more broadly—a form of bodily discipline that Sander L. Gilman argues is “a universal

category of organization that society uses to define the human" (339).[36] Against this sociocultural backdrop, and even outside of official regulations, (horizontal) bodies deemed out of place are unofficially controlled through social interactions. While performing *The Loneliness of the Immigrant*, mentioned previously, artist Gómez-Peña was kicked, poked, and verbally threatened, as well as urinated on by a dog. The performance concluded when "Eventually, the artist was evacuated by security guards and thrown into an industrial disposal bin," an outcome that underlined the ways that horizontal bodies (and in this case, the body of the immigrant) are viewed as disposable (Gómez-Peña).

Horizontal bodies are therefore policed in very direct ways. An infrastructural lens on *Radical Rests* prompts consideration of how such policing is unevenly enacted depending on how bodies are perceived in relation to the intended use of the infrastructure. For example, questions related to the perception of people's socio-economic status become relevant when considering which kinds of bodyminds are regulated while on the sidewalk, and for whom the sidewalk is public or private/domestic space. As Loukaitou-Sideris and Ehrenfeucht observe, "Most activities that are associated with homelessness are common—including sitting, talking, asking questions, and sleeping—but they are perceived differently when people appear to be homeless" (158). These questions are pertinent to disability rights discourses because of the high rates of physical and intellectual disability in populations experiencing homelessness (Gaetz et al.; Mercier and Picard; Pallard et al.; Rodrigue).[37] An infrastructural lens is necessary to

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[36] Sander L. Gilman understands "posture" to be a malleable concept shaped by cultural and historical context. In *Stand Up Straight!* he shows how posture emerges as a way of organizing, categorizing, and defining the human in connection to contexts like education, arts, military, and medicine, as well as being a factor in defining racial and gender divides.

[37] Populations experiencing homelessness are diverse, as are routes into homelessness. Tracy Peressini notes that while poverty, housing issues, and interpersonal conflict are three common pathways into homelessness, there is less homogeneity in terms of the influence of sociodemographic factors on these pathways (124). Regardless, disability and health-related issues are consistently cited across literature as prevalent within populations experiencing

uncover these important questions since they are not otherwise suggested within Armstrong's performance. Though Armstrong's action of lying down may be viewed as *incongruent* with the intended use of the sidewalk, her clothes and lack of personal items mean she is not read as using the space as shelter. That is, though Armstrong lies down in public out of personal necessity, and not purely as a theatrical performance, the sidewalk is still not her domestic space. I am not suggesting that Armstrong is co-opting this gesture in a way that is problematic, but I do think it necessary—particularly when framing this gesture as performance—not to overlook how such actions are possible because of her evident economic security.

Identity markers such as race, ethnicity, gender, and dis/ability also drastically impact how people are perceived, surveilled, and policed on sidewalks. For example, Eliza Chandler describes how she is interpellated into particular subject positions because of how she moves through the world; her lopsided gait, on account of cerebral palsy (CP), is often met with stares or avoidance, or interpreted incorrectly by others as a drunken stumble ("Troubled" 326). Walking down the sidewalk as such provides Chandler with "a strong sense of how ableist logic dominates and circulates" ("Troubled" 318). Chandler's writing deftly articulates how the tenor of the reactions and interactions that occur on the sidewalk are refracted across identity markers. She contrasts her own experience by describing how a friend who also has CP, and who therefore walks with a similar gait, experiences the sidewalk in markedly different ways because he is male and black. When Chandler is perceived as being publicly intoxicated, for example, she becomes the "party girl." In contrast, for her friend, "that interpretation [of intoxication] had violent, not communifying, effects as my white disabled body might have. He would worry that

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homelessness as correlated factors the influence routes into homelessness. In the 2013 report "The State of Homelessness in Canada" Gaetz and colleagues cite a greater incidence of disabilities and mental illness specifically in single adult males, a demographic which they note accounts for almost half of those experiencing homelessness in Canada (25).

other men would start fights with him, that women would act as if frightened of him, and that the presumption of inebriety might provoke police brutality or land him in jail" ("Troubled" 326). Despite their similarities, there is a marked difference in risk between these two disabled bodies traversing public space.

For Armstrong, lying down to rest in public undoubtedly opens her up to a certain level of vulnerability and risk. Public space is often framed as dangerous for woman, especially when they stop or pause, because their immobility makes them easier targets for unwanted attention, acts of violence, or sexual harassment or assault. However, because Armstrong's disability is invisible, her experience on the sidewalk differs from those whose impairment means they would be perceived as disabled. And, like Chandler, Armstrong's skin colour and tone mean that she is unlikely to be in danger of any race-based violence, either from law enforcement or other members of the public. For Armstrong to lie down in public space does not hold the same meaning, nor the same level of risk, as if the gesture is performed by someone who presents differently in terms of their race, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, or dis/ability. This means that while *Radical Rests* might resonate with other public space interventions and protests like die-ins, it cannot be equated to the ways that these tactics have been used specifically to address issues like racial violence.[38] Therefore, there are limits to the visibility that *Radical Rests* engenders (cf. Phelan). In one sense *Radical Rests* counters the ways that disability, impairment, and illness are obscured from public view. However, the intersectional politics of the sidewalk mean it cannot be read as a universal gesture, given the unevenness in how a horizontal body is perceived and policed as it lies across the sidewalk.

[38] Black Lives Matter Toronto (BLMTO) led a die-in at Yonge-Dundas Square in 2014 after no charges were laid against an NYPD officer following the death of Eric Garner. For more on BLMTO's use of public interventions as protest see Diverlus.

Sidewalk Politics: Biased by Design

It is not just the policing of bodies that result in inequitable experiences on the sidewalk—thinking infrastructurally in relation to *Radical Rest*s also requires that we do not lose sight of how bodyminds are impacted by the built design of these structures. Although we might feel an urge to historicize events and regulations like the ugly laws—decrying them as indicative of a discriminatory attitude that has since passed—disabled people continue to experience similar kinds of prejudices that prevent them from being fully present in public life. Susan Schweik observes that even though the formality of discriminatory public ordinances like the ugly laws are now defunct, many of the "crude elements" with which they were comprised—including heavy police surveillance, anti-begging rhetoric, and structural discrimination against disability—still hold sway (208). So too are these crude elements built and embedded into infrastructures, which are often designed and constructed in ways that exclude specific populations and bodyminds. In other words, although sidewalk ordinances like the ugly laws (as well as zoning by-laws and the heavy surveillance of certain groups of people) *overtly* convey ideas of un/desirable sidewalk users and activities, sidewalks are spatial infrastructures that are also regulated in *covert* ways through their design and construction.

Design is a significant means through which infrastructures are controlled and regulated, creating unevenness within infrastructures whereby some people are easily able to use them (and remain safe and supported while doing so) and others are not. These insidious methods of exclusion are often less apparent because built infrastructures are assumed to be politically neutral, and their discriminatory aspects are oftentimes buried within them in covert ways. In one section of his seminal article "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" Langdon Winner describes how the extraordinarily low overpasses in Long Island, New York (designed by Robert Moses in the mid-

twentieth century) were in fact built to specifications that "reflect Moses's social-class bias and racial bias" (123). As Winner explains, the low hanging overpasses prevented buses from driving on the parkways. This meant that the people who relied on public transit—predominantly poor people and people of colour—were prevented from accessing spaces via the parkway. This included Jones Beach, a public park also designed by Moses, which was de facto restricted to people who had automobiles, a group which also tended to be upper/middle class and white. This plainly demonstrates the racial and class biases embedded in infrastructures that might otherwise be assumed to be politically neutral.[39]

Racial biases are also embedded in sidewalks, which are illuminated when we think of sidewalks as spatial infrastructures that impact and shape urban mobility. One analysis by Kate Lowe demonstrates how the disparities of "pedestrian infrastructure" (namely sidewalk connectivity) in different areas corresponds to the racial demographics of those communities. Conducting an inventory of the ratio between sidewalk connectivity and bus stops in New Orleans, Lowe concluded that areas with a higher amount of minority populations correlated with worse sidewalk continuity than areas with a predominantly white demographic (122).[40] This disparity exists even though minority populations "travel by walking at higher rates than other groups" and therefore are more reliant on pedestrian infrastructure (Lowe 119). Lowe's findings indicate how infrastructure (or a lack thereof) is used as a tool of racial and class segregation that prevents equitable access. It is troubling that this also corresponds to rates of pedestrian injuries

[39] For more on the legacy and impact of the racism embedded in Moses's design and construction, see Freilla.
[40] Interestingly, a lack of sidewalk continuity can also correlate with high socio-economic status, as in affluent (often primarily white) suburban communities. The lack of pedestrian infrastructure in these areas indicates a privileging of automobility as a form of transport and the assumption that all residents are of a level of wealth that would allow for them to own a vehicle. Even as many suburban areas are being retrofitted—in part, in an effort to reduce automobile dependency (Dunham-Jones and Williamson)—it is important to remain aware of how the availability of pedestrian infrastructure is refracted in complex and somewhat contradictory ways across vectors of race and socio-economic status.

and fatalities, which are disproportionally higher for people of colour (Jakowitsch and Ernst 168-169). Disability and injury thus have multivalent connections with these infrastructural anomalies, whereby poor sidewalk connectivity becomes about more than just a discrepancy in access, but also a cofactor with real material consequences.

Sam Bloch's detailed writing on the provision of shade provides an illuminating example of how the correlation between disability, infrastructural inequities, and biased design plays out on the sidewalk. In an article for the "Writing the City" series in the online journal *Places*, Bloch considers the placement of the nearly 1,900 official bus shelters in the city of Los Angeles—structures that provide people respite from the hot sun while waiting for the bus.[41] Bloch reveals how the city of Los Angeles outsourced the construction of bus shelters to billboard companies in the 1980s, a deal that the companies agreed to in exchange for the chance to use the shelters as advertising space.[42] As Bloch explains, this led to bus shelters "tend[ing] to show up in wealthy areas where ad revenue surpassed maintenance costs" rather than being placed in areas with higher transit use. The result was an enormous "shade disparity" based on the location of the shelters. Bloch positions shade as a form of infrastructure in itself and argues that it is a public resource that should be distributed equally. In Bloch's analysis, infrastructure's connections to disability, health, and well-being become apparent. That is, given the physiological impact and dangers of sun exposure, the availability of shade is not merely an aesthetic perk but is also necessary to prevent heat-related illness.[43] Shade is "an index of inequality, a requirement for public health, and a mandate for urban planners and designers" (Bloch). Bloch's analysis not only reaffirms the many ways that racial and class biases are embedded within infrastructure

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[41] For additional analysis on the racial and gendered hierarchies of Los Angeles public transit, see Hutchinson.
[42] For more on the privatization of public space see M. Davis.
[43] For further analysis of the intersections between heat-related illnesses and death, urban infrastructure, and social breakdown, see Klinenberg.

design and provision, but also shows how infrastructures aggregate on top of each other, bridging issues of mobility, space, health, and economics.

Infrastructural Inversions and Acts of World Building

Disability activists have long been aware of how built infrastructure is designed without disabled bodyminds in mind. This is plainly evident in the lack of accessible spaces. Inaccessible built infrastructure has been and remains one of the most important aspects of disability activism, with disabled people continuously fighting and advocating for equitable access to public spaces. There was no one, singular end to the era of ugly laws, for example, but instead "a long history of everyday resistance to being marginalized that disabled people have practiced, individually and collectively, throughout the twentieth century, finding matter-of-fact ways of being in public, avenues for getting there, means of claiming a right to the city" (Schweik 207-208). Many of these efforts have been met with some success. The well-known genealogy of disability activism in Berkeley, California—such as the stories of disabled activists who drove around the city late at night smashing curb cuts into the sidewalk with sledgehammers—is one such example. Although the actual details of this guerrilla activism may not be as spectacular as the current allegory describes (Hamraie, *Building* 287n1), the ways that activists intervened into built space expressed the central ideas of independence and access that would develop into the Independent Living Movement and eventually lead to the ADA—national legislation that mandates minimum levels of accessibility in public places and which "prohibits public entities from isolating, separating, or denying people with disabilities the opportunity to participate in the programs that are offered to others" (Sandahl, "Disability" 83). These activist interventions into

public space had social and policy ramifications nationwide.[44] Therefore, although legislative measures have been critiqued for their varying levels of efficacy (Sandahl, "Disability" 85), the scope of regulations like the ADA must be acknowledged for how they have made important strides in supporting people with disabilities and addressed issues of inaccessibility, particularly with regards to built environments.

The success of the ADA also indicates how interventions into built infrastructure can have positive ramifications with regards to discrimination. When the disability activists took sledgehammers and cement onto the streets and sidewalks of Berkeley, they engaged in an act of infrastructural inversion that made undeniably clear how the usual design of sidewalks were inaccessible and exclusionary. They also engaged in a literal act of world building, reforging their environment through its very materiality. Armstrong's gesture in *Radical Rests* is much subtler, but it too becomes an act of infrastructural inversion—signalling how the absence of benches, seating, or areas in which to rest becomes a literal impasse for certain bodyminds.

Infrastructural dramaturgy encourages us to look more deeply at this impasse and consider how it evinces the underlying politics of spatial infrastructures like sidewalks. The lack of spots to rest is not an accidental omission but a calculated design choice that limits the kinds of embodiments that spatial infrastructures are intended to support. At the same time, bringing an infrastructural lens to this performance reveals how its call to lie down and rest is complicated. Who is prevented from freely accessing spatial infrastructures like the sidewalk because of how they are designed, used, and regulated? Who is safe to lie down in public and who gets arrested for merely appearing in public? How do infrastructures support or prevent this gesture depending

[44] Canada followed suit in 2019 with the development of the *Accessible Canada Act*, the purpose of which is to identify and remove barriers for people with disabilities in areas under federal jurisdiction across the domains of employment; the built environment; information and communication technologies; the design and delivery of programs and services; and transportation (Government of Canada).

on the specificity of one's bodymind? *Radical Rests* not only brings these questions to light but also becomes a form of world building in how it reimagines the possibilities for a different way of engaging with infrastructure. It questions the ways that spatial infrastructures—as they currently are—might not be sustaining to all bodyminds, and it relates to them with the intention of reversing this. In this sense we might think of *Radical Rests* as a kind of heterotopic performance, but one that engenders new infrastructural understandings, rather than spatial ones. In her writing on heterotopias, Joanne Tompkins details how theatre can be heterotopic, not just in name, but in how it "depicts other possible spaces and places live in front of an audience, and it offers spectators specific examples of how space and place might be structured otherwise" (3). For Tompkins, heterotopic theatre is a chance to rehearse different kinds of spatial constructs and relations. In *Radical Rests*, Armstrong embodies a way in which spatial infrastructures that are intended to support mobility might be structured otherwise. The performance offers possibilities for new ways of being that can emerge from the simple act of lowering one's body to the ground and resting.

ALEX BULMER'S *MAY I TAKE YOUR ARM?*

After almost fifteen years living and working as a performer and theatre maker in the United Kingdom, in 2017 Alex Bulmer elected to return to her home country of Canada. Originally from Puslinch, Ontario, in her early twenties Bulmer trained in acting, speech science, and voice at Bishops University and Ryerson University. She soon became a well-known figure in the Toronto theatre community, working as an actor and performing with a variety of bands and musical groups. It was during this time that she was diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa, a genetic eye disorder that causes gradual loss of vision. Bulmer began to experience gaps in her vision, finding, for example, that she would look up from a script in the middle of a rehearsal and

be unable to see the actors in the room (Johnson and King 62-63). Concerned with the lack of support for disabled and blind artists in Canada, Bulmer moved to the United Kingdom, where, in London, she was introduced to a much more established and supported disability arts scene. During her time overseas, Bulmer continued her work as a performer, filmmaker, and screenwriter, often working with well-known disability arts organizations like Graeae Theatre Company. She also founded Invisible Flash, a theatre company that develops inclusive performances for blind children.

As Bulmer's career in disability arts grew in the United Kingdom, she maintained personal and professional ties to Canada. She eventually began to return more frequently to Canada to work as an accessibility consultant with arts organizations. In 2015 she completed a full accessibility review at Harbourfront Centre in Toronto, and in 2016 co-curated the first iteration of the National Arts Centre's Republic of Inclusion, a national summit convened to assess the current—and imagine the future possibilities for—disability arts in Canada. It was projects like these that signalled to Bulmer that there was a growing interest in disability arts, arts accessibility, and inclusion happening in Canada. In 2017 she decided to return with the hope that the burgeoning disability arts community meant that the support for disabled artists had improved during her time overseas. Since then, Bulmer's career and artistic output has continued to accelerate, and she continues to cultivate a career comprised of performing, teaching, curating, consulting, and artistic leadership.

Bulmer encountered some difficulties in relocating, including a significant difference in how she related to the city. In London, Bulmer had become familiar with the city without relying on memories of people or places. This experience, she notes, though initially challenging, ended up being liberating: "I didn't feel so much a dual citizen in the sighted and blind world. I felt far

more as if . . . I was developing a deeper relationship with my own blindness through my own body and my own sensory reality" (Personal interview). Returning to Toronto then presented a different challenge. While Bulmer had spent many years living in Toronto before her time abroad, it was a place she had known when she was sighted. Given the changes in her vision, Bulmer was returning to a city that was in some ways familiar—full of old friends and colleagues and places that she used to frequent—but in many ways entirely foreign. As she describes:

> And then coming back to Toronto after all those years I felt very shaken up. Because there were some expectations . . . that coming back I would . . . return to this place of memory. And that didn't happen. I really wanted to bring this depth of experience of blindness that I discovered while being in London, I really wanted to bring that back to Toronto. So I moved back and I moved to a neighbourhood that I really didn't know that well from any kind of sighted memory. (Personal interview)

Bulmer's experience of Toronto in 2017 was therefore markedly different than it had been previously, and she struggled to feel at home in the city. After one challenging year living in the far east end of the city (in a location that did not support her having a guide dog, was not close to her support networks, and where she did not feel a strong sense of community), Bulmer relocated to Toronto's Cabbagetown neighbourhood. It was there that she realized she had to find a way of creating a sense of home and belonging. As such, in collaboration with Tristan Whiston and Anna Camilleri of Red Dress Productions, in 2018 she created *May I Take Your Arm?*—a performance developed in direct response to Bulmer's real life experience moving to a new neighbourhood, and which specifically addressed her need, as a blind person, to adjust to the unfamiliarity of the place. This evolving performance has emerged in different forms since its

creation. In this section I focus on its use of walking as a structural component, its first public staging, and its digital adaptation in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Walking in the City

Located just east of the city's downtown core, Cabbagetown is an architecturally diverse, culturally vibrant neighbourhood, much of which has been designated a heritage conservation district.[45] It is a mixed-income area that features Victorian facades, laneway houses, various green spaces, and hidden alleyways, and which boasts a heterogenous and electric mix of residents. Its main thoroughfare, Parliament Street, is filled with shops and small businesses. Despite Toronto's reputation for being a large, impersonal metropolis, Cabbagetown retains a town-like feel set against the backdrop of a larger city. For Bulmer, although the vibrant community of Cabbagetown was a much better fit than her previous location in the city's east end, she describes how she felt disoriented: "I felt an emptiness. I felt an invisibility and I think that is not unusual when one is blind and finds themself in an unfamiliar environment [in which] there is no shape, there are no geographic boundaries [and] there is nothing to say I am here and that is there" (Personal interview). Devon Healey describes how "Blindness forces a blind person to "figure out" (almost always by hearing and feeling) the rhythm of the city—a traffic flow, the pedestrian flow, the rhythm of the sound, the rhythmic movement of the city" (111). But while Bulmer worked towards this by drawing on typical orientation supports available to people who are blind or partially sighted (i.e., lessons on navigation and cane use, guide dog training, tactile maps), she craved a more meaningful sense of connection to her neighbourhood than these

[45] The name comes from "the epithet used by Toronto's prosperous British residents offended by the use of front gardens to grow cabbages and other vegetables by the hundreds of Irish families who had fled famine in Ireland in the 1840s" (Cabbagetown).

tactics could provide. Her neighbourhood felt like a space that was content-less. She wanted a way of connecting to the area that would endow it with meaning and significance.

May I Take Your Arm? was a way of remedying this sense of placelessness. In this work, Bulmer invites an individual to go on a walk with her around her neighbourhood, and, while doing so, the participant is tasked with helping guide and navigate Bulmer around the area.[46] The title of the work refers to a phrase often uttered by Bulmer when she requires the assistance of a human guide—"may I take your arm?"—because lightly grasping the forearm or elbow of her companion allows Bulmer to manoeuvre the streets and sidewalks with increased safety and ease. These walks, which initially took place over the span of three weeks in 2018, are a kind of micro-performance—an urban choreography in which two bodies negotiate time and space together (Cunningham and Heddon 200). By drawing on the quotidian act of walking the performance situates itself within a lineage of peripatetic artworks where artists and audiences ambulate through different spaces as a means of attuning themselves to the particularities of landscapes (as in the scenographic walking performances of Louise Ann Wilson), disrupting a space or prompting a shift in perception (as in Adrian Piper's series *Catalysis* (1970-73) and Carmen Papalia's *Long Cane* (2009)), or enacting forms of pilgrimage (as in Robert Wilson's *Walking* (2008) and Carl Lavery's *Mourning Walk* (2006)).[47] Key to this performance, however, was that the invited participants were local residents who had a connection to the area.[48] During these walks each participant was meant to guide Bulmer around the neighbourhood, both

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[46] I use the word walk to describe these outings, while recognizing that bipedal movement is not how many move through space. Though I do not wish to perpetuate ableist or exclusionary language by doing so, I use walk in line with how the creative team of the performance describe the activity, including during the walks Bulmer took with people who use wheelchairs.

[47] For additional writing and projects on walking and performance see Hadley, "Mobilising"; Heddon and Myers; Mock; Pyne Feinberg; Springgay and Truman, *WalkingLab*; Wilkie.

[48] The selection of participants was helped by Whiston's and Camilleri's contacts in the community, given their long history of conducting community art projects in the area.

physically, but also narratively: describing the scenes to her by detailing their own histories, memories, and stories that they associated with the sights (and sites) they were encountering. In this way this performance evokes the mobile methodology of the walking interview that has been popularized in different scholarly disciplines (Anderson; Ingold and Vergunst; Irving; Pink et al.). Bulmer notes that the conversations were "not just for the pure sake of me knowing there's a tree there and there's a house there and cemetery there. But for [the participants] to put meaning to these places beyond the fact that they existed" (Personal interview). These conversations traced across description, narrative, and personal revelations, and provided Bulmer with not only factual descriptions of certain markers and touchpoints within her new neighbourhood, but also emotional and affective connections to the area.

Through these conversations, as Bulmer describes, each street and corner and storefront was suddenly transformed from an unmarked *space*, absent of meaning or connection, into a specific *place* that held emotional resonance and memory for her. Even if the memory of the place was not necessarily her own, Bulmer drew on the stories of her guides to develop her own emotional connection to the streets of Cabbagetown. This connection engendered a shift in how Bulmer related to the area, facilitating a transition from *space* to *place* to *home*. As she recalls:

> …to have people tell me about the time that they walked through that cemetery . . . the day after their mother died. Or [when] they went to Riverdale farm with their three children and one of them has since passed away and then we talk about that. Or [they say] 'look that Tim Hortons used to be a pub and me and my sister, we used to go there when my parents were fighting.' Whatever it is, these places suddenly have a narrative and a human being attached to them. And that is what started to bring this neighbourhood—which had been a space—it started to become a place. And then it became a home. And it

was literally through those stories and those walks. That's how it became a home for me. (Personal interview)

Healey argues that "Blind people feel the rhythm written in the city, a rhythm we rarely write" (112). But in these shared walks Bulmer and her companion are writing the rhythm of the city together through the intimacy of their conversations. Now when Bulmer traverses these streets, she orients herself alongside the descriptions and narratives that were shared with her by each individual—the streets feel familiar and knowable in response. The landmarks she encounters resonate with the lived experiences of people and this provides a kind of emotional sense memory for Bulmer; allowing her to orient herself directionally but also affectively. As she observes, "And that's why I think this project has had such an impact. I think about all those people all the time as I walk around and it's almost like they're still walking with me. It's very comforting" (Personal interview). Because I consider these walks to be the infrastructure of the performance itself, I read *May I Take Your Arm?* through a lens of infrastructural dramaturgy with a particular attention to how the walks highlight relationships, interdependence, and care.

<u>Relational Infrastructures</u>

In their discussion of Bulmer's work, Chandler and colleagues draw on Robert McRuer and Merri Johnson's conception of "cripistemologies"—crip ways of knowing rooted in the subject position of disability—to position Bulmer's interdependent walking practice as foregrounding "ways of knowing that emerge from the vantage-point of non-normative bodyminds, and more precisely, from the transitory embodied and embedded experiences of those coded as morphologically and mentally different" (87). The authors argue that in *May I Take Your Arm?* "Bulmer uses the act of walking and walking/traversing together as knowledge gathering and generating" as a means of advancing an epistemology of blindness (92). Acknowledging the

ways that walking through urban space and the associated figure of the flâneur have excluded not only disabled people but disability as a way of knowing the world, Chandler and colleagues identify how *May I Take Your Arm?* "signals an upending of ocularcentrism, particularly its assumption that sightedness holds a superior epistemological position" (87).

This situates Bulmer's work in a domain of what Springgay and Truman define as "critical walking methodologies," an approach that "insist[s] that intersectionality, the place where research takes place, and how one moves through space be critically complicated and accounted for" ("Critical" 171; see also Springgay and Truman, "A Transmaterial"; Heddon and Turner). Colin McFarlane notes that "Walking generates a particular, situated knowledge of the city" and that it is an activity "always already and inescapably political, both scripted and a form of scripting, both historically shaped and caught up in the disruptive and unpredictable nature of urban life" (175, 184). Bulmer's walking performance is not the unmarked, seemingly "universal" experience of Benjamin's flâneur, Debord's dérivist, or de Certeau's pedestrian—three figures that have dominated walking scholarship but which have failed to account for differences in the ambulating bodymind and the ambulatory experience. Rather, these walks are necessarily specific to Bulmer's embodiment, her circumstances, and her modes of engagement with place. I argue that, in addition to decentering the visual, the specificity that *May I Take Your Arm?* engenders reimagines how we relate to quotidian spatial infrastructures. The performance offers a way to engage with spatial infrastructures across different sensory modes of experience, and thus promotes a way of thinking about how infrastructures emerge differently depending on our relation to them. Bulmer and her companion develop unique ways of relating to each other, and to their surroundings. For example, Bulmer's guides must start to conceive of the world through narrative, seeking out ways to translate what they are seeing into words that might ignite

Bulmer's imagination. In doing so, they are also filtering these narratives through their own personal sense of connection to the area—they decide to describe some landmarks over others, for example, perhaps highlighting a bench that holds meaning for them but which to others would be unremarkable. The way that the spatial infrastructure of the city unfolds for Bulmer is therefore mediated through an interpersonal relationality with another. We might imagine that the sidewalk becomes a kind of palimpsest—overlaid with the relational infrastructure that is enacted by Bulmer and her guide. It emerges as a spatial infrastructure that is conjoined with the emotional, embodied, and affective memory of her guide. In this rendering, the spatial infrastructure of the sidewalk is never neutral. Rather, it emerges as intensely personal and specific in the context of this particular pairing of people in a shared time and space. The performance not only advances an epistemology of blindness, as Chandler and colleagues suggest, but also puts forward a relational way of knowing the world that is rooted in infrastructural experience. Cabbagetown becomes a 'place' for Bulmer through the quotidian and repetitive acts of these guided walks, and the significance and meaning that is gleaned from traversing the spatial infrastructures of the city become a shared form of knowledge between Bulmer and her guides.

By prioritizing the connection between Bulmer and her guides, *May I Take Your Arm?* deftly points to the importance of the relational and interpersonal infrastructures that exist in tandem with the physical and material infrastructures that support daily life. This resonates with Arseli Dokumaci's research on "microactivist affordances," which traces the micro practices, habits, and amendments disabled people make to their routines and environments in order to "make up for" accessibility gaps in their environment and daily life. Dokumaci's continued development of this concept extends it to include "people as affordances," and she notes how

“people may enable, facilitate, or interfere with and disable the emergences of affordances for one another” and describes this as “a new way of conceptualizing care” (“People” 98). *May I Take Your Arm?* enacts this care by demonstrating how interpersonal relationships with friends, colleagues, and support workers are central to how Bulmer operates in and accesses the public sphere. The work shows how the built infrastructure of the sidewalk is not, in itself, enough support to allow Bulmer to traverse through public space easily, safely, and in ways that secure her place and connection with the community. What is also needed are the relationships that—while they are not a replacement for the support offered by built infrastructure—become an equally important contributor to accessibility and care and a way of filling in access gaps in the built environment.

However, I argue that Bulmer’s work goes beyond showing how interpersonal and social arrangements complement or address the lack of access in built infrastructure to also exemplify how relationships can constitute an infrastructure in and of themselves. Relationships become about more than just mitigating gaps in access—they emerge as a substrate of support that is inextricable from how people exist in, move through, and experience the world. The singularity and individuality of the flâneur is undone by this performance, not just because Bulmer is accompanied by another person, but because both participants’ *experience* of the city and the walk is mediated with, by, and through the other. This resonates with AbdouMaliq Simone’s acknowledgement of the ways that immaterial social relations and practices undergird quotidian life, particularly in urban settings. Simone has advanced an understanding of “people as infrastructure,” arguing that the ways that people “engage complex combinations of objects, spaces, persons, and practices . . . [are] conjunctions [that] become an infrastructure—a platform providing for and reproducing life in the city” (“People” 408). This approach “draws attention to

the ways in which social relations are a central, hidden, and vital support system necessary to live in cities" (Appel et al. 11-12). *May I Take Your Arm?* is a performance that highlights the interpersonal relations between Bulmer and her guides (and the arts community networks which generated these) to underscore how essential they are to Bulmer's life. The work shows how these relations build out an interpersonal infrastructure that exists in tandem with the built infrastructure through which they traverse. This performance emphasizes its relational infrastructure and demonstrates how it offers as much structural support to the performance—and to Bulmer's life—as the winding concrete paths on which it is walked.

Haptic Infrastructures

The relational infrastructures that emerged in these intimate, one-on-one walks were then staged for a wider audience when *May I Take Your Arm?* transformed into a live performance installation. The walking conversations between Bulmer and her guides were initially audio-recorded because they were intended to be developed into a podcast. But when funding for that project did not materialize the team shifted and began to consider ways of expanding the content into other sensory registers. The development of the work was, as Bulmer describes, an extremely iterative process that was shaped by the reality of funding opportunities and the team's creative impulses (Personal interview). For example, Red Dress Productions co-founder Anna Camilleri, a visual artist, was interested in adding a tactile dimension to the project. She created a series of dioramas that replicated sites in Bulmer's neighbourhood—"miniature worlds" complete with small-scale trees, people, animals, streets, and structures like pergolas, fences, and building facades. At this point the project began to be envisioned as an audio-visual installation that would include the dioramas and the recorded conversations, but the creative team also felt that it was important to include a live element that would feature Bulmer's presence directly.

This was underscored during one rehearsal when Bulmer instinctively began touching the dioramas—running her fingers over the street scenes that she had walked so many times with her guides. As she notes,

> Again, it was just one of those things where it just happened so organically. Anna [Camilleri] set the little miniature worlds up in the space and I naturally went around exploring them, feeling them, touching them. And . . . I think watching me do that was quite moving for both Tristan [Whiston] and Anna and so we thought okay, I guess that's part of the story, is . . . watching me re-engage as I listen to the walks that I went on. (Personal interview)

Ultimately, the piece settled as a live performance in which an audience listens to the recorded conversations while witnessing as Bulmer moves through the space interacting with the dioramas in this same exploratory, semi-improvised manner. When the piece was first staged at Cahoots Theatre in Toronto in 2018, audience seating was arranged in a semi-circle that allowed for a view of the five neighbourhood dioramas set up around the space. These included sites from Toronto's east end that Bulmer had visited on her walks, such as the Allen Gardens, the Toronto Necropolis, Riverdale Farm, and the Hugh Garner Housing Co-operative. Speakers were set up on splints around the room which played the conversations and ambient street sounds recorded during the walks. When Bulmer would hear a part of a conversation that referenced or recalled a particular place she would call out to the audience for someone to guide her to the corresponding diorama so she could engage with it through touch—thus re-performing the interpersonal infrastructure that was developed during the initial city walks.[49] Throughout,

[49] This was also facilitated by Becky Gold, who took on the role of creative enabler in the performance, stepping in the guide Bulmer if an audience member did not volunteer. Gold and Bulmer recently wrote about their work together through the frame of creative enabling, noting the need for support roles to support disability arts work. See Gold and Bulmer.

videographer Katie Yelland followed Bulmer and filmed as she touched each miniature world. This close-range video was projected at a scale ten-fold onto a wall in the venue, which allowed the audience to witness a close-up image of Bulmer's tactile engagement with the dioramas. Bulmer's intimate tactile performance evokes the experience of the "touch tour"—an access practice that provides the opportunity for a haptic experience of an artwork.[50] Georgina Kleege describes how, as a blind person, the ability to touch artworks extends and complements what she might perceive visually and offers an opportunity to relate to the artist on a different sensory register (*More Than* 62-64). As she notes when recounting the experience of touching a Matisse sculpture, "I had the analogous pleasure of feeling a distant relative of the artist's haptic sensation as he molded the forms . . . I felt I was not only in touch with the artist but also feeling something that probably is not apparent to the eyes alone" (*More Than* 63-64). Although I have focused on the immaterial and interpersonal relations that structure Bulmer's work, from an infrastructural perspective this haptic element of *May I Take Your Arm?* reminds audiences that such relations do not occur in the abstract but are situated on and mediated by physical and material infrastructures. The walking conversations were innately connected to a material sense of place, and as Bulmer's fingers trace routes she walked via the miniature worlds, she brings the physical infrastructure of the city sidewalks back into focus. This performance draws together the material focus of visual arts and the ephemeral nature of live performance and in so doing it becomes a multi-sensorial work that demonstrates how the immaterial and material infrastructures that have guided the piece are meaningfully entangled. The multiplicity of infrastructures that helped to create the work is then replicated by the plurality of art forms called on to present the work, and these multiplicities converge through Bulmer's haptic experience.

[50] At the end of the performance audience members were invited to touch the dioramas.

Pandemic Re-iterations

May I Take Your Arm? was created in 2018, and in 2019 it was performed again in Toronto while also touring to Kingston, Ontario and Vancouver, British Columbia. Its later iterations, however, were shaped by pandemic exigencies.[51] In 2020 the piece was scheduled to be performed live at the FOLDA festival in Kingston, but had to be heavily adapted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. I opened this chapter describing how relations on the sidewalk shifted dramatically during the pandemic, a time when increased scrutiny was brought to bear on public interactions. This was certainly true for Bulmer, and the team felt that *May I Take Your Arm?* needed to be updated to reflect Bulmer's new reality during this period. A digital version of the piece was created and livestreamed for the FOLDA festival in June 2020. This version found Bulmer performing the work alone in a makeshift garage theatre, engaging with both the original diorama and a large tactile map hung against the back wall, which included colourful dots, lines, and wooden blocks that outlined the city streets she walked with her guides. Some of the original audio recordings of the walks were played, but the soundscape also included new voiceover by Bulmer who described her pandemic reality, a period of "so much time spent inside" she explained, that she was "afraid my body [was] losing the knowledge of 'here I am.'" The livestream video of Bulmer was also, in moments, visually overlaid by pre-recorded video footage. This footage ranged from Bulmer's original handling of Camilleri's diorama, a Zoom call of the creators discussing how to refashion the work into this new format, and Bulmer going on distanced walks with her co-creators. Because Bulmer could not safely "take the arm" of

[51] *May I Take Your Arm?* continues to transform. In 2021, through partnership between Theatre Passe Muraille, Red Dress Productions, and Common Boots Theatre, Wy Joung Kou designed a website to house all components of the work. This included the livestream broadcast discussed here, an audio recording of the original performance, and the individual conversation recordings. Also included were "story walker calls"—recordings of phone conversations that Bulmer had with her guides in 2021, three years after they first met. As part of this iteration, Camilleri created 200 tactile books that audience members could purchase, a new material form of presenting the work that could be experienced while listening to be audio content on the website.

anyone during this period, the distanced walks shown in the video include Bulmer and Whiston each holding on to the end of a long belt, walking together but attempting maintain the requisite six feet of distance between them.

The livestream version of *May I Take Your Arm?* is an engaging artistic work and exemplifies how artists creatively innovated during the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, infrastructurally light performances like *May I Take Your Arm?* were able to tour to different cities easily and economically.[52] The realities of COVID-19 meant that touring was no longer feasible, and digital forms of dissemination had to be more fully explored. In addition, this iteration of the work also highlights how unsettling it can be when relationships to habituated infrastructures are disrupted. For example, Bulmer notes how many of her social interactions became fraught with tension during this time, particularly because of her inability to manage her proximity to other people. In the video Bulmer described an experience of going out on her own to the local store in an attempt to purchase flowers. "When I went in," she recalls, "people shouted at me to leave. Physical distancing while blind is uncontrollable." Further, when Bulmer describes her concern that her body is "losing the knowledge of 'here I am'" she gestures to how pivotal her engagement with the physical and relational infrastructures of her community are in orienting her to the world. By integrating her real-life use of a human guide into the fabric of the performance, *May I Take Your Arm?* draws attention to the need for certain kinds of support to enable Bulmer's mobility. On one hand, the interpersonal infrastructure that Bulmer and her guide develop through their interaction becomes—on a very basic level—the means through which the performance can take place. In other words, without the sharing of stories and

[52] Kirsty Johnston glosses Carrie Sandahl in noting that the low material and infrastructural costs of producing, touring, and presenting solo performance is one reason why disabled artists have gravitated towards this particular form (*Stage* 44).

interdependent guiding of each other through the city, the performance as is literally would not exist. Critically, the performance also demonstrates the kinds of interpersonal relations that are equally important in Bulmer's quotidian life. Both in the context of *May I Take Your Arm?* and beyond, such relations form an essential infrastructure that allows her to access to the world. When this interpersonal infrastructure is broken or unavailable, the performance is disrupted in a way that mimics the disruption in Bulmer's everyday life when certain supports are not available. What the relational structure of *May I Take Your Arm?* depicts, therefore, is a literal demonstration of the way that interpersonal relationships are a necessary infrastructure to one's easy and smooth functioning in the world.

Interdependence and Sustainability

Equally important in *May I Take Your Arm?* are its enactments of interdependence. In a literal sense, this happens through the performance's reliance on touch, in the way Bulmer and her guide are physically connected as they lead each other through space. The dual mobility of their two bodies navigating as a unit embodies interdependence. They identify and circumvent obstacles, nudge each other towards landmarks or places that hold particular interest, and communicate their personal sensory experiences to each other as they move. In a figurative sense, the pair enacts interdependence through the sharing of vulnerable stories and observations during the walk. The performance cannot exist without each person's contribution, and they both benefit from the experience by developing a deeper sense of connection to the places they inhabit and to each other. Bulmer describes how quickly the conversations moved into deeply personal terrain. She argues that something about taking another person's arm causes them to open up:

> And for this tiny brief moment in time there's this intimacy with someone [that] I don't know at all. And it often [happens] [because] you're not used to having someone on your

> arm, so people start talking and people tell me just the most amazing things. And in a period of three minutes crossing the road I'll hear all about someone's daughter who just graduated from art college and doesn't know what to do, you know, whatever, whatever the conversation will be. It's this strange, beautiful window into people's lives that otherwise I wouldn't have. (Personal interview)

This connection and sense of intimacy is also bolstered by the shared vulnerability that the performance engenders. As Bulmer observes,

> I can feel that there's an instantaneous sense of interdependence. And maybe also it's a sharing of vulnerability. Because, you know, . . . I can't deny that I have a vulnerability that is different than if you can see. I'm more likely to be hit by a car or . . . I'm more likely to trip and fall. Although the irony is that usually when I'm walking with people is that it's them that trips over the sidewalk! (Personal interview)

Here Bulmer recognizes her vulnerability in public space, acknowledging how the presence of a sighted guide can offset some of the responsibility she holds for her own safety. And yet *May I Take Your Arm?* does not convey this vulnerability as a weakness or flatten it into a unilateral form of dependency. Rather, by acknowledging the interdependence and vulnerability that emerges through the act of guiding and conversing, this performance becomes a way of thinking about how we might enact more sustainable relational infrastructures.

As an important tenet of disability studies, the concept and enactment of interdependence counters the neoliberalist pull towards individualism and independence, while also not collapsing into a model of dependency that risks diminishing one's agency (Arneil; Fine and Glendinning). Disability studies has a tenuous relationship with the notion of dependency—staunchly rejecting its propensity to paternalize disabled people while also acknowledging the need for various

forms of assistance (Reindal). Disability activists and scholars have advocated for a revaluation of dependency. They argue that the refusal to acknowledge the need for dependency is ableist—a viewpoint rooted in the false and exclusionary logics that would position humans as fully autonomous, rational, and self-sufficient. This logic obscures how we are all mutually dependent, how dependency is an inherent quality of being in the world, and how dependency is what allows us to be sustained in our lives. As Judith Butler asserts: "dependency fundamentally defines us: it is something I never quite outgrow, no matter how old and how individuated I may seem . . . we invariably lean towards and on each other, and it is impossible to think about either of us without the other" ("On Cruelty"). Likewise, Eva Feder Kittay has persuasively argued for a revaluation of dependence as necessary to an ethics of care. She traces how disability activism has followed theories of justice that link independence and autonomy to dignity and the acquisition of rights. Critically, in this context "independence" does not necessarily mean operating individually or without support systems. The Independent Living Movement, for example, does not disavow the realities of dependency and caregiving but advocates for supports that allow people with disabilities to garner independence and autonomy in making *decisions* about their care. And yet Kittay argues that this remains an instrumentalized view of care that centers the autonomous individual as its goal (50-51). Instead, she points to the need to re-evaluate the ideas that underlie how we conceive of ethical care relations, arguing that the expectation of full autonomy does not adequately reflect how many kinds of relationships of care are structured. Like Butler, Kittay is interested in positioning dependency as a feature of life, and as something that can still engender relations of care that are ethical, reciprocal, and attentive (54-55).

Similarly, *May I Take Your Arm?* turns away from a concern with an *equal* exchange of care to instead value a sense of *mutuality* in the exchange. The experience offers different lessons

and things of value to each person—it fosters the shifting terrain of interdependence in which needs can be articulated and met without the frantic pull towards independence. Bulmer's guides lead the route; she initiates and leads the conversation. Though Bulmer is not entirely dependent on her guides per se, the work's awareness of vulnerability and safety in public space means that it also does not perform a false allegiance to the notion of independence in a way that would deny the very real need for interpersonal support. Instead, the performance uses the interdependent walks as its own infrastructure and they become the basis on which all other performance elements are constructed, exemplifying human dependence on infrastructural systems, be they physical or interpersonal. But the work also demonstrates how independence can be found *through* the acceptance and valuing of our moments of dependency. Disability advocate Erik Leipoldt argues for the acceptance of the reality of individual care needs within the context of mutual care relationships. He observes how "A sense of dependence is then reframed into a sense of personal independence, paradoxically through being assisted by others" (22). This perspective reorients the connection between dependence and independence away from being two opposing poles into a mutually constitutive relationship.

Moving into a space of disability justice further dissolves the opposition between in/dependence. Disability justice, a framework developed by disabled queer, trans, and gender nonconforming people of colour and robustly articulated by the arts collective Sins Invalid, is inextricably linked to the concept and practice of mutual aid and collective care. In their essay on the topic Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha describes Loree Erickson's care collective—an initiative started by Erickson as a "practical survival strategy" in which she mobilized friends and community members to work unpaid shifts to provide her with care, undertaking tasks like

bathing, dressing, and administrative work.[53] As Piepzna-Samarasinha observes, in this model Erickson's care needs "[are] posited as something she both needs and deserves, and as a chance to build community, hang out with Loree, and have fun—not as a chore" (45). The discrete care tasks matter, but so too does the approach, which is not replicating a charity model of access, nor is it about pushing Erickson towards greater levels of independence. Rather, this approach mobilizes care work as a site for community building and disability justice organizing, emphasizing the ancillary interpersonal and political benefits that emerge from this engagement.

By invoking a similar perspective, *May I Take Your Arm?* revalues the notion of support and interdependence, appreciating the way that assistance and care can be mutually gratifying and deeply meaningful. Through this interdependence Bulmer and her guide are both able to draw something out of the experience. As Bulmer observes: "Yeah, and I guess that's kind of cool because . . . there was an exchange happening for both of us. Because . . . the world around me, the space was becoming a place. I was starting to develop a connection. But so did they, because . . . they hadn't considered their environments through a different sense. And they hadn't had to deliver it" (Personal interview). The task of describing the world offered an opportunity for her guides to open themselves to their neighbourhood in a new way—attending to the street scenes with more awareness and concerted attention. It also provided them with a welcome challenge to figure out how to translate their visual experiences into words. Bulmer notes how many of her companions "were excited at the idea of finding ways to describe the world around them. Like using words to bring what they could see to my imagination. And a lot of them found

[53] This mimics how, in health care settings, friends and relatives often provide care for patients in between and alongside the regulated and formal care infrastructures that involve professional health providers. Armstrong and colleagues note that while assistance from friends or relatives can be beneficial (and necessary) for filling in the gaps within care service, these familial interventions into care provision are not universally positive or beneficial, and they can increase workload and stress for health care providers (59-60).

that very exciting because it . . . prompted them . . . to see things they . . . hadn't noticed before" (Personal interview). Through its modes of mutual care *May I Take Your Arm?* offers its participants a new way of engaging with their quotidian world—an approach that sustains us through its desire to live interdependently with the spatial and interpersonal infrastructures embedded in our lives. It shows how, by acknowledging needs and our bodily limits and finding means of accommodating them, we can enact a fuller engagement with the world.

RETURNING TO REST AND TRAINING FOR A NEW WORLD

While situated in these themes of interdependence, intimacy, vulnerability, and sustainability, I want to conclude by returning briefly to Rhiannon Armstrong's work. In 2016, Armstrong expanded on *Radical Rests* to develop the performance *Public Selfcare System.*[54] In this work, Armstrong again evokes the gesture of lying down and resting in public, but, as with Bulmer's *May I Take Your Arm?*, the work includes one other participant. The duo go out together to a public space and lie down, engaging in what Armstrong describes as "the radical act of stopping" ("Public"). As the participant lies on their side and extends their body along the ground, their head supported by a small pillow, scarf, or piece of fabric, Armstrong lies behind them with her hand resting gently on their shoulder. A bright yellow A-frame sign is placed nearby, the kind typically used to indicate a wet floor. In the middle of the sign there is a black triangle that encircles the image of a horizontal stick figure. Alongside this image, in big black text, are the words: "It's O.K. We're just resting." The sign acts as a message to assuage the interest or concern of any people who pass by about the intent of the pair's actions. The

[54] Though distinct works, *Radical Rests* is connected to *Public Selfcare System*. Not only do both works enact the same gesture of lying down in the public, but they also overlap because Armstrong notes that she usually contributes a photo to the *Radical Rests* series each time she performs *Public Selfcare System*.

performance is centered on this stationary gesture of two bodies stretched out beside each other, a momentary act of stillness as they lie together in public space.

As a duet, *Public Selfcare System* transforms the solo act of rest found in *Radical Rests* into an intimate moment of care and vulnerability between two people. The moment is vulnerable, tender, and importantly, full of dependency. The individualization insinuated by the word “selfcare” is a bit of a misnomer here, given how Armstrong frames the performance as a *shared* moment for rest and recuperation, instructing: “We are going to lie down and have a rest: I am going to look out for you and look after you. You have a right to be here, you have a right to do this. We can do it together” (“Public”).

Public Selfcare System embraces the ways in which humans depend on external expressions of care as a means of sustaining ourselves. This is not an individuated or materialistic approach to self-care, such as those often performed by white women and rendered through feminized rituals like manicures, bubble baths, and alcohol consumption (Kisner). Instead, this is care borne out of connection and community, more in line with original notions of self-care honed by Black feminist thinkers like Audre Lorde. Lorde describes caring for herself as self-preservation, which, as a Black woman, is an act of political warfare (130). Black feminist collectives like Tricia Hersey’s The Nap Ministry continue to use rest as a path toward rebellion and liberation—a means of recuperation and self-maintenance that is necessary in combating the psychic and physical exhaustion that comes from fighting the injustices of anti-Black racism. This is rest not as an individualized form of self-care, but as an act of resistance against white supremacy and its historical and ongoing attempts to oppress and exhaust Black communities. This is rest as reparation.

Armstrong does not frame the performance as engaging with anti-racism work, and I am hesitant to position it as an extension of this lineage given the prevalence with which the radical self-care advanced by Black feminist thinkers has been whitewashed, corporatized, de-politicized, and ultimately subsumed under a banner of "wellness" within an industry that is predominantly controlled by and aimed at white people (Rodino-Colocino; Spicer). And yet I want to acknowledge the ways that *Public Selfcare System* resonates with a similar notion of rest as a form of resistance against structures of power. As Hersey argues, we cannot separate the sleep deprivation and pull towards productivity wrought by capitalism from its roots in white supremacy and colonialism (qtd. in A. Young). Rest is a form of embodied refusal against these systems of oppression. But it is also an act of world building in how it opens up space to dream and imagine another world beyond these systems. So too, as Armstrong lies alongside her companion, her hand lightly resting on their shoulder, she creates a world for her companion that provides a space in which they can pause and replenish themselves through rest. In this work the notions of sustainability, care, and rest are intertwined and become a form of survival against the relentless demands and individualization of neoliberal capitalism. In his indictment against the unremitting temporality of capitalism, Jonathan Crary observes the "incompatibility of 24/7 capitalism with any social behaviors that have a rhythmic pattern of action and pause" (125). For Crary, this includes "any social exchange involving sharing, reciprocity, or cooperation" (125)—tenets that are core to Armstrong's performance. *Public Selfcare System* advocates for shared moments of rest and pause and care that are incompatible with our contemporary moment, since, as Crary argues, "Time for human rest and regeneration is simply too expensive to be structurally possible within contemporary capitalism" (14-15).

For Armstrong, this performance is also a form of training for a future in which the need to rest is not only important but inevitable:

> I am an expert at resting in public thanks to a condition that sometimes forces me to lie down wherever I happen to be, and stay there until I am well enough to get up again. We may all one day have to learn to stop in the middle of the street, in the middle of the day, and rest. *Get ahead of the curve, get your training in now.* (Armstrong, “Public”; emphasis added)

In this rendering rest becomes necessary for future survival. Armstrong’s words allude to the idea that ‘we will all become disabled if we live long enough’—an adage often evoked as a means of instilling a sense of empathy, compassion, and solidarity for experiences of disability. While this phrase does not address the uneven ways that some bodies are more likely to encounter (or be targeted for) disablement, injury, or illness (Kafer; Muñoz; Puar), it does point towards ways that contingency and dependency are fundamental to life. If we consider *Public Selfcare System* as a form of training—in order to endure the comings of the future—and as a form of practice—a rehearsal of our future needs—then it becomes an embodied form of world building. The moment of pause on the sidewalk, the lying down and giving in to our inherent and inevitable dependence calls forth a different way in which the world might be inhabited.

CHAPTER TWO

RAMPS AS INFRASTRUCTURE

> *When traversing the streets of Toronto, the brightly coloured triangles are hard to miss. Jutting out from storefront doors, these triangular wooden blocks are painted vibrant hues of yellow, red, blue, and green that contrast sharply with the grey concrete of the sidewalk. Along one side a series of block capital letters, painted in a contrasting colour of black or white, reads STOPGAP.CA.*

Over the last decade, the Toronto organization StopGap has constructed temporary access ramps to place around the city. The organization seeks to solve accessibility issues in local communities, advancing a mission of "helping communities discover the benefit of barrier free spaces and providing support to create them" (StopGap).[55] For StopGap, a barrier free world is foundational to their values of independence, spontaneity, and fulfillment. The organization seeks out donated materials and volunteer labour to construct brightly coloured portable wooden ramps, which are then positioned in front of single steps, such as those usually found at local storefronts. These ramps are intended to provide temporary and ad hoc forms of access, and their bright colours are an attempt to bring attention and levity to the topic. The name StopGap holds a double meaning: it both describes the work that these small temporary ramps do (removing the gap that might prevent a wheelchair user from accessing a space), and denotes the definition of a stop gap as a temporary solution to a problem.

The ad hoc approach of the StopGap ramps stands in stark contrast to permanent constructions like the multilevel ramp in the Ed Roberts Campus in Berkeley, California. Designed by Leddy Maytum Stacy Architects and opened to the public in 2011, the spiral ramp is situated in the atrium of a building that houses ten disability service organizations. It spans 56

[55] Luke Anderson co-founded StopGap (alongside Michael Hopkins) in 2011 after becoming frustrated with the lack of access while working at an engineering firm in Toronto. Anderson became a wheelchair user following a mountain bike accident in British Columbia in 2002.

feet in diameter and winds in an enormous circular motion between the first and second stories of the building. At seven feet wide, the width of the ramp can accommodate two wheelchairs side by side. Although the ramp is an impressive feat of accessibility, it was initially imagined from a design perspective. As Clifford Pearson writes, "instead of tucking the ramp off to one side, the architects celebrated it as the building's iconic element and put it front and center. The helical ramp with its translucent red resin balustrade panels is suspended from cables attached to its inside radius, so it seems to float when viewed from other parts of the lobby or the central court." The ramp is a dominant architectural feature of the building that foregrounds accessibility and combines function with visual spectacle. Bess Williamson observes that the spectacle of the ramp signals an awareness of many other access measures in the space, noting how "Its exaggerated visibility also provides a discursive space to consider the many less-visible forms of accessible design in the building, such as open spaces for circulation, audiovisual tools built into community meeting rooms, and an advanced HVAC system to reduce the building's effects on people with chemical sensitivities" (*Accessible* 187).

The StopGap ramps on Toronto's city sidewalks and the large helical ramp on the Ed Roberts Campus are dissimilar structures that exemplify two very different kinds of access ramps, but they hold the common goal of ameliorating barriers through forms of built infrastructure. This chapter explores how disability performance takes up and addresses similar issues related to access and built infrastructure. Moving off the sidewalk and onto the ramp, it is these inclined planes—which manifest in all sorts of configurations—that are the focus of this chapter.

Both the StopGap and the Ed Roberts campus ramps can be situated in a long history of disability advocacy and activism that has focused on the inaccessibility of built space as a major

contributor to the oppression of people with disabilities. Legislation that mandates certain levels of accessibility—such as the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (1990) and the *Accessible Canada Act* (2019)—has grown out of this advocacy and made important contributions in this arena, helping to both increase the public's awareness of the need for accessible spaces, and codify acceptable standards of public accessibility.

Disability arts, performance, and culture has also been instrumental in bringing awareness to access barriers within performance venues, with many artists seeking to transform these spaces into sites that can be easily accessed and utilized by people with many different bodyminds. Carrie Sandahl, for example, has considered the ways that phenomenological experiences of impairment might offer aesthetic choices that impact how theatre spaces are conceived and used. Sandahl notes how spaces are inherently ideological and how their use is designated through specific ideas of their imagined users, arguing that "The layout of physical space tells us who is in it and who can participate and at what levels" ("Considering" 23). While accessibility legislation has helped make performance venues more accessible to disabled audiences, it is far less common that stages, rehearsal halls, box-offices, and costume shops provide the same level of access.[56] This discrepancy indicates that people with disabilities are not imagined to be cultural producers. As Sandahl notes, "Most academic, professional, and community theatres send a clear message to people with disabilities: you may be an observer, but you are not wanted in the sacred stage space" ("Considering" 24). The presence of disabled performers, therefore, expands the purview and responsibility of access within artistic spaces,

[56] A 2017 assessment report by the Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia, commissioned by Realwheels Theatre, noted this discrepancy. The report observed that, for example, "the revised 2010 *Americans with Disabilities Act* requirements refer mostly to requirements around wheelchair seating, lines of sight, and assistive listening devices"—access measures intended for disabled patrons rather than disabled performers or technicians (Williams 6).

which must move beyond the front door, the lobby, and public washrooms into rehearsal, backstage, and performance spaces. For example, in 2016 when Ahuri Theatre developed and performed their production *This is the Point* at The Theatre Centre in Toronto, the company's residency required that various parts of the venue were retrofitted with access ramps so that they could be accessed by performer Tony Diamanti. These changes fundamentally altered the physical space.[57]

While the addition of access ramps may appear like a minor change, I argue that making these kinds of alterations to the physical infrastructure of a performance venue signals the profound shifts that the presence of disability can make within artistic spaces. This chapter is situated in this space of transformation. Throughout, I explore three performances that comment on accessibility but which also consider how disability opens up different paths regarding the relationship between bodies and physical infrastructure.[58] I focus specifically on how each performance takes up the object of the access ramp in a way that elucidates the infrastructural politics evoked by this ubiquitous symbol of access and disability.[59] Although the ramps represented within these performances are singular and therefore not infrastructural *systems* like highways or roads, they nonetheless represent a critical form of infrastructure because they are a

[57] As Ahuri Theatre's Artistic Producer Dan Watson describes: "The Theatre Centre's stage is accessible but that doesn't mean the building is. The rehearsal hall is sunken down two feet, so they built a ramp. And it turns out there's a 6-inch step in the hall that leads from the dressing room to the elevator. So they built a ramp. How do we know that there are all these accessibility challenges? Because The Theatre Centre invited us in, and they accepted the responsibility of providing an accessible stage. If you make a space accessible you have to commit to making all the spaces in your building accessible. And the best way to do that is to actually invite artists with disabilities to work in your space. To see how the space works for particular people with particular needs. To make a commitment, for better, for worse, to figure it out together" (Watson, "Making").
[58] Because of this chapter's focus on built infrastructure, I attend more closely to the experience of physical bodies rather than bodyminds. I do so while also noting how physical disabilities and related access needs have historically dominated disability studies and disability activism, often to the exclusion of people with a range of impairments and illnesses.
[59] I provide an alternate analysis of how the ramp functions in these three performances in the forthcoming chapter "Travel, Mobility, and Kinetic Hierarchies in Disability Performance" in *How Disability Performance Travels*, edited by Christiane Czymoch, Yvonne Schmidt, and Kate Maguire-Rosier (Routledge).

built structure that is intended to support the mobility and circulation of people and goods. In my analysis I consider the symbolism, materiality, and phenomenological experience of the ramp across these performances, attending to the “impulses” that are “embodied in and transmitted by” these physical forms (Schwenkel 104). Adopting an infrastructural lens for these performances provides insight into the ways that disability performance is engaging with the literal and symbolic attributes of built infrastructures like ramps and offering renewed ways of thinking about accessibility in the process. The infrastructural dramaturgy that I take up in this chapter is focused on the built infrastructure of the ramp so as to detail the ways performance can unearth and rescript the infrastructural politics embedded within these physical forms.

I begin with jes sachse’s *wish you were here*—an outdoor installation of a decaying access ramp that invites spectators to think about the ruination of built infrastructures in both literal and figurative ways. While not a live performance per se, this work is performative in its enactment of the ramp and leads me to a meditate on the systemic and structural impacts of infrastructural ruin. I use sachse’s work to consider disability in relation to the concepts of (deferred) maintenance (S. Knowles; Mattern), slow death (Berlant), and collaborative survival (Haraway, *Staying*; Tsing). I then turn to Adam Grant Warren’s solo theatre work *Last Train In* to consider built infrastructure at the level of the body. While in this performance much of the action and commentary turns on the absence of the ramp, emphasizing the profound effects of its absence on the central character powerfully demonstrates the shifting physical impact that (inaccessible) built infrastructures have on individual bodies. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the new choreographic possibilities that emerge from Kinetic Light’s dance duet *DESCENT*, a work that features a specially built ramp that functions as the dance’s set design. The ramp in this performance invites particular corporeal responses from its two performers

(both wheelchair dancers), and, in so doing, demonstrates the ways that built infrastructure—when supportive of and constructed in anticipation of diverse embodiments—can elicit and support intensely pleasurable experiences of moving through space.

JES SACHSE'S *WISH YOU WERE HERE*

In September 2013—at the culmination of a month-long residency with the Common Pulse Arts & Disability Festival— jes sachse[60] debuted their large-scale installation *wish you were here* at the Durham Art Gallery in Ontario, Canada.[61] The work consists of a large rectangular sheet of aluminium that measures 48" wide by 80" long. The sheet is propped up at one end with the other angled against the ground at a steep thirty degrees, supported by an L-frame made of steel. Though one end touches the ground, its top end is not connected to anything, its razor edge leading to nowhere. *wish you were here* looks like an access ramp, but its comically steep angle (and disconnection from neighbouring structures) makes it utterly impractical. So too is the ramp unusable because of its evident decay: the aluminum slab shows a series of thick and winding vertical lines that have been etched into its surface. It is rough and worn through in spots—with scratches and marks that appear as signs of wear, it looks like it would be more suited to a junkyard than an art gallery.

wish you were here marks the start of sachse's long-term engagement with the ramp as an object. Since then, sachse has also created a ramp made from copper piping and hand-shaped a ramp formed out of a homemade cement/clay material. In 2018, all three ramps were installed at the Gardiner Museum in Toronto as part of the museum's *Community Arts Space: Recent*

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[60] sachse uses they/their pronouns and lowercase letters when writing their name.
[61] This residency featured four disability artists (sachse, along with Emily Cook, Tom Leonhardt, and Kazumi Tsuruoka) who spent a month living in Durham, making new work, and connecting with the local community.

Histories public art program.[62] Although sachse's work is varied and they work across media, the ramps resonate with much of sachse's other work in terms of their large scale, their connection to disability culture and accessibility, their materiality, and their method of intervening in public space.[63] sachse notes that they are drawn to creating large scale artwork because of their own small size and stature, noting that "I think it's a way to be loud without having to make [the art] about me as a person" (Personal interview). The ramps also reflect sachse's interest in using found and/or discarded materials for their work. This choice both conveys ideas about worthiness and desirability and is also a pragmatic and economic necessity given the cost of art materials. sachse's commitment to disability culture and representation is also evidenced by the ramps, as is their interest in issues of accessibility and labour.[64]

I focus on the first ramp in this series that was created and initially installed at the Durham Art Gallery. Though there are many facets of the work that merit analysis and discussion, the marks and worn through parts of the artwork are one of its most prominent features and have particular significance when viewed infrastructurally. I explore how thinking with Donna Haraway's phrase "staying with the trouble" in relation to the rips, gaps, and scuff marks that cover this work offers an entry point for considering how these marks can reorient the viewer's perception of the relationship between built infrastructure, accessibility, and disability.

Staying with the Ruins

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[62] For this installation the trio of ramps was retitled as *i wanna dance with some body*—a title that nods to Whitney Houston, becomes a moment of word play between "somebody" and "some body," and which evokes sachse's love of using song lyrics as titles (sachse, Personal interview). For clarity I retain the original title for the first ramp (*wish you were here*) throughout this chapter.

[63] In addition to being a visual arts practitioner, sachse is also a dancer, writer, and curator.

[64] These themes are present in much of sachse's other work, including *To be Frank* (2017), a weekly performance in which sachse questioned the accessibility of museums; *Signs* (2017-2018), which features large wayfinding signs; and *American Able*, a satirical photography series by Holly Norris which features sachse as a model parodying the clothing brand American Apparel.

In *Staying with the Trouble*, Haraway focuses on reconfiguring a multispecies relation to the earth in the face of capitalism and the epoch of the Anthropocene. Haraway uses the phrase "staying with the trouble" as a way of remaining oriented to the present rather than escaping to the imaginings of a safe and undisturbed future. To stay with the trouble is to attend to the present even when it is difficult or disappointing—in an ecological context it denotes an approach that eschews a misplaced faith in "technofixes" as much as a pull towards paralyzing and despondent cynicism. It asks us to instead refocus on the now and find a path through the two extremes of unfounded hope or cynical despair. It also requires that we enact odd forms of multi-species kinship and acknowledge that "we require each other in unexpected collaborations and combinations" (3). I read this approach as deeply resonating with Anna Tsing's writing in *The Mushroom at the End of the World.* Tsing traces the ecological and economic lifecycle of the matsutake mushroom as a way of uncovering how to live within the ruins left by capitalism. The valuable matsutake emerges in "ruined, industrial landscape[s]," a trait which, while it should not be used a justification for ecological destruction, does offer a narrative that shows what can emerge from ruination (30).

Inspired by these approaches, I adapt Haraway's phrasing to consider how sachse's torn and scuffed ramp provides an opportunity for "staying with the *ruin*" in relation to built infrastructure. Though built infrastructure is often associated with progress, development, and modernization, these concepts obscure the fact that infrastructures also frequently exist in a state of ruin, decay, disrepair, and breakdown. Staying with (infrastructural) ruin opens up the possibility for different narratives, temporalities, and experiences to emerge (Gupta; Howe et al; S.J. Jackson; Mattern). I want to stay and explore the decay, ruination, and disrepair evident in sachse's ramp to prompt potentially different ways of thinking about humans, built

infrastructures, and the merits of their sustaining functions. Specifically, I am invested in how the lens of "staying with the ruin" encourages different perspectives on value, attention, and care that counter narratives that are myopically focused on infrastructural progress, modernization, and futurity. What happens, for example, when the proximity, access, availability, and functionality of built infrastructure is compromised because of its decay or disrepair? Who or what do these infrastructures then fail to support and sustain? Who shoulders the fallout from infrastructural breakdown?

Critically, this approach is not intended to position ruin and decay in direct *opposition* or as mere *arrestation* to growth and progress. Rather, I engage with the concept of the "impasse," which—even as it impedes progress—also offers alternative pathways and modes of engagement. I understand this as akin to Jacques Derrida's articulation of *aporia,* an unresolvable paradox, but one which Derrida positions as rhetorically useful for sifting through the complexities of concepts like giving, hospitality, forgiveness, and mourning. That is, the impasse is not a blockade or a dead end but an opportunity to grapple with the conceptual and practical complexity of a topic, attending to how its conditions of possibility and conditions of impossibility are entwined.[65] Similarly, when critical infrastructure scholars takes up ruin as a constituent part of infrastructure, they do so in ways that reveal multiple pathways and temporalities aside from the linear and binary trajectory of progress versus ruin. As Caitlin DeSilvey articulates, the change of state that accompanies the process of decay offers the chance "to read other narratives out of its remains . . . to understand change not as loss but as a release

[65] For example, the conditions of possibility for genuine gift giving, for Derrida, require anonymity of the giver and that the gift does not propose any recompense or acknowledgement. In short, "He argues that a genuine gift must involve neither an apprehension of a good deed done, nor the recognition by the other party that they have received, and this seems to render the actuality of any gift an impossibility" (Reynolds). The conditions of possibility for giving a gift, therefore, are inextricable from the conditions of its impossibility.

into other states, unpredictable and open" (3). In other words, there is more than one story—or what Akhil Gupta describes as "many possible trajectories"—that can emerge from infrastructural ruin (70). The narratives that materialize from the rips and gashes on the ramp in *wish you were here* take us in a series of alternate directions, encouraging us to reckon with the complexities and paradoxes of deferred maintenance and the inaccessibility of built space; disability and slow death; and pathways towards collaborative survival.

Dis/repair, Maintenance, and Slow Death

Thinking about disrepair immediately sparks the thought of its corollaries: the act of repair and maintenance. Lisa Baraitser identifies two distinct temporal forms within maintenance. The first is that maintenance is about "trying to keep something going . . . allowing what already exists to continue or persevere" (52) and the second is a kind of buoying, where "To maintain is to underpin, to prop up from below, to hold up when something or someone is flagging" (52-53). In both formulations, maintenance becomes about sustaining things as they are, a preventative labour that staves off decay. When spectators arrive at *wish you were here*, however, the ramp is already in disrepair and no maintenance work is visible. Unlike works like Mierle Ladermann Ukeles's *Manifesto for Maintenance Art* (1969) or Nishiko's *Repairing Earthquake Project* (2011-2021), in which the artists perform care, maintenance, and restoration through acts of domestic labour and object repair, respectively, *wish you were here* does not include a performance element in which sachse repairs the structure. The need for maintenance is *signalled* by the ramp's disrepair, but it is never enacted.

The ramp is also expected to further decay because of its placement outdoors. While the initial wear of the aluminum sheet emerged through physical use and labour, its open-air installation indicates that the piece will continue to decay through its exposure to changing

weather patterns and temperature fluctuations. This is an intentional choice by sachse who notes that "by placing the artwork in a public domain outside the gallery setting, it is subsequently subjected to the elements; to rust and weathering. A metal object alive in its subjectivity, and thusly, necessarily, on a trajectory toward death" ("Artist Statement"). sachse's words imply that the deterioration of the work is inevitable given its surroundings. But this deterioration also seems inevitable because there is no mention of the ramp receiving repair or maintenance in an effort to extend its service life. What happens when there is no plan for infrastructure repair? What happens without maintenance?

This is the state of much built infrastructure, even in countries that boast narratives of progress and development. For example, the United States consistently receives poor overall grades on the "infrastructure report card" compiled by the American Society of Civil Engineers. This quadrennial report tracks the state of the country's public infrastructure and estimates the resulting economic investment that is needed. The results are usually dismal—there was a slight improvement with the 2021 report awarding a grade of C+, which moved the country out of the D range for the first time in 20 years.[66] The needed economic investment to improve the country's infrastructure now rests at a staggering 5.937 trillion dollars.

These astronomical costs signal a profound absence of infrastructural maintenance, commonly attributed to a lack of interest and political will. Political points and media attention are garnered from funding *new* projects rather than more mundane, though often more necessary, methods of upkeep and repair (Mattern). The development of new infrastructure can herald narratives of progress and advancement, working to "signify that the nation-state is advanced and

[66] In 2017 and 2013 the country received a D+ (with estimated investments listed at 4.59 trillion and 3.6 trillion, respectively), and in 2009 and 2005 a D (with estimated investments listed at 2.2 trillion and 1.6 trillion, respectively). A D grade is categorized as "Poor, at risk" and a C grade is categorized as "Mediocre, requires attention" (American Society of Civil Engineers).

modern" (Appel et al. 19). But these infrastructures quickly lose their sheen when the monotonous work of maintenance begins. There is also often less public support for infrastructure maintenance and renewal because the benefit of such investments is usually indirect (Frischmann ix). Although benefits might be more apparent during periods of breakdown or disrepair (moments when infrastructures come to the surface and demand attention), "the public attention given [to infrastructure] is reactive, isolated, and short-lived" (Frischmann ix). Because of the lack of public interest and the corresponding lack of political incentive, investment in the maintenance of infrastructures is rendered secondary and tends to be deferred until moments of crisis or absolute need.

Of course, not all built infrastructure receives the same level of deferral or investment. Howe and colleagues describe how "infrastructural deterioration highlights the affective investments and meanings associated with a particular set of projects over their lifetime" (550). *Which* infrastructures are left to deteriorate denotes not only the amount of financial and material investment in that structure but also the level of affective investment. Critically, because infrastructures are systems that support and sustain how people operate in and move through the world, their disrepair also reveals the kinds of experiences and populations that are deemed worthy of sustaining. Infrastructural dramaturgy helps to excavate these deeper significations of built infrastructure—from this perspective, decaying infrastructure speaks volumes about the ethico-political underpinnings of who is supported by that structure. The decaying ramp of *wish you were here* indexes myriad access infrastructures that have not received enough care and attention for them to remain functional and useful. Therefore, it specifically highlights the ongoing neglect of access infrastructures that, if properly maintained, could support people with disabilities.

Tobin Siebers, writing on disability aesthetics, argues that the inattention paid to access measures like ramps, accessible parking spots and walkways, and handicap signs is an extension of society's disavowal of and discomfort with disability and impairment (70-71). Siebers notes how "in no time, plants and flowers clutter wheelchair ramps, handicap signs are tucked away, and decorative rocks and woodchips block accessible walkways" (79). These objects become "defensive countermeasures" that arise in environments to impede disabled access, objects which "work to conceal the blemish on society represented by disability" (79). In Siebers's example, the non-maintenance of built structures like access ramps prevents the presence of people with disabilities and disavows disability altogether. Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha recalls a similar experience when they returned to a performance venue that—two years prior—had an access ramp leading up to the stage (152). The venue had installed the ramp to accommodate a performance by the disability arts collective Sins Invalid, but the ramp was removed following their show. It was assumed that the presence of disabled artists onstage was a one-time occurrence that only necessitated temporary access. These examples of ruin and disrepair acts as a double erasure of disability, one that is both metaphorical and literal. In this sense, we can read the dilapidated state of sachse's ramp as symbolizing the kind of abjection that Siebers observes, where public aversion to disability extends into the built environment when symbolic or material marks of disability (such as access ramps) are covered up, obfuscated, or left to disrepair. It represents the reality of moving through a world that is never quite functional enough to offer a true sense of ease, support, and care.

Aside from a state of abjection, we might also consider *wish you were here* within a frame of what Scott Gabriel Knowles describes as "deferred maintenance." From this perspective, although sachse's ramp is currently in a state of disrepair, we might imagine that

repair and maintenance are intended to arrive at some (indeterminable) point in the future. The concept of deferred maintenance can help explain why access infrastructures exist in a constant state of disrepair and breakdown—the always broken elevator, the loose and unusable handrail, the "accessible" washroom without an accessible stall. Tanya Titchkosky argues that this happens when disability remains within the category of the "not-yet." This status of the "not-yet" means that disability is present, but its conflict with the built environment is not perceived as urgent. The "not-yet" is how "It is possible that for more than two months the one fully accessible washroom in a building could have a hastily scribbled sign attached to it, reading 'Out of Order,' with no alternative posted" (*The Question* 108). Titchkosky observes the many instances of this deferral—when access is signified (e.g., with the international symbol of access), and thus its possibility is gestured to, but it is not actually provided (*The Question* 64). So too in *wish you were here,* the figure of the ramp *symbolizes* access but cannot provide it as such. Unconnected to any building or entrance and worn through with wear, the ramp is unable to offer any actual assistance. One could, however, imagine that if the ramp were to be repaired, it would become functional. In such cases, as Titchkosky observes, access is theoretically present, but functionally absent, deferred indefinitely towards a yet-to-materialize future.

The ramp's lack of maintenance and repair also show how infrastructural decay and deferred maintenance can generate inequities that go beyond issues of accessibility to also create or perpetuate disabling experiences and states that prevent populations from flourishing. One example of this is that, at the time of this writing, there are 58 active boil-water advisories spread across 38 First Nations communities in Canada (Stefanovich and Jones).[67] One of those, the

[67] While this is a decrease from the 105 advisories that were in place at the start of Justin Trudeau's tenure as Prime Minister, the scale and length of this crisis—as well as the necessity for humans to have access to drinkable water—means that only a full removal of these advisories is acceptable.

Neskantaga First Nation in Northern Ontario, has been under advisory for the past 25 years with the reserve's water treatment plant having not provided clean drinking water since it was built in 1993 (Ketelaars). The Canadian government insists that infrastructure (both its development and maintenance) is the solution to ending these advisories, but does so while simultaneously citing the economic and logistical difficulties that impede needed infrastructural developments (Indigenous Services Canada). Here, infrastructure is needed, but its construction is deferred for years on end, a deferral that creates economic, logistical, and health burdens for these communities.

Living in a state of infrastructural decay or in the constant deferral of infrastructural investment places communities into a state of what Lauren Berlant calls "slow death." Berlant describes slow death as "the structurally induced attrition of persons keyed to their membership in certain populations" (102) to the extent that "the physical wearing out of a population . . . points to its deterioration as a defining characteristic of its experience and historical existence" (95). The boil-water advisories cited above are one example whereby infrastructural disrepair or decay thrusts a population into a state of slow death, creating or exacerbating intense psychological and physical struggles in response.[68] Berlant's concept of slow death intersects with disability studies' critiques of neoliberalism, austerity measures, and ableism. Margrit Shildrick, for example, notes how the "neoliberal mantra of self-responsibilisation" contributes to the slow death of populations and particularly disabled populations ("Death" 156). *wish you were here* echoes this state because deterioration is a defining characteristic of its existence as well. While slow death can sometimes be mislabeled under a rhetoric of crisis or catastrophe, to

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[68] In *Root Shock* Mindy Fullilove shows how the destruction of housing in African American communities (often under the guise of "urban renewal" initiatives) causes the withdrawal of municipal services (i.e., infrastructural supports) and leaves to many psychological and psychological ailments.

do so is to misconstrue the fact that slow death is "neither a state of exception nor the opposite, mere banality, but a domain where any setting scene of living is revealed to be interwoven with ordinary life" (Berlant 102). The ongoingness of sachse's ramp exemplifies this distinction because the work does more than just symbolize the attrition of built infrastructure. It also materializes the temporality of slow death in how it anticipates and experiences its own continued erosion through its placement outdoors, moving ever forward, as sachse describes, "thusly, necessarily, on a trajectory toward death" ("Artist Statement").

Impasse

There is another way of situating *wish you were here* in relation to the concept of slow death. Throughout her analysis, Berlant identifies the temporal genre of the "impasse" as a potential space of disengagement from the experience of slow death. This is not a form of extreme or energized resistance to structural violence, but a refusal through abeyance or interruption—resistance "less well symbolized by energizing images of sustainable life . . . than it is expressed in regimes of exhausted practical sovereignty, lateral agency, and, sometimes, counterabsorption in episodic refreshment" (119). It is a moment of delay, a suspension of the self that evades improvement and progression, and that "enables us to develop gestures of composure, of mannerly transaction, of being-with in the world as well as rejection, refusal, detachment, psychosis, and all kinds of radical negation" (199). In this way, the impasse "opens up different ways that the interruption of norms of the reproduction of life can be adapted to, felt out and lived" (199). The impasse is a suspension, a pause in the flow, which offers something different (and perhaps unexpected) to emerge.

The impasse is evident in the very materiality of sachse's ramp. Because it is unconnected from any other structure, the ramp, if used, would very literally present an impasse.

Its physical deterioration also makes it unusable—the disrepair evidenced by its holes and gaps mean it cannot support the mobility of its users. While in the previous section I linked the disrepair and unusability of the ramp to the uneven forms of access that people with disabilities experience, here I want to position the disrepair of the ramp as enacting a form of impasse that might open a space for alternative pathways, particularly those that counter the incessant forward motion of progress. Although it appears in differing contexts, the concept of progress often indicates a deep attachment to the fantasy of 'the good life.' Berlant identifies this attachment as problematic, describing it as a form of "cruel optimism" in which our attachment to something impedes (rather than engenders) our ability to flourish.[69] The interruption of the impasse, however, becomes a way of managing such attachments—a moment of self-suspension that is also "a relief, a reprieve" from the exhaustion of the reproduction of life within the context of slow death (Berlant 117).

I propose that conceptually, the disrepair in *wish you were here* creates an impasse that—in symbolizing the experience of being stuck or being unable to proceed—offers a moment of pause that brings the potential of a different path. Staying with the ruins of *wish you were here* and joining that approach with the concept of the impasse allows important forms of "radical negation" to become visible. Typically, built infrastructure is used as a way of literally and symbolically enacting progress and modernization. Kregg Hetherington notes how "Infrastructure has always been a part of development thinking because both concepts share a

[69] In Berlant's words, cruel optimism is a sense of hope and ambition that keeps us attached and bound to the things and events that are actually detrimental: "optimism is cruel when the object/scene that ignites a sense of possibility actually makes it impossible to attain the expansive transformation for which a person or a people risks striving" (2). Margrit Shildrick draws on Berlant's rendering of cruel optimism as that which "describes and explains why those enduing slow death are compelled to keep going" ("Death" 157). Shildrick voices a concern that, in times of austerity, the cruel optimism of the majority—which casts the disabled as "a drain on society's resources"—will bolster the "feeling that we would all be better off without them" ("Death" 157). In other words, that cruel optimism will operate as self-interest hidden behind a facade of communal good.

similar progressive temporality" and he identifies this as an anticipatory state that situates infrastructure within a "future perfect" tense ("Surveying" 40). Wakefield and Braun describe how "Infrastructure . . . creates the conditions for another order, or at least promises a new order to come" (202). This new order has "an assumed—and assured—end" that operates on a trajectory toward the future that is "unidirectional, irreversible and teleological" (202). At the same time, Akhil Gupta notes that when built infrastructure is in ruins—perhaps becoming stuck partway through completion, or even being in ruins prior to its construction—that this "time of suspension, of the hiatus, of the pause, is also a time of relative temporal openness. The future is unknown and unknowable: the project may go ahead, or be scrapped, abandoned, or modified" (72). Decaying infrastructure like sachse's ramp can equally offer a moment of pause, a chance to reflect and potentially redirect one's focus or efforts. *wish you were here*, by presenting a built infrastructure that is in disrepair and which is full of rips and holes that prevent it from being used, upsets the trajectory of narratives that are aligned with linear progress. The work throws a metaphorical wrench in the assumption that the future, in Wakefield and Braun's words, is "unidirectional, irreversible and teleological" (202). Instead, its very dysfunction makes it impassable, thus leading to a reconsideration of assumptions and an opening to a future that is "unknown and unknowable" (Wakefield and Braun 202).

Attending to the generative possibilities of an impasse is not meant to disavow or romanticize the destructive impact of decaying infrastructure that I detailed earlier. Rather, by attending and staying with the (infrastructural) ruin of sachse's work a bit longer, I hope to show how more analytical pathways open up. As with the doubt and puzzlement that arises for Derrida from the aporia, that which *seems* to be a dead end can instead encourage us to reformulate or reconceive our current understanding. To that end, I believe two particularly generative

possibilities emerge in this impasse—possibilities that only become apparent because of how the impasse necessitates a moment of pause and reorientation. The first concerns how sachse uses deferral in a way that prioritizes the access needs of the disability community and opens space for forms of collaborative survival. The second builds from this prioritization of collaborative survival above individualization to emphasize how the work of access is always, and necessarily, ongoing, communal, and incomplete.

Deferral as impasse

In the previous section, Scott Gabriel Knowles's notion of deferred maintenance highlighted how postponing infrastructural investment can have deleterious consequences for communities that rely on forms of infrastructural support. But sachse's practice offers an example of how deferral can instead be a form of community investment—a moment of impasse that can be harnessed to ensure accessibility. sachse maintains that access statements are an essential form of community care that grew out of disabled communities as a form of protection and a means of safety: "You told people exactly how accessible a space was [where] a party or whatever was happening . . . so that a person in a chair or with specific needs didn't show up . . . and . . . discover, in the real, that it's not suited for their needs, and then they're stuck there, you know? . . . It was about protection" (Personal interview). Here sachse is referencing the fact that accessible transit must be arranged in advance and therefore people could be unknowingly "stuck" at an inaccessible venue until their scheduled pick-up time. Because of these concerns, access is nonnegotiable in sachse's work: "[if] the access fails, well, for me, that means I failed my community" (Personal interview). sachse's commitment to access means that they will insist on rescheduling a live presentation until appropriate access measures are put into place. As they note, "Generally as a practice . . . I don't think I've ever said yes to being a part of any art shows [in] any spaces that

are physically inaccessible. And I would extend that to participation in anything public facing with Zoom. If there's no access, I'm not doing it." (Personal interview).

These acts of deferral create moments of impasse, but they are not intended to be argumentative or antagonistic. As sachse notes, postponing an event until access measures can be ensured is their commitment to their community, a refusal that is "actually a lot kinder and generous than people take it as" (Personal interview). It instills an awareness that the event "doesn't happen until it's accessible. So it's not that I'm saying no, or refusing, I'm just saying, 'okay, well get back to me when you've done the work [to make it accessible]'" (Personal interview).

These moments of impasse resist the lure of constant progress and its push to produce content at the expense of accessibility and community. Impasse refuses the insistent mantra that "the show must go on" and instead recognizes that "the show" is the least important part of the event. As sachse asserts, "But yeah, people act really offended and surprised when you say 'well, okay. So we need to reschedule' or 'oh, I'm not going to go on.' And [it's] not because I'm trying to be tempestuous. But because my relationships are the point. The art is not the point. The art is a nice poem about the relationship, but it is the relationships [that matter] and without [those] . . . [the art is] not a thing to me" (Personal interview). Here sachse offers an example of a different association between deferral and access. With built infrastructures, deferral leads to broken or inaccessible structures that prevent people with disabilities from accessing or being present in certain spaces. But sachse's deferral intends towards the opposite outcome: creating an impasse that insists upon the full and unobstructed presence and participation of the disability community.

Collaborative survival

What also emerges from the impasse that the decay of sachse's ramp engenders is the opportunity to reorient the logics of forward-driving progress through a focus on collaborative survival. Anna Tsing argues that detaching from the linear "driving beat" of progress allows different temporalities to emerge (21). For Tsing, these multiple and polyphonic temporalities, alongside "patchy landscapes . . . and shifting assemblages of humans and nonhumans" form "the very stuff of collaborative survival" (20). Tsing argues that these collaborations necessitate working across difference, and that "We are contaminated by our encounters; they change who we are as we make way for others" (27). Our encounters with others become almost alchemical—they transform gatherings into "happenings" that are "greater than the sum of its parts" (27). But this transformation cannot occur until we release notions of self-containment and self-interest and instead acknowledge that our survival depends on others.[70] As Tsing notes, "It is hard for me to think of any challenge I might face without soliciting the assistance of others, human and not human. It is unselfconscious privilege that allows us to fantasize—counterfactually—that we each survive alone" (29).

With regards to *wish you were here*, we can locate a form of collaborative survival in the way that its disrepair was created. The initial scuff marks on the ramp grew out of the close friendship that sachse developed with Kazumi Tsuruoka, a fellow artist at the month-long residency in Durham.[71] sachse describes how they would share space together as a form of access intimacy,[72] with sachse often eschewing their own room to instead sleep on an extra bed

[70] Tsing notes that this lens of individualization helped propagate new intellectual and scientific advancements in the twentieth century, and cites neoclassical economics and population genetics as being two central fields that contributed to the framing of the self-contained individual: "At the heart of each is the self-contained individual actor, out to maximize personal interests, whether for reproduction or wealth" (28).
[71] Tsuruoka is a writer and performer, most well-known for the musical revue show *CP Salon* (2004) created in collaboration with Fides Krucker.
[72] The term access intimacy is from Mia Mingus, who coined the term as a way of describing the connection and intimacy that emerges when people share a deep understanding of each other's access needs. See Mingus.

in Kazumi's space (Personal interview). Through this temporary sharing of domestic space during the residency, and through being in conversation with him about his own artistic practice, sachse had the idea of Tsuruoka being part of the creation of the ramp. sachse invited Tsuruoka to create the first marks on the aluminum slab by driving his power wheelchair across it: "So what we did was we laid it down on this concrete porch, and I covered Kazumi's tires with shoe polish, and was like, 'okay I want you to fly across it and then fly back.' And so, he did" (Personal interview). sachse then used a grinding wheel to carve the polish marks into the slab, creating both shallow scratches and deep marks, sometimes cutting all the way through the aluminum. This was deeply physical work for sachse, who spent hours hunched over the metal sheet retracing Tsuruoka's initial tire marks. As they note, "I'll never forget the memory of my back aching […] oh my God, my muscles! It was a lot on my body […] one of [the grinding wheels] was five pounds [and] the other one was ten pounds. And [they're] vibrating, so it was very labour intensive" (Personal interview).

The disrepair of the ramp was created collaboratively through the contribution of Tsuruoka's mobility and sachse's physical labour. Engendered by their experience of domestic and personal collaboration during their time in Durham, the scuffed metal thereby offers an alternative meaning for infrastructural decay. In this case decay was wrought by a meaningful experience of connection and bolstered by a sense of care and access intimacy. While that may appear counterintuitive, as Rebecca Solnit observes in her writing on disaster and hope, disasters can be moments of insight because they "provide an extraordinary window into social desire and possibility, and what manifests there matters elsewhere, in ordinary times and in other extraordinary times" (6). The disrepair of the ramp might appear to evoke more "disaster" than "hope," but viewing it as a by-product of sachse and Tsuruoka's interdependent care and effort

recasts it as something that signifies sustainable and equitable relations. This echoes the ways that forms of interdependent survival are hugely present in disability communities, most clearly evidenced in acts of mutual aid, cross-community coalitions, and ethical care that proliferate within those spaces. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, many forms of collective organization and activism emerged—online and in communities—to support people with disabilities.[73] The mutual aid initiatives that sprung forth fast and furiously in response to the pandemic exemplify how liveable collaborations and various forms of care can emerge from ruin. The mobilizing of these (and many other) resources within disability communities highlights how collective and interdependent forms of care can be prioritized above individual forms of self-preservation.

This is not to say that joy is automatically created from wreckage, nor to welcome moments of disaster, but to observe that "they are one avenue through which the gifts arrive" (Solnit 6). The gift in the disrepair of the ramp is that it is a physical manifestation of the access intimacy that developed between sachse and Tsuruoka during their residency. Knowing this can orient us towards the ways that access emerges through the fostering and sustaining of community. The ramp also points us towards more nuanced understandings of access because its disrepair makes it dysfunctional for its purported use. Pairing this observation with the notion of access intimacy can help us to recognize the ways that access is an always emerging, changing, and therefore necessarily incomplete practice. Access can never be 'achieved,' or 'fixed in place,' since bodies, spaces, and relationships are in constant flux. In my conversation with

[73] The performance art collective Sins Invalid linked to a variety of mutual aid initiatives and resources, mostly by sharing publicly accessible Google Docs. As part of this, artist, writer, and activist Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha wrote a 19-page document titled "Half Assed Disabled Prepper Survival Tips for Preparing for a Coronavirus Quarantine" which provided a comprehensive guide for disabled people to manage stay-at-home and quarantine requirements. See: https://www.sinsinvalid.org/news-1/2020/3/19/social-distancing-and-crip-survival-a-disability-centered-response-to-covid-19

sachse, they observed how the recent fixation on access statements by many institutions is borne out of a panic of not getting access 'right,' and that this approach, paradoxically, interferes with the ability of these organizations to offer fulsome and responsive forms of access. Merely to add a ramp to a building or create an institutional access statement does not embed an ethos of access and collaborative survival into a space. While such changes can signal improvements in access—and should not be wholly discounted for the access they *do* provide—they miss the kind of access that sachse's work is gesturing towards. By thwarting the pull of progress and leaving the ramp unfinished and in disrepair, *wish you were here* refuses any positioning of access as cursory, performative, or complete.

In this way, *wish you were here* also points to the ways that forms of collective survival are more than pragmatic—they are also infused with joy and desire and love. It signals the kind of access detailed by Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, who links access to radical love: "I mean that access is far more to me than a checklist of accessibility needs—though checklists are needed and necessary. I mean that without deep love and care for each other, for our crip bodyminds, an event can have all the fragrance-free soap and interpreters and thirty-six-inch-wide doorways in the world. And it can still be empty" (76). Indeed, Piepzna-Samarasinha opens their book with a call for these more collective forms of care, asking: "What does it mean to shift our ideas of access and care (whether it's disability, childcare, economic access, or many more) from an individual chore, an unfortunate cost of having an unfortunate body, to a collective responsibility that's maybe even deeply joyful?" (33). sachse's collaboratively created scuffed and torn ramp leads us towards thinking of collective access as infused with joy and a desire for alternative pathways beyond individualism. The title of the group exhibition where the piece was first displayed at the Durham Art Gallery was "desire lines," a phrase that describes the informal

paths taken outside of circumscribed roads and sidewalks. Echoing the exhibition title, sachse describes how they purposefully followed Tsuruoka's tread marks as guides, their "heavy metal etching interpret[ing] and forg[ing] this treading as desire lines found where pathmaking occurs" ("Artist Statement"). The scuff and marks on *wish you were here*, therefore, are more than just symbols of infrastructural ruin. They can offer, in Solnit's words, "an extraordinary window" into sustainable and communal way of relating and surviving. Recalling Berlant's concept of slow death, we might also consider the scuff marks as an impasse that allows for a pause, one that slips the subject into a state of self-suspension and offers a moment of reprieve from the incessant exhaustion of the reproduction of life, and which thus opens up the possibility for forms of lateral agency. Viewed in this way, these marks index the desire for connection, collaboration, and access intimacy, forged, as all desire lines are, in ways that are "often less seen, these paths occur away from roads and institutional promptings, found & memorized by those who tread there" (sachse, "Artist Statement").

ADAM GRANT WARREN'S *LAST TRAIN IN*

In contrast to *wish you were here*, a work in which the ramp is prominently displayed, in Adam Grant Warren's solo play and performance *Last Train In,* the significance of the ramp is evinced by its *absence*. Warren is an award-winning Vancouver-based playwright, actor, and writer who has worked in theatre, dance, and film. He received a Jessie Richardson Theatre award for his performance in Touchstone Theatre's production of Brad Fraser's *Kill Me Now*, a Best Canadian Short award at the Vancouver International Film Festival for his film *Float*, and a BC Film Leo Award Nomination in Best Screenwriting for the film *Conocerlos (Get to Know Them)*. More recently, his play *Lights* won Touchstone Theatre's 2019 Flying Start Playwrights Competition. Warren has performed with companies such as All Bodies Dance Project, Frank

Theatre, Touchstone Theatre, and Reelwheels Theatre, and at the time of this writing is completing a Master's degree in Creative Writing at the University of British Columbia.

Warren's solo play *Last Train In* was initially commissioned by Kickstart Disability Arts and Culture as part of their Fine Line Project (a series of disability art events) in 2015, and the script was further developed through the Playwright Theatre Centre's Writing Colony in Vancouver. In 2017 it premiered at Victoria's UNOfest and was also produced by rice & beans theatre as part of Vancouver's rEvolver festival. Rooted in Warren's personal experience, the play explores events in 2007 when, following his time at Memorial University, he relocated overseas for a year to teach at a private high school in the United Kingdom. Warren describes the experience as "variously exciting and miserable" (Personal interview). The protagonist Adam, played by Warren, describes how he would travel by train to London on the weekends in order to see shows, explore the city, and take a break from the small town where he taught during the week.[74] Like Warren, Adam is a wheelchair user, and the play centres on one evening when Adam returns from London and ends up stuck on the train platform; he is unable to exit the station because it does not have an elevator or a ramp.

Although this play presents issues related to disability (and has been included in a disability theatre anthology), Warren maintains some ambivalence about classifying this play (and his work in general) as disability theatre.[75] Warren uses a wheelchair but does not strongly identify as part of the disability community (Personal interview). Further, while Warren expresses concern with how disability is represented in arts and culture (pushing against, for instance, demeaning or overly inspirational narratives that seek to use disability as a metaphor

[74] I use Adam in reference to the play's character and Warren in reference to the playwright outside of the context of the play.
[75] See Sefel et al.

for triumph and overcoming, or as "a measuring stick of somebody else's difficulty"), he seeks to make disability present in his work without writing plays that are entirely centred on impairment (Personal interview). For him, disability is one factor among many that make up the lives of his characters (Personal interview).[76] I mention Warren's perspective to acknowledge that issues of identification, categorization, and representation are personal and complex. To be clear, even as I parse through issues related to disability, impairment, and access in this play, it is not my intention to insist that *Last Train In* be exclusively classified as a work of "disability theatre." As I noted in the introduction to this dissertation, the descriptor "disability" has a long and complicated history, which means that artists have "a plethora of positions, fears, anxieties and concerns around the comfort with and identifications with 'disability'" (Cachia, "Disabling" 268). Indeed, as Kirsty Johnston points out, many artists are drawn to theatre as a medium because they "are interested precisely in troubling received concepts of disability, ability, theatre, and art" (*Stage* 4). Although I do take up aspects related to disability and impairment in the following exploration of *Last Train In*, I seek to reflect Warren's ambivalence in my analysis; my focus is less on how disability is represented in the script or onstage, and more so geared toward the character's physical relationship to the built infrastructure in their environment. For me, the play illuminates how we all, with our diverse and changeable bodyminds, oscillate between moments of alignment and moments of discord with the built infrastructures that organize our world.

<u>Last Train In</u>

[76] As Warren notes, "I still haven't written that play that *just happens* to have a disability in it though" (Personal interview; emphasis added). Here he is referencing the way that, onstage, disability is overly signified rather than existing as part of the diversity and range of embodiments. As Petra Kuppers observes, "When disabled people perform they are often not primarily seen as performers, but as disabled people. The disabled body is *naturally* about disability" ("Deconstructing" 26; original emphasis).

The play opens with Adam situating himself as always just outside of major cities—naming the nearest metropolis as an easier point of reference. He confesses that he usually tells people he is from St. John's, Newfoundland, even though he comes from Mount Pearl, a small town adjacent to St. John's. He mentions that he has been teaching SAT-level English in Vancouver, British Columbia for the past eight years, but really he's been in nearby Richmond. And then he describes how currently he is teaching at a private high school in London, England. Except he is not *actually* in London, but rather the small town of Hadley Cross in Essex. He does travel to London quite frequently, however, taking the short trip into the city to see West End theatre and explore. His desire to soak up everything London has to offer means Adam always returns to Essex on Sunday on the last train of the evening—arriving at Hadley Cross station just after midnight.

This is where the play begins, with Adam sitting on the Hadley Cross train platform in the very early hours of Monday morning. Adam's wheelchair use is made pertinent by the time and space of the action because the train station is inaccessible. Once on the platform, exiting the station requires climbing a flight of stairs and crossing the bridge over the train tracks, and, because the station lacks an elevator or a ramp, Adam requires assistance to navigate the stairs. Luckily, he has worked out a system with the evening station manager Pardeep, who happily carries Adam's wheelchair up the stairs and over the bridge, leaving it on the other platform for him. Adam is then able to manoeuvre himself up the stairs before resettling himself into his chair and exiting the station. One night, however, his plan is complicated when Pardeep is not on duty. His replacement, Tony, refuses to assist Adam. As Adam explains to his audience:

> I asked Tony to carry my chair and please leave it on the other platform. And Tony said no. I laughed. I couldn't help myself. But Tony was serious. Tony said that, no, he was

> not going to carry my chair over the bridge tonight because it's not something he's supposed to do. He explained that, if <u>he</u> were to fall and, say, break his leg while carrying my chair across the bridge, then his benefits wouldn't cover it. He'd be off work and the medical bills would come right out of his pocket . . .When I asked Tony how I was supposed to get from here to [my house], he said that wasn't his problem. That I should've thought about that earlier, and that I'd have to figure it out for myself. Then he went into his office. He hasn't come out since. (Warren, *Last Train In* 159; original emphasis)

This moment of impasse both enacts and stands as a metaphor for all the major conflicts in the play. Physically, Adam is stuck on the platform with no feasible way to get himself across the bridge and back home. Warren notes that in writing the play he "wanted to really get into the bridge and investigate the metaphor of what that moment was for me . . . I liked the idea that the symbolic value of the bridge is sort of counterintuitive. Because bridges are normally seen as things that get you over, [not] things that stop you and prevent you from getting over something" (Personal interview). To that end, his immobility also metaphorically represents the ways that Adam feels stuck in his professional and personal life: though he initially implied otherwise, as the play progresses Adam confesses to the audience that he is having trouble with his students and that his long-distance relationship is breaking down.

One way to understand how Adam handles the play's central physical impasse is to attend to its corporeal engagement and spatial features alongside Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's concept of "misfitting." Garland-Thomson describes a misfit as an incongruence between two things—the truest sense of a square peg in a round hole (592-593). A range of encounters and experiences can produce a misfit, but the term intends to describe an incongruent relation

between self and environment. As such, the problem with misfitting lies not in either thing itself "but rather in their juxtaposition, the awkward attempt to fit them together" (593). I draw on this term in my analysis which focuses on the set pieces in the play. The set pieces represent the built infrastructure of the train station, however it is again important to note that no actual ramp features in the play. Instead, the built infrastructure of the station is represented by a series of large wooden cubes, all of which are affixed with four caster wheels which allow them to be rolled around the stage. To me, however, the absence of the ramp paradoxically makes its presence more palpable, because it tells a story of how bodies must physically (re)orient themselves to built infrastructure when its default state does not fit the needs of individual embodiments.

Crossing the Bridge

At the top of the show, three of the wooden cubes are positioned onstage. The script describes them as "bridge boxes" and indicates that they should be "identical cubes that are roughly shoulder-height to a seated actor" with "handrails across the top . . . [that] are flat to the audience" (Warren, *Last Train In* 152). When Adam enters the stage at the top of the show, he is pushing a similar cube (with caster wheels and handrails) that is fashioned as a small staircase on one side. During the first few scenes of the play he retrieves three more staircase cubes from offstage until the total number of set pieces is seven—three cubes and four small staircases. Throughout the play, Adam pushes them around the stage individually as he spins out his narrative.

The cubic set pieces take centre stage (both literally and figuratively) in response to Adam's moment of impasse at the train station. Adam describes how his solution to being stuck on the train platform that night was to slide himself out of his chair, dismantle his chair into

pieces, carry each piece with him up the stairs and across the bridge—using the handrails to drag his body across as he does so—and then reassemble his chair on the other side. He then proceeds to enact this process for the audience by positioning five of the set pieces in a line (the three cubes flanked by a set of stairs on each side) so that they form the stairs and the bridge of the Hadley Cross train station. Crossing to stage right, Adam slides himself out of his chair and seats himself on the stairs. Methodically, he begins to dismantle his wheelchair: removing the wheels, folding down the seat, etc. With effort, he carries each piece up and across the bridge to the other side, pulling himself with the help of the handrails, and taking multiple trips back and forth across the set pieces until he has transported all the pieces across the bridge. He then sits on the opposite set of stairs on stage left, reassembles his wheelchair, and slides himself back into his seat.

The journey is slow, painstaking, and exhausting—Adam displays a huge amount of physical effort in making this crossing multiple times. There is no dialogue during this sequence, only the sound effect of the mechanic rumble of trains on tracks. There is little to distract the audience from the physically arduous task that Adam is performing and witnessing his physical exertion during the re-enactment of this experience drives home the impact of the inaccessibility in the train station. That is, for spectators who don't typically or consciously need to consider access, or for whom accessibility is thought of merely in an abstract way, the physicality and duration of Adam's full crossing—a sequence that lasts for multiple minutes—is directly confronting. Pedro Chamale of rice & beans theatre in Vancouver (who produced the play in 2017) notes how spectators verbalized their discomfort witnessing this scene: "The moment of crossing the bridge: some nights it takes a long time for Adam [to complete]. And I've had

audience members tell me that they were about to go up onstage and help Adam" (Warren, "Last Train In" 00:07:03–12).

Once on the other side of the bridge and seated back in his chair, while still catching his breath, Adam exclaims triumphantly:

> And that, ladies and gentlemen, is how one young, crippled man triumphed despite overwhelming odds, in a kicked-in, fucked-up, pissed-on Essex train station. And that young man went on to have a full and satisfying career as a high school English teacher. He never failed a student because he believed that success was something unique and individual. He never raised his voice. And, in time, his students came to see him as a quiet example of what it meant to treat each day as a victory. The End. (Warren, *Last Train In* 160-161)

The end of this speech was usually punctuated by the audience's spontaneous applause (Personal interview). However, the play does not remain in this celebratory energy for long. Quite suddenly, the tenor of the play shifts and the entire narrative that Warren has set up in the first half of the play starts to unravel. The harmless white lies of his location (St. John's over Mount Pearl, Vancouver over Richmond, London over Essex) are indicative of the way Adam has spun taller tales about other parts of his life. Initially the play implies that he is flourishing in his life overseas. But, in the second half of the play we learn that Adam is struggling with his students, feels under appreciated by his employer, that his long-distance relationship is coming apart, and that his weekend trips into London are not filled with exciting explorations of the city but him sitting alone in a Starbucks grading student papers. His dream of living and working as an expat has been overblown, and the reality of it is much less exciting. So too is the story of him crossing the bridge at the train station—the story that he has just acted out—equally fabricated.

Though it is true that he struck up a deal with the station manager to facilitate his crossing, on the night in question he did not muscle his way over the bridge alone. In reality, he waited for over an hour, at one point having to relieve himself on account of a spastic bladder: "That just means I gotta go when I gotta go. And when there isn't anywhere to go, that's when I *really* gotta go . . . So I managed to hold it for about ten minutes. And then I couldn't hold it anymore. So, I pissed my pants, and then I sat there wondering whether or not someone helpful would come along before sunrise" (Warren, *Last Train In* 168). Eventually, at almost 2:00 a.m., someone does come along: Jack, one of Adam's high school students, who has been tormenting Adam and who is "Maybe the only other person in Hadley Cross who was restless enough to be out and about after 10:30 [p.m.] without a reason" (Warren, *Last Train In* 168). Jack helps Adam by carrying his chair up the stairs and leaving it on the other side of the bridge like the station manager usually does. The pair don't speak about the incident at school the next day, and Adam notes that he quickly fashioned an alternative story to tell people when he returned to Canada:

> It wasn't until I got home . . . when people started asking me what I did for a whole year in England, that I realized I had almost nothing to tell them, except a story about this one night in a train station when there wasn't anyone else around. When I took my chair apart, carried the pieces across a bridge and put them back together again. God it was a hell of a story, and folks loved to hear it. (Warren, *Last Train In* 168).

<u>Misfitting</u>

Spectators of *Last Train In* are thus presented with a dual narrative: the lie that Adam has spun out for willing audiences asking about his trip, and the reality of what actually transpired. Both narratives hinge on the obstacle of an inaccessible built environment—where the absence of an

elevator or an access ramp obstruct Adam's mobility. But each narrative differs in how it describes Adam's relation to the built infrastructure of the train station.

On one level, the bridge crossing scene in which Adam muscles his way across the set plays into the notion of the supercrip—a term used to describe a disabled person who is perceived as impressive and inspirational for their abilities or capacity. Indeed, the spontaneous applause that erupted from the audience following Warren's crossing underlines that this scene transmitted an inspirational affect to the audience.[77] The supercrip has received extensive critique in disability studies[78] for how it suggests that impairment can be transcended through individual will, how it places expectations that people with disabilities should be performing feats of athleticism,[79] and how it disavows the many structural, attitudinal, and environmental barriers that people with disabilities encounter.[80] While the sense of inspiration and empowerment that the supercrip may provide to its audiences is not wholly negative, its roots in an ableist ideology of 'overcoming disability' means it tends to propagate the rejection of

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[77] The figure has also been cited as providing inspiration and feelings of empowerment to people with disabilities, which makes its representation complex (Berger; Kama). But it also reinforces a dominant cultural narrative that people with disabilities are "inspirational"—a narrative that can be infantilizing (S. Young) and which can frame the reception of disability performance in particular ways (McAskill). When attending to these multifaceted effects, Sami Schalk notes how "It is important to distinguish the difference between the underlying assumption present in the production of supercrip narratives and how audience members actually interpret and understand these representations" ("Reevaluating" 75).

[78] This is a truncated explanation of the concept and figure of the supercrip, which is an important point of critique and analysis in disability studies. Here I present a unidimensional framing of it as inherently demeaning towards people with disability. While this is generally how the supercrip is understood, scholars have also advocated for a more nuanced interrogation of the figure. For a more robust discussion of the supercrip see Berger; Schalk "Reevaluating"; Silva and Howe).

[79] The figure of the supercrip is often located in physical feats or in displays of extreme athleticism—for instance, these tropes are frequently analyzed in relation to the Paralympics as discussed by Berger; Conroy; McGillvray et al.; Peers; Silva and Howe.

[80] As Eli Clare notes, "Supercrip stories never focus on the conditions that make it so difficult for people with Down syndrome to have romantic partners, for blind people to have adventures, for disabled kids to play sports. I don't mean medical conditions. I mean material, social, legal conditions. I mean lack of access, lack of employment, lack of education, lack of personal attendant services. I mean stereotypes and attitudes. I mean oppression. The dominant story about disability should be about ableism, not the inspirational supercrip crap, the believe-it-or-not disability story" (*Exile* 2-3). Clare points to how the individual focus of the supercrip figure can obscure the structural issues that unevenly constrain people with disabilities. If an individual can overcome the obstacles of the built environment, there *appears* to be no need to amend physical structures.

disability and impairment. In reflecting on the play, Warren also expresses some discomfort with how this scene underlines this trope, noting that "And it's the same with *Last Train* [*In*], I think. Like that whole 'I picked [the wheelchair] up and I carried it,' it's very super-crippy. And I'm not interested in that in the same way that I was" (Personal interview).[81]

The play's immediate turn into its second narrative prevents the audience from fully resting in the usual sense of catharsis that accompanies the inspirational supercrip narrative. This turn, in effect, calls out the audience for their allegiance to the supercrip narrative and forces them to acknowledge the more uncomfortable and ambiguous reality of the situation: that built infrastructure can curtail our movements and our experiences in ways that often cannot be overcome. But what the dual narratives of the play also draw attention to is the changeable nature of our relation to the built environment. The duplicity and inconsistency of the narrative—which is established early in the play when Adam confesses how he often bends the truth when describing his location—mimics the slippery relation between bodies and built infrastructure. When faced with the inaccessibility of the train station, an environment that impedes his mobility rather than supporting it, Adam finds various work-around solutions that each shift his corporeal relation to the built infrastructure that surrounds him. This resonates with Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's theorization of the "misfit" and "misfitting," and particularly the way she positions fitting and misfitting as dynamic experiences that are importantly contextual. As Garland-Thomson explains, "A fit occurs when a harmonious, proper interaction occurs between a particularly shaped and functioning body and an environment that sustains that body," whereas "A misfit occurs when the environment does not sustain the shape and function of the body that

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[81] It is also important to note that at the time of this writing and my conversation with Warren, it had been six years since the play was conceived. As Warren notes, aspects of the play land differently for him now, and if he were to restage it, he "would be really interested in . . . a redirection of that play. To see what there could be in the script and the different ways that we could work it out" (Personal interview).

enters it" (594). We might "fit" in one moment only to become "misfits" in the next. Though Adam seeks out ways to enact a better "fit" with the environment at Hadley Cross station (e.g., soliciting help from the Station Manager or exerting himself to cross the bridge alone), the substantial effort required by these workarounds indicate the lack of fit between Adam and the built infrastructure of the train station. Further, like the "stopgap" ramps discussed in the beginning of this chapter, even when these workarounds succeed, they remain temporary, ad hoc solutions that do not address the inaccessibility of the infrastructure.[82]

Garland-Thomson notes how fitting is an unmarked subject position—when our embodiment conforms easily to the built infrastructures that surround us we experience a moment of "material anonymity" where both the infrastructures and our embodied experience fade into the background and become unremarkable (596). In these moments of fitting we might move through the world with increased ease, but this ease also comes at the cost of obscuring the structures that support this movement and the innate contingency of our bodies. In *Last Train In*, Warren's bridge crossing does the opposite, instead drawing increased attention to the fact that the built infrastructure does not adequately support his bodymind. This recalls too how the gashes and marks on sachse's decaying ramp in *wish you were here* foreground the ways that inaccessible built infrastructure can impede movement. In distinct ways, both works illuminate the presence and absence of supportive structures, thus emphasizing the "the fragile contingency

[82] Although misfitting can be helpful in developing critiques of inaccessible spaces, Garland-Thomson offers other observations of how misfitting can be positive and generative. Specifically, she notes that the experience can produce subjugated knowledges that result in profound moments of community and solidarity; that the concept accounts for specificity in a way that can strengthen identity politics (and avoid reliance on generalizations within identity markers); and that it avoids abstraction by centering embodied life within sociopolitical relations. Garland-Thomson uses the concept to reinforce the inescapable nature of human dependency and vulnerability (following scholars like Martha Fineman, Judith Butler, Bryan Turner, Martha Nussbaum, and Eva Feder Kittay) but she locates these traits not within the individual's body but within the fit between body and environment. Therefore, while vulnerability may be universal, it is not always present. Rather, Garland-Thomson describes how "it is a potentiality that is realized when bodies encounter a hostile environment and is latent in a sustaining environment" ("Misfits" 600).

of body ability," and offering a critical "reminde[r] that bodily capacity can be stopped short at any time" (Jackson, *Social Works* 5).

Last Train In also illustrates the intensely material aspects of misfitting. Garland-Thomson notes how the term follows a recent shift in disability studies to recenter the embodied and material experiences of impairment, something that can be overlooked when disability is heavily emphasized as a social construction.[83] Misfitting does not refer to abstract moments of inaccessibility; it is intended to capture how disability is a material arrangement within and against an environment, what Garland-Thomson describes as "a dynamic encounter between flesh and world" (592). Earlier, I noted the intense physicality sachse endured when creating the scuff marks on the ramp in *wish you were here.* There is a similar level of effort expended by Adam during his solo crossing of the bridge—a physical engagement that underlines the materiality of the experience of misfitting and which brings the physical impacts of infrastructural inequity to the fore. The physical effort on display in this scene exemplifies how our encounters with built infrastructure exist on a spectrum that can range from smooth and harmonious to disjointed and grating. Inaccessibility becomes corporeal in these moments, accompanied by effort, sweat, and heavy exhales; the physical exertion in this scene makes visible what Mimi Sheller describes as the "'vital frictions' that take place within the uneven terrains of corporeal mobilities" (56). Spectators witness the true visceral experience of coming up against an environment that is not accessible to your body. This scene recalls and importantly emphasizes the discomfort that can arise from a clash between sinew and steel—when bodies come up against infrastructures that impede (rather than support) them.

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[83] This is not to argue against the social constructivist view of disability, but to account for the realities and pain and impairment, something that critiques of the social model have sought to do. See Clare, *Exile*; Crow, "Including"; Shakespeare and Watson.

Attending to the level of the corporeal, embodied, and phenomenological is important because it reminds us that the *quality* of the experience of moving through/interacting with infrastructure is highly variable and has a lot to do with how accessible built infrastructures are to different people. It is of consequence that spectators witness Adam expending a great deal of effort in this scene; his crossing was not a mere inconvenience but an act that required substantial exertion. This scene underlines that our engagement with built infrastructures is phenomenologically different, with some encounters being smooth and others full of friction. Although it treads the line of a supercrip narrative, this scene also foregrounds the corporeal and reminds us that our relation to built infrastructures is bound to the sensorium—inducing sensations of pain and exertion, often in uneven and highly differential ways.

KINETIC LIGHT'S *DESCENT*

The final work that I consider in this triptych of ramp performances is Kinetic Light's *DESCENT*. This is a dance performance that engages with the ramp in a contrasting way to the themes of impasse, disrepair, and misfitting that I highlighted in sachse and Warren's work. Kinetic Light is an artistic ensemble "working at the intersections of disability, dance, design, identity, and technology" (Kinetic Light, "About"), developing performance rooted in intersectionality, accessibility, and disability culture. Their work *DESCENT* is a dance duet performed by the company's artistic director Alice Sheppard and collaborator/designer Laurel Lawson, both wheelchair dancers. The work premiered in 2017 at the Britt Music & Arts Festival in Oregon and debuted at New York Live Arts in Manhattan the following year. In 2019, following a ten-day residency, *DESCENT* was also performed at the Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (EMPAC) in Troy, NY and in the same year toured to the Prague Quadrennial of Performance and Design Space. Kinetic Light

was gearing up for an exciting tour of the production in 2020, including what was to be their first international presentation at disability arts festival in Hong Kong in February. Unfortunately, the performance was cancelled following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In response, the company partnered with EMPAC, the Walker Arts Center, and Northrup at the University Minnesota to create and broadcast a multi-camera film version of the performance that premiered in December 2020.[84]

DESCENT was inspired by the nineteenth-century Auguste Rodin sculpture *Toilette of Venus and Andromeda*, which portrays the two goddesses bathing. The dancers wondered how these two figures, each from a different mythological tradition, came to share the same space in Rodin's sculpture. As a response to this query, *DESCENT* imagines an interracial, queer love story between Venus and Andromeda. Sheppard, who describes herself as a multiracial Black woman, embodies Andromeda, a casting choice intended to "visually restor[e] the racial heritage that Rodin himself erased" (Kinetic Light, "DESCENT"). Lawson, a white woman with short cropped hair, takes on the role of Venus and "both challenges and realizes Rodin's imaginations of Venus and ideals of feminine beauty" (Kinetic Light, "DESCENT"). Throughout the performance the pair dance together and apart, moving in and out of their wheelchairs. The overall aesthetic of the work is powerful yet romantic, with the pair's love story oscillating between moment of tenderness and anguish. This is reflected in the choreography, which is at times graceful and fluid, at other times forceful and linear. Both dancers exhibit an impressive

[84] As I noted with regards to Bulmer's *May I Take Your Arm?,* the pandemic has thrown the practicalities, economics, and limits of touring shows into stark relief. Kinetic Light had already shipped the ramp to Hong Kong when their presentation of *DESCENT* was cancelled. The ramp then had to make the long journey back to New York on the container ship the Seaspan Hudson. In a February 2020 newsletter, Kinetic Light provided a link to a website where subscribers could track the ship's trajectory across the ocean, thus emphasizing the logistical complexities of moving such an infrastructurally heavy performance.

sense of strength in the more acrobatic moments of the performance as they push and pull each other across the stage, or deftly manoeuvre themselves in, out, and around their chairs.

The Ramp

As with *Last Train In*, the set of *DESCENT* is a salient feature of the performance. The dance takes place on a specially designed set piece called "the ramp"—a large singular entity that features a series of undulating dips and curves, and spans the length and width of the stage. The design of the ramp grew out of a collaboration between Sheppard and Sara Hendren, a professor at Olin College, whose ongoing research and engineering project *Slope:Intercept* is a thorough investigation of the incline plane. In 2013 Hendren began her research by developing a series of moveable modular ramps that were intended to support the mobility of two different population groups: wheelchair users and skateboard users. As Hendren observes, though "neither [group] tend to be related conceptually, neither in their physics nor in their politics," the ramp was designed to meet the needs of both (qtd. in "Ramp Magic"). In so doing, she notes that these ramps' "Venn diagram of uses and users [are] intended to upend the assumptions about wheeled gear and wheeled passage—both aesthetically and technically. They create a political physics that is expressive and functional at once" (qtd. in "Ramp Magic"). Like the StopGap Foundation ramps discussed in the opening to this chapter, Hendren's early ramp prototypes also aimed to solve the obstacle of single-step stairways in cities, addressing a grey area in the access requirements laid out in the ADA.[85]

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[85] There are some grey areas and loopholes in the ADA regarding the language of providing "reasonable accommodation" that does not constitute "undue hardship" for the provider. This murky language allows for wide and persistent gaps in accessibility. For example, as Hendren notes, the ubiquity of single steps in large American cities have been "grandfathered into the standard architectural code because it's thought that it would be onerous for these small businesses to alter their entrances entirely, so they don't have to . . . take out that step" (Hendren). This gap in accommodation is what projects like Hendren's *Slope:Intercept* and the StopGap Foundation attempt to address.

In 2016, three years after the start of Hendren's work on ramps and incline planes, she and Sheppard began collaborating in an attempt to develop what Hendren describes as an "architectural-scale ramp for dancing" (qtd. in "Ramp Magic"). This collaboration grew to include Professor Yevgeniya Zastavker and twelve engineering students at Olin College, who, over the course of a semester, developed a ramp based on Sheppard's performance style, her movement technique, and the operation of her wheelchair. The students, who nicknamed themselves "TeamRAMP," experimented with various materials and modes of construction and assembly, while also working with Sheppard in an iterative design process. What resulted from this collaboration was a multidimensional and architecturally focused set piece that covers the size of an average stage, measuring 24' by 15' and including a 4' peak at one corner. Along the downstage edge of the ramp closest to the audience there is a flat playing area. The ramp then curves upstage to become a large sloped plane, meaning that the dancers travel at an incline as they move upstage. The upstage length of the ramp contains its highest levels: a dramatic steep incline that results in a 4' high peak at the upstage left corner, and a more traditional looking ramp that runs along the length of the stage to connect the base of the peak to a flat rectangular platform supported by legs at the upstage right corner. This offers the dancers four main playing areas as well as the ability to use the space underneath the platform at upstage right. Sheppard describes it cheekily as "ramp porn," noting that "It's an incredible cross between a [. . .] velodrome on the side of a cycle [. . .], and a half point, and the underworld deck and cave, and the peaky bit to sit on, and it's a ramp, but it's like no other wheelchair access ramp. It is what you would want if a ramp was a work of art, and that is exactly what it is" (qtd. in Critical Design Lab, "Performance").

Activation of Built Structure

In designing the ramp Sheppard and the Olin College students navigated questions of function and aesthetics. Although the ramp had to provide functional support to the dancers' movements, as Sheppard recalls, "In all our conversations, I stressed that beauty was paramount: the RAMP was to be a work of art and true movement partner, not a structural device" (qtd. in "Ramp Magic"). The result is that in *DESCENT*, the ramp is not merely a backdrop for Sheppard and Lawson but rather an integrated and intrinsic part of the performance. Far from being an inert set piece, it is better conceived as a collaborative partner that influenced the dancers' choreographic choices and kinaesthetic experience. The architecture of the ramp invites certain movements, certain bodily comportments, and the choreography of the performance becomes an extension of these invitations. Disability arts scholar Georgina Kleege visited the ramp after attending a preview of the performance in 2016 and recounts her experience of being on the ramp as such:

> Knowing all that people say about the ramp, the first time I walked on it, I felt it was merely tolerating me. The ramp is accustomed to—indeed designed for—wheels. But it is also accustomed to the dancers' bodies when they are out of their wheelchairs. The ramp knows their backs and fronts, their elbows and knees, their gripping fingers and scrabbling toes. The ramp is also familiar with the inept movements of non-dancers, technicians, and assistants who trip and slip on it. But I am a blind person. My bipedal movement is preceded by taps and sweeps of my white cane. This presented the ramp with a novelty. "What's this?" it seemed to muse. "What am I going to do with this?" It was almost an involuntary response that made me feel staying on my feet was not the way to go. I sat down, I lay on my back. I rolled. I crawled. I dragged and scooted. I slipped and slid. I flopped and sprawled. I abandoned all dignity . . . It was clear to me

that this ramp would have no patience with that sort of deceit. "You move the way I say you move," it told me. ("What the Ramp Teaches")

Kleege's words indicate how quickly the ramp insisted that she engage with it on its own terms, orienting her movements and her interactions to its built form.[86] Connecting this to the choreographic impulses of Sheppard and Lawson, Kleege notes how the ramp's "inclined planes and curves do more than frame the dance" but also serve to "creat[e] a movement vocabulary that has never existed before" ("What the Ramp Teaches"). The way that the ramp emboldens the dancers to travel through the space in specific ways—forcefully exerting themselves to roll up its vertical planes and gracefully sweeping down them—allows for the development of new choreographic possibilities. The ramp is therefore an important part of how the aesthetic of *DESCENT* is realized, and in this way the choreography of the performance is inherently infrastructural because it emerges directly out of the relationship between the bodies of the dancers and the built infrastructure of the ramp. Lawson describes how "Nothing you know about dancing on flat ground applies. What we had to do on the ramp was trust the instability, to deliberately lean in to the unstable side. We had to learn a completely new way of being" (Nonko). The push and pull of gravity that the ramp exerts on the dancers, for example, is highlighted in many moments of the performance. A common motif in the work finds Sheppard and Lawson seated in their chairs and forcefully rolling themselves upstage before releasing their grip on their wheels and spinning gracefully back downstage, allowing the slope of the ramp to pull them back towards the audience. In other moments the dancers manoeuvre themselves out of their chairs and navigate the structure by rolling their bodies down the declining sections of the

[86] Kleege has a background in dance and has considered the relationship between dance and visual description as a means of making dance performance accessible to blind audiences (see Kleege, "What does dance do"). She was also a consultant for Kinetic Light as they developed their audio description practices and technology, which I discuss in Chapter Three.

ramp, or muscling their way up to sit on the top peak in the upstage left corner. This contrasts to how dancers usually relate to the sets, stages, or backdrops of their performances. As Sheppard notes: "Modern dancers are always taught that the first partner is the floor, but we rarely allow the floor to actually generate our movement: it is a surface we perform upon. *DESCENT* is different" (qtd. in "Ramp Magic"). If they were performing the same movements on a flat stage, it is likely that their moving bodies would be the focus, with the stage fading into the background. On the ramp, however, attention is drawn to the interaction of their bodies with the built structure. Here, the choreographic vocabulary of the performance is directly tied to how Sheppard and Lawson are supported by, constrained by, and generally oriented by the built infrastructure.

This connection emerges in part through the interdependence that is enacted between dancers and ramp, in how bodies and ramp are enlivened and dependent on the other. On one hand, because the ramp allows for ease of some movements more than others and encourages a playful engagement with its dips and curves, it impresses a specific choreographic vocabulary upon the dancers. Inversely, and at the same time, the dancers' movements across the ramp activate its architecture. Sheppard and Lawson's movements in *DESCENT* bring the built structure to the viewer's attention; its shape, depth, and tactility is communicated by the ways they roll, twist, crawl, and stretch across its surface.[87] For example, the show opens with Sheppard (out of her chair) tucked into the upstage left corner of the ramp with her hands grasping onto its sharp peak. Her knees are curled under her, her body emulating the pose of Venus in Rodin's sculpture, and a matching sketch of the figure is projected on the scrim upstage

[87] The activation of built infrastructure has been a consistent theme in Sheppard's artistic work. In 2019 she performed alongside Danielle Peers and several other wheelchair dancers in a dance-on-film short called *INCLINATIONS*, which saw the performers rolling up and a down a series of access ramps in an industrial-looking building—spinning around the corners and acrobatically flipping each other over the ramp's handrails.

of Sheppard's body. Sheppard's movements for the next few minutes highlight the architecture of this section of the ramp as she rolls down its steep curve, pulls herself along its edge, and balances herself to sit right on its peak. This is further supported by the work's lighting design (designed by Michael Maag). The ramp is covered by grey marley dance flooring which allows for lighting and images to be projected onto the surface. Maag uses these projections to create a series of scenes with differing moods—from a grassy meadow to a starry galaxy—and projects sketches of the Rodin sculpture on which the work's narrative is based. The lighting highlights the architectural features of the ramp in very direct ways, such as running a spotlight up and down it's curving planes, echoing the movements and trajectory of the dancers.

Access Aesthetics

By drawing attention to the ramp via the artistic interventions of dance and lighting, *DESCENT* also advances the exciting potential of access aesthetics, an approach by which accessibility is included as "an integral part of creative content and the artistic process from inception to presentation" (Jacobson and McMurchy 8).[88] Maag's lighting design deserves further mention in this regard because his design is also specifically created with the disabled spectator in mind. As a wheelchair user himself, Maag not only designs his lighting for the perspective of a wheelchair user, but also lights Sheppard and Lawson in a way that highlights their disabled bodies and their accompanying chairs. *DESCENT* makes no attempt to hide disability, but rather celebrates it as fundamental to the politics and aesthetics of the performance. *DESCENT* also features exciting advents in audio description. Spearheaded by Lawson, Kinetic Light has developed an app called *Audimance* that allows users to select different kinds of dance audio description so that their

[88] I discuss the concept and use of access aesthetics more thoroughly in Chapter Three. See also Cachia "Reflections"; Johnson "Integrating"; and Johnston *Disability*.

aural experience of the dance can include not just functional description but also poetry, narrative, and soundscape (I discuss *Audimance* in more detail in Chapter Three). Lawson also drew on her engineering background to design specialized wheelchairs for herself and Sheppard that were specifically created for contemporary dance (Nonko).

An aesthetic of access is also present in how the work theatricalizes the quotidian act of using an access ramp. By moving it from a space of pure functionality into a decidedly aesthetic space *DESCENT* challenges the utilitarian nature of ramps, or the idea that they are constructed solely as a means of access. Sheppard notes that "The [engineering] students designed for beauty and for the potential of wheeled movement" in a way that evokes what Rosemarie Garland-Thomson describes as "aesthetically non-compliant with the ADA" (Sheppard 8). Though legislative regulations regarding accessibility have helped to ensure more consistent and equitable forms of access, viewing access *solely* as an issue of compliance ignores the possibilities of it making an aesthetic contribution. In *DESCENT*, however, function is married to the aesthetic and architectural beauty of the ramp. Importantly, the focus on aesthetics does not mean that the ramp in *DESCENT* is *not* functional, or that the political import of accessibility is overshadowed in the performance. It was Sheppard's politicized understanding of ramps and access that initially drove the concept of the work. In a blog post for Kinetic Light Sheppard writes:

> Lived experience as a wheelchair user has taught me, Alice, both the personal significance and cultural insignificance of access ramps. I appreciate being able to enter a building, even as I notice how the mechanisms of my entry restrict my movement, discriminate against me by offering separate and unequal access, thereby refusing equal participation in our social, aesthetic, and civic life. I also know as a queer person of

> colour how legislated restrictions on my mobility and normative social prescriptions of movement inhibit my freedom. ("Ramp Magic")

Here Sheppard recognizes the inequality with which different identities and bodyminds are afforded access to built infrastructures and public space. Awareness of these inequalities has led Kinetic Light to be intentional in ensuring that their performances are as accessible as possible, especially for people with disabilities. Access is not only integrated into the company's artistic work but is factored into the entire performance experience. As Sheppard describes, "*DESCENT* is an experience that is choreographed from the moment you hear about the show and try to buy a ticket . . . with careful prioritization and careful coordination among different aspects of the experience" (qtd. in Critical Design Lab, "Performance"). She explains, for example, that elements like the length of the show's intermission are considered in the context of how many accessible stalls are in the venue's washroom, since this will impact how long wheelchair users and disabled patrons may need to access and use facilities during the break. Sheppard is also acutely aware that many of the infrastructural experiences that prevent people with disabilities from accessing artistic spaces are outside of her control. In a podcast interview with Aimi Hamraie and Cassandra Hartblay she notes:

> I cannot choreograph public transit, and I cannot choreograph the inaccessible taxi situation in New York, or wherever you happen to live, but I can and do choreograph everything that happens from the moment you enter the building . . . it matters that a disabled person hands you your program or [a] disabled person takes you to your seat. It matters that a disabled person set the lights at a certain height and in a certain way . . . The whole thing is structured, I mean maybe not correctly, maybe not equitably, but

> wholly intentionally. So it's not, the performance is never just what's on stage. (qtd. in Critical Design Lab, "Performance")

While Sheppard's words acknowledge that accessible performances themselves do not wholly eliminate the access barriers between people with disabilities and live performance, she is purposeful in the elements she can control. Her thinking is also decidedly infrastructural in that it acknowledges that many other inaccessible infrastructures (i.e., transit infrastructures, the administrative and built infrastructures of a venue) intersect with the accessibility protocols used onstage. Her interrogation of access in relation to *DESCENT* makes a critical connection to *public* access in particular, and the need for it to go beyond mere functionality. In a continuation of the blog post quoted above she describes how:

> my performance and choreographic practices question in public our normalized assumptions of racialized disabled movement. *I acknowledge an acute need to publicly embody movement freedom and perform kinesthetic pleasure as a means of starting a new conversation around the intersection of race, disability, and movement* . . . I see the inclined plane as a provocation that urges us to think about the value of surface in dance, the aesthetics of wheels and movement, the politics of wheels and movement in particular, and the cultural practices of movement and mobility. ("Ramp Magic"; emphasis added)

Sheppard notes how access through a service elevator or a delivery ramp does not offer adequate levels of pleasure or ease of mobility. The earlier analyses of sachse's and Warren's performances evince this, given how those works foreground the challenges of confronting broken or inaccessible infrastructure. *DESCENT* also adds to this discussion through its insistence that supporting the mobility of diverse bodyminds is about more than just access to

public space, about more than just being there. It is also about the *quality* and *experience* of that access. We can make a connection here to the 'desire lines' that pop up unexpectedly in town squares, parks, and university campuses—the trajectories that deviate from circumscribed paths, and the term that also described the collaboratively-created scuff marks that adorned sachse's ramp in *wish you were here*. While desire lines in part express a need for speed or efficiency, they are also playful responses to the invitation of an environment (Tiessen). This playful response was also evident in 2018 when Sheppard and sachse's work converged and they collaborated for an event at the Gardiner Museum in Toronto alongside the installation of sachse's *i wanna dance with some body* (which included the ramp from *wish you were here* as well as two additional ramps created by sachse). This public event, billed as a "live choreographic work," found sachse and Sheppard moving through different spaces of the museum improvising a site-responsive choreography that reacted to the space and each other. By activating the built space with their improvised and collaborative movements, the duo emphasized the inaccessibility of the venue—particularly when they moved outside to crawl, run, roll, and stretch across the under-construction access ramp leading into the museum. However, their bodies did more than offer a critique of the non-functional ramp. Like the corporeal focus on display in Adam's bridge crossing in *Last Train In,* the physicality of Sheppard and sachse's dance duet showcased the aesthetic and choreographic possibilities that emerge when built infrastructure is a "misfit" in relation to disabled bodies. This extends the conversation beyond the binary of accessibility/inaccessibility in relation to built structures, to also consider how this relation can evoke playfulness, pleasure, curiosity, and artistic expression. Similarly, the aestheticization of the ramp in *DESCENT* pioneers a form of access aesthetics that embodies a politics of access through its insistence on the potentiality and pleasure of disabled

movement. Carrie Sandahl argues that Kinetic Light's artistic work is "not about adaptation or accommodation. It's about how unique bodies, minds, senses and phenomenological experiences of disability and impairment—along with the political aspects and intersectional identities—can create new work" (qtd. in Nonko). The ramp in *DESCENT* is particularly impactful in this regard. The way it is designed to engage dynamically with the dancers' movements and aesthetics shows how access and pleasure become co-constitutive when structures not only enable but truly support and encourage the movement and engagement of diverse bodyminds.

CHAPTER THREE

ACCESS PROTOCOLS AS INFRASTRUCTURAL INVERSIONS

"This is Megan speaking."

Attend any disability arts events in Canada, in-person or online, and you will likely find this kind of phrase being spoken repeatedly. It is the first part of an access protocol that I was initially introduced to by blind theatre maker Alex Bulmer at *The Republic of Inclusion*—a large disability arts event co-curated by Sarah Garton Stanley and Syrus Marcus Ware and hosted by the National Arts Centre English Theatre in Ottawa in 2017.[89] Bulmer encouraged attendees to begin with this phrase because in large group settings, when multiple people are contributing to the conversation, this simple practice allows everyone in the room to better follow the discussion and track who is speaking.[90] The second part of this protocol comes at the end of the person's contribution. To signal that one is finished speaking, one concludes their comments with "And that is the end of my current thought" or, more simply, "end of thought." This prevents people from speaking over each other and means no one has to guess at or rely on visual cues to figure out that someone is finished speaking.[91] Together, these two short phrases bookend each

[89] *The Republic of Inclusion* was part of *The Cycle,* a trilogy of two-year research initiatives curated by Sarah Garton Stanley (then the Associate Artistic Director of English Theatre at the National Arts Centre). Each cycle focused on a different "big idea" in relation to theatre and contemporary society. From 2014-15 the focus was on Indigenous Performance, from 2016-17 it focused on Deaf, disability, Mad arts and inclusion, and from 2019-20 it focused on climate change.

[90] This practice is also helpful for groups who are newly acquainted, since the repetition aids in learning each other's names. Personally, I find it also holds the unexpected ancillary benefit of focusing and grounding me before I speak.

[91] The additional benefit to this part of the protocol is that it prevents people from rambling or getting lost in their words. It offers a freedom to simply end your train of thought where it is, without feeling the need to continue speaking until arriving at the perfect conclusion. This can help retain clarity and conciseness in group discussions. It also serves as a helpful reminder that thoughts can be in-process. Especially when I say, "this is the end of my *current* thought" it indicates that I may have more to contribute later, but this is where my thinking has landed in the moment. Though small, the attitudinal shift that this practice offers is an example of the ways that access protocols can be more than just functional practices; they also help reorient the *ways* that we gather, exist, and relate to each other.

individual contribution to a group discussion and become an organizing feature of the conversation—a recurring mantra that echoes through the space.

This simple but significant access protocol is one example of the many practices, approaches, techniques, and ways of working that emerge from disability culture. This chapter is based on the premise that these practices—when they bump up against normative or mainstream ways of working—can enact infrastructural inversions of the usual and habituated modes of presenting and experiencing art and performance. At the same time, because they reflect a commitment to equity and inclusion, these practices also imagine new ways of reconfiguring those 'usual and habituated modes' to be more inclusive of a wider diversity of bodyminds. In the following pages I detail some of the access protocols that organizations and practitioners implement in art and performance venues and consider how these protocols restructure conventions around art and performance.

In *Reading the Material Theatre* Ric Knowles argues that performance's "conditions of production" and the "conditions of reception" are equally constitutive in generating the "meaning" of a performance. That is, elements like rehearsal processes, a venue's architecture, ticket prices, and marketing materials frame performance in particular ways that are just as substantive as the script or the *mise en scène* of a work. Many of the "conditions" that Knowles describes are administrative elements—elements that I identify as components that come together to form an infrastructure, which, like all infrastructure, *organizes* and *orients* artists and audiences to performance in specific ways. Analogous to how the built infrastructure of a city choreographs movement through urban space, so too do performance conventions and ways of working in artistic contexts stipulate how artists and audiences relate to art and performance. Particularly in institutional settings, administrative infrastructures are comprised of the

'things'—the contracts, the conventions, the policies—that organize the experience; they communicate how and in what ways artists and audiences can engage with the art. I classify these conventions, practices, and ways of working as 'administrative' because, although they overlap and intersect with built, technical, or human infrastructures, they are more so comprised of ephemeral elements and practices that are clerical, contractual, or regulatory in nature. Despite their immateriality and ephemerality, I position these elements as 'infrastructural' in the sense that they work in tandem to enable particular actions or forms of engagement, and because they signal particular politics and values. Moreover, like all the infrastructural forms that have been discussed in this dissertation, these administrative structures and systems are imbued with paradoxes, tensions, and uneven applications.

By engaging with these administrative infrastructures, this chapter moves indoors to enter the art gallery, the museum, and the theatre. These are spaces that have historically posed accessibility challenges to disabled artists and audiences, but which are, in many ways, being reclaimed and remade by the practices and protocols discussed in this chapter. Just as a pedestrian might depart from the sidewalk and forge new "desire lines" that run counter to a city's prescribed paths, the organizations and practitioners that I detail here are retooling the conventions of how art and performance are created and presented. To that end, this chapter begins "in the auditorium" and considers how relaxed performance practices rescript the conventions of audience etiquette in the theatre. It then moves "on the stage" to explore how innovations in audio description are making new inroads in access aesthetics. Finally, it jumps "on the page" to investigate the way disability artists and organizations are reimagining contract clauses and agreements, arguing that this enacts a form of crip curation that integrates an ethic of care into administrative practices. I show how these activities and practices reveal the inequity in

current ways of working while also creating new infrastructural configurations that rethink the relationship between the administrative and the aesthetic. Throughout, I closely consider the uneven (and often obscured) politics within these practices by drawing on critical access studies. The protocols and practices I discuss weave across different art forms—from live performance to visual art—and oscillate between a concern for accessibility for audiences and for artists. They also represent only a fraction of the disability arts and performance work currently happening in Canada (and beyond). The organizations discussed here can, in no way, be representative of any singular disability community, but they do offer a snapshot of some of the salient administrative issues and preoccupations of this dynamic and diverse arts ecology.

These practices are not restricted to organizations or practitioners working in disability arts. Indeed, it is encouraging to observe that, as disability arts, performance, and cultural production has burgeoned in Canada over the last decade, questions of access and inclusion are becoming increasingly commonplace in many artistic spheres. Access measures like sign language interpretation and relaxed performance approaches can be found in a range of settings, including theatres, music venues, and art galleries, and many arts organizations are working with access consultants to increase the accessibility of their offerings. This is an exciting progression to witness and is gratifying for those who have been long and steadfast advocates for accessibility in the arts. I make note of some of these examples in this chapter and feel that they signal an important shift in the ways that performance is made available and welcoming to a wide range of practitioners and spectators.

However, it is important to recognize that access protocols register differently depending on their context and their relation to disability culture. The critical lens of infrastructural dramaturgy that I invoke in this dissertation encourages a close examination of how these

protocols, when integrated into the administrative infrastructure of art or performance, reveal differing politics, values, and ideologies depending on where and how they are situated. This resonates with Knowles's observation that "specific and determinate social and cultural contexts" are crucial in shaping the meaning and reception of theatrical works (*Reading* 10). As such, while I applaud the work that arts organizations are doing to increase the accessibility of their venues and artistic offerings, I also insist upon a critical lens with regards to how these protocols are deployed. Aimi Hamraie has proposed the need for the field of *critical access studies* as that which "engages with the methodologies, epistemologies, and political commitments of accessibility from the perspectives of Disability Justice and disability culture" (Hamraie, "Critical"). Pursuing access with this critical lens recenters disabled people as the beneficiaries of access (working against the liberalizing discourse found, for example, in rhetoric on Universal Design that positions access as "good for everyone"). Critical access also acknowledges how a history of disability activism and the "Subtle, mundane projects of crip technoscience served as a training ground for later, more public and legible disability protests" (Hamraie, *Building* 125).[92] These projects are a necessary, contested, and frictioned part of disability history and accessibility practices. Without a critical lens on access, however, they risk being smoothed over by a liberalist rhetoric of inclusion and belonging that—even as it offers forms of access—is built on the premise of transforming disabled people into productive labourers and consumers through assimilation and rehabilitation.

[92] Hamraie first coined "crip feminist technoscience" in their 2015 article "Cripping Feminist Technoscience." The term extends the positioning of technoscience in feminist technoscience studies as that which "conveys that scientific and technological worlds are active constructions of entangled material, social, and historical agents" by adding a crip theory perspective (307). This perspective "actively resists compliance with supposedly normal embodiment, behavior, and desired futures. Instead, it understands disability as productive possibility and resource" (307-308). Hamraie and Kelly Fritsch later expanded on the concept in their 2019 article "Crip Technoscience Manifesto."

In line with this perspective, this chapter explores how positioning access protocols *as an infrastructure* allows us to retain the critical lens on accessibility that Hamraie calls for, and pushes beyond a facile or apolitical understanding of access and inclusion. Ultimately, I view the practices outlined here as developing an administrative infrastructure that is not only concerned with the *provision* of access in arts and performance practices, but which is, at its core, fundamentally *remaking* and *retooling* the very infrastructural foundations of how artistic work is created, produced, developed, disseminated, and consumed. This infrastructure is fashioned through a commitment to disability justice, disability culture, and the flourishing of disability community. Though it seeks improvements in access and inclusion and helps broker a more inclusive relationship between disabled artists/audiences and mainstream arts practices, it does so in a way that retains the frictions of a disability politic and prioritizes the values and commitments of disability culture. It is through this critical lens on access that the infrastructural politics of these administrative infrastructures become apparent.

And that is the end of my current thought.

IN THE AUDITORIUM

Relaxed Performance

This chapter begins in the theatre auditorium, a space where we find one of the most exciting advents in arts accessibility in Canada in recent years: the integration of relaxed performance practices. The relaxed performance movement emerged in the United Kingdom in the 1990s and has proliferated in Canada in large part due to the work of the British Council, who developed several training initiatives related to relaxed performances (El-Akhrass 57-61). A 2019 report on relaxed performance practices noted that, since 2015, two hundred people had received training

in relaxed performance via British Council programming (LaMarre et al. 3).[93] In addition, organizations like Calgary's Inside Out Theatre run their Good Host Program, in which they work with other theatres which are seeking to improve their accessibility—a process that includes modifying productions to align with relaxed performance practices. It is now possible to find theatres and performance venues across Canada with relaxed performances as part of their season programming.[94]

Relaxed performance (RP) is a method of curating accessible theatre spaces and involves making technical and organizational modifications to a performance so as to accommodate and support a diverse range of bodyminds. These changes include dimming (rather than extinguishing) the house lights in a theatre, reducing the intensity of loud noises or sound effects, providing advance notice of any startling moments or technical effects in the show, and allowing spectators to move freely within, in, and out of the theatre space. RPs were originally conceived and designed for neurodiverse audiences and often are still discussed in the context of Autism, however these alterations can support a range of people with sensory sensitivities.[95] RPs can also include a variety of para-performance elements designed to support audiences. For example, it is

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[93] This report was commissioned by British Council and prepared by members of Bodies in Translation: Activist Art, Technology & Access to Life, a SSHRC funded research project co-led by Carla Rice and Eliza Chandler. The report sought to understand the impact of the British Council's training initiatives, as well as offer recommendations for future development of relaxed performance (RP) in Canada. The report collected data through five sources, including "a scan of media and academic representations of RP; analysis of post-surveys completed by people who took part in RP trainings; interviews with people who have taken part in RP trainings; participant observation of one British Council RP training; case studies of audience members at 2 RPs (surveys and short key-informant interviews)" (4). In interpreting these data, the report offers a useful summary of current RP practices in Canada, while also offering recommendations to support the development of RP in the future.

[94] In this section I focus on topics related to in-person performances, but relaxed performance practices can also be integrated into virtual or online performances. In 2021, for example, Theatre Passe Muraille presented a digital relaxed showing of *11:11* by Samson Bonkeabantu Brown. This included a visual story that could be accessed by spectators ahead of the performance, reminders to the audience to move or take screen breaks as needed, and a recording of the performance that could be accessed by the audience for up to 36 hours after the performance. For more on the creation of this show and its use of mixed-reality technologies as a mode of accessibility see Garrett et al.

[95] RPs are also often positioned as benefiting children and families. While they certainly offer benefits to this population, the impact of RP is not restricted to young people.

common for RPs to designate a separate area outside of the theatre as a “chill out space” where patrons can take a break or a quiet moment to themselves if they feel overstimulated. RPs also offer supports before and after performances, which can range from visual stories, touch tours, introductory remarks, and active listeners. Further, during the performance RPs accommodate movements, noises, and vocalizations from the audience, thus lessening the strict expectations around audience etiquette. These protocols are typically communicated to audiences in the promotional material and through a verbal announcement prior to the show. These practices recognize that not everyone has been welcomed into and supported by theatre, and they work to reduce these barriers in order to open up the space to a more diverse range of audiences.[96] Together, these changes enact an administrative and organizational transformation of the performance and the theatre venue into a more inclusive space because they allow “bodies to be bodies, regardless of their verbal, processing, and ambulatory ways of being in the world” (LaMarre et al. 28).

Performance Conventions

Part of the significance of RPs is that they address some of the barriers encountered by disabled audience members when engaging with performance. As Kuppers describes “We have to think about how to get into the theatre, how to get into our seat, how to access the spectacle—these are core issues for disabled audiences” (*Theatre* 5). In making certain modifications to the performance and the venue, RPs help offset some of these access concerns, thus making it easier for disabled bodyminds to enter and remain in the performance venue. The ethos of RPs is rooted in the social model of disability. It recognizes that disabled people often face innumerable

[96] Though I do not focus on it here, it is important to note that the content of theatrical shows can also present a barrier, particularly when it engages in discriminatory, demeaning, or ableist stereotypes of disability. Some access consultants will review and amend content to mitigate this barrier.

barriers and frustrations in the process of getting themselves to the theatre, and that the subsequent accumulation of stress and fatigue can prevent disabled people from attending shows. RPs, as described by the Battersea Arts Centre in the UK, acknowledge these stressors and try to contribute to "reducing fuss around access requirements"—making the experience of attending the venue "as seamless as possible" (Battersea).

In addition to these important material changes that improve the accessibility of the theatre experience, RPs are also meaningful because of how they reveal, resist, and counter some of the conventions that traditionally structure the performance experience. Jan Derbyshire observes how "Canadian theatre is full of systems dominated by the realities and ideas of ableism"—systems that include not only inaccessible built environments but also "the dominant cultural practices that inform the viewing and making of theatre" (265, 266). These cultural practices are often unspoken and so ingrained that they appear unremarkable.[97] They extend beyond working practices to become conventions—the agreed-upon realities that operate in relation to specific artistic genres, forms, or media. Howard Becker describes conventions as the things that "make possible some of the most basic and important forms of cooperation characteristic of an art world" (46). Conventions can structure the internal workings of an art form, (as with the harmonic structure of classical sonata form), and also impact how people comport themselves in relation to that art form (as in the convention in classical music of clapping only at the end of a multi-movement work).[98] Conventions are often learned as part of

[97] This also recalls Pierre Bourdieu's notion of habitus. Habitus, or the dispositions and behaviours that come to distinguish between class factions, appear to be natural and instinctive even though they must be learned and reinforced (Bourdieu 52-65). Thinking of how the dispositions within a certain class structure become obfuscated by their apparent naturalness might allow us to consider how the expectations we hold around the existence, availability, and function of certain kind of infrastructures come to be equally obfuscated and equally linked to certain kinds of communities, geographical locations, and class or socio-economic statuses.
[98] There are also conventions that surround artists' participation in the "professional culture" of their discipline (Becker 59).

the initiation to a particular 'art world,' and knowledge of and familiarity with particular conventions can justify one's status as a "serious audience member" who is deeply indoctrinated into the form (Becker 48).

Artistic conventions and infrastructures are interconnected, since many of the material, built, technical, and human infrastructures that support performance are developed in accordance with the conventions of the artistic form. This becomes clear when tracing the infrastructural shifts that result from a change in conventions. For example, if a two-hour performance transforms into a durational eight-hour performance, this will necessitate corresponding changes in staffing and production requirements to support the longer run time. Such changes have the potential to challenge the administrative, labour, or financial systems that are set up around the *expectation* of a two-hour performance. Further to how conventions connect to other infrastructural forms, I argue that *conventions also form an infrastructure in and of themselves.* That is, conventions form an underlying substrate that structures the performance experience in intangible but impactful ways, becoming one layer of the complex and interwoven matrix of infrastructures that support and organize different forms of performance. Although conventions are often ephemeral and constituted more through actions and habits than by tangible objects, I view them as infrastructural because they are "enablers" that allow for certain kinds of actions and experiences over others (Filion et al. 3). Like many other infrastructures, conventions are also "learned as a part of membership" within a community of practice, and then become normalized, unquestioned, and sink into the background of the experience (Bowker and Star 35). Further—though they are assumed and unspoken—performance conventions hold particular politics and values that impact who is supported in attending and experiencing artistic and cultural events. This means that conventions are specific to context, and can shift across artistic

forms, cultures, and historical moments. For the purposes of this discussion, I write from the perspective of contemporary Western performance traditions, primarily focusing on theatre, and considering how RPs become a method through which the underlying organizational infrastructure of this artistic form can be illuminated.

Audience Etiquette in the Theatre

RPs are a mode of infrastructural inversion in how they reveal conventions and help us to interrogate the politics embedded within them. One of the most salient examples of this comes from how RPs counter and rescript the parameters surrounding etiquette in the theatre, particularly with regards to noise from the audience. Usually, in the context of a theatre performance, the audience is expected to watch the show with rapt attention and respectful silence, and then contribute their applause at the appropriate moments. When this etiquette is broken, it can result in reprimand from ushers or fellow spectators, the penning of editorials from frustrated theatre critics,[99] and even—as in the case of a few colourful examples—condemnation from the performers themselves.[100] Though this theatre etiquette seems deeply embedded in the conventions of specific aesthetic forms and genres, Hannah Simpson notes that the phenomenon of the "quiet audience" is a relatively modern occurrence. Simpson explains how the British public was taught this etiquette beginning in the 1950s through a series of instructional and disciplinary methods, including program notes that described how to limit the disturbance of

[99] As Hannah Simpson writes, "[British journalist] Oliver Burkeman penned an entire *Guardian* editorial on the horrors of noisy fellow spectators, cheerfully recalling an usher 'who lectured the noisemakers so forcibly and successfully' that the very memory can still, he confesses, 'thrill' him" (1).

[100] Though there are many examples of this, I am thinking here of an infamous moment in 2019 when Broadway star Patti LuPone, midway through her performance of the climactic number "Rose's Turn" from the musical *Gypsy,* stopped the orchestra so she could verbally castigate an audience member who was taking photos. The interaction was caught on film and the video went viral soon after the performance. In 2022, LuPone similarly interrupted a talkback following a performance of the musical *Company* to call out two attendees for not wearing their masks properly.

coughing, public lectures by celebrities on proper theatre etiquette, and teachers instructing school-age children on the matter (2). Dominique Pasquier glosses Serge Proust's assertion in noting how this "domestication of the audience's bodies . . . was the result of education into new behavioural norms by the educated middle class" that occurred starting in the late nineteenth century (223). The rowdiness and undisciplined nature of earlier theatre audiences was eroded through new performance conventions that "plung[ed] the hall into darkness and reduc[ed] the audience to silence" (223).

It is important to note that this is a convention that does not extend across all performance genres. Performance forms like stand-up comedy or popular or rock music are more so structured around the assumption that the audience *will* make noise throughout the performance as a way of communicating their feelings and emotions about the event. Musicians might encourage audiences to sing along, and comedians rely on auditory contributions (i.e., laughter) from their audience as a way of evaluating their performance.[101] Critically, however, even in performance forms where audience etiquette appears more flexible, the disabled bodymind can still be deemed disruptive and unwelcome. For example, when interviewed, performer and disability advocate Jess Thom often cites a distressing experience she had as an audience member at a comedy show. Thom has Tourette's Syndrome and makes frequent verbal and motor tics. Even though Thom alerted the venue and performer as to her presence at this show, at intermission she was moved from the audience seating and relegated to the (sound-proof) sound booth, having been told that her tics were too disruptive to the other spectators. This proved to be a distressing experience for Thom, who has since often noted that the "experience of exclusion and

[101] In his writing on stand-up comedy, Oliver Double describes that while there can, at times, be a sense of hostility between comic and audience, that because of the social nature of laughter there is often a sense of the comic and audience engaging in a shared experience and shared sense of community (204-205). The idea that audiences can contribute to the experience by being free to vocalize supports this perspective.

discrimination . . . made me almost self-select away from theatre totally and turn away from theatre and feel that wasn't a place for me" (ADIarts). This echoes and re-enacts the violence of segregation and institutionalization that people with disabilities have historically endured (and continue to experience) when their bodyminds are deemed excessive or incompatible with normative space. I highlight this story to note how—even within a performance form with more leniency regarding audience etiquette—disabled people and access measures are often still unwelcome and understood as hindrances to established conventions. As Simpson observes, even as British mainstream and fringe theatre have made strides towards increased accessibility in recent years, "the demand for a 'quiet audience' still frequently appears to outweigh the needs of individual disabled spectators in modern UK theatre" (4).

Relaxed Performances as Infrastructural Inversions

Thom's experience of exclusion is significant for how it reveals the rigidity of performance conventions that discriminate against non-normative bodyminds. Kuppers describes the theatre as "an apparatus, a machine," and notes how "alternative embodiments . . . make the supportive mechanisms appear behind the curtains" (*Theatre* 2). That is, at times the mere *presence* of disabled audiences can be enough to perform an inversion of the theatre's infrastructure—calling attention to the ways it does and does not support and enable a diverse range of bodyminds. The convention of the quiet audience, as one example, insists on a disciplining of the body that is not possible for everyone, and it offers no alternative. As Thom experienced, if your actions are deemed disruptive you will be reprimanded and potentially removed from the theatre. That the "acceptance of 'quiet audience' etiquette as theatrical norm radically decreases the auditorium's accessibility," means that disabled patrons are often absent from theatrical venues (Simpson 1). Likewise, RPs are crucial for how they reveal the ways that performance conventions prevent

many people from being able to attend a performance in a safe and welcoming way. By shifting the parameters of those conventions and articulating this change to the audience before the performance begins, RPs draw attention to them and illuminate their presence, enacting a mode of infrastructural inversion that renders perceptible these hidden parameters.

Critically, however, RPs do more than just reveal the existence of these exclusionary conventions—they also offer alternatives. For example, the convention of sitting still for the duration of the performance is removed and replaced by a new convention which not only allows for movement, but also supports it through material changes (like keeping the house lights slightly illuminated, or having trained ushers available, etc.). Thus, the real strength of RP protocols is that they go beyond just *revealing* the exclusionary aspects of these conventions to also *reconstituting* them. This results in a complete reconfiguration of the performance space, and, in this way, I view the implementation of RP protocols as akin to the building of new infrastructure; an infrastructure that is attuned to the need to include a more diverse range of bodyminds in the theatre. Ideally, what the integration of RP practices point to is a move beyond ad hoc or temporary access solutions towards a more fulsome and capacious integration of accessibility into the theatre venue. We find an example of this at the Battersea Arts Centre in the UK. Working extensively with Jess Thom and her organization Touretteshero, in early 2020 Battersea became the world's first fully relaxed performance venue. This means that not only do the Centre's artistic offerings adhere to RP protocols, but that the organization is committed to integrating this ethos into all of their programming, administrative and governance systems, and digital and physical infrastructure.

What is particularly important about these infrastructural reconfigurations is not only that they—in a practical way—allow a wider range of people to patronize the theatre with greater

ease. It is also that they signal a shift in the *values* that undergird artistic spheres. Carrie Sandahl notes that the configurations of "performance spaces tell everyone present (and even those absent) which bodies are considered sacred and which bodies can participate at which levels" ("Considering" 23). In short, accessibility (or its absence) has practical but also ideological meaning. If the conventions of the theatre auditorium are such that only the most docile and disciplined body can be present, then this communicates the limits of theatre's availability as a public offering. In contrast, what the shift in values enacted by RPs communicates is that theatre is available and welcoming to a diverse range of publics. The authors of the British Council report on RP write that "One of the key values [interviewed] participants expressed in relation to RP was its ability to "open up" the theatre experience: to break down physical, attitudinal, sensory, and financial barriers" (LaMarre et al. 40). Adherence to RP protocols signals this kind of "opening up." It conveys to audiences that welcoming a diversity of people into the theatre is the priority—the *raison d'être* that we come to gather together in the first place. It becomes about repositioning theatre as a public good, as something that should be universally available, rather than gatekeeping aesthetic experiences so that they can be reified and held as monuments to elitism. From this perspective, it is not the specialness of the events onstage that are the focus, but rather the act of being together in space going through a common experience together that matters.

Critical Access Studies and the Politics of Relaxed Performances

Simpson argues that RPs "offers a new perspective on the value of theatre as a live, embodied, collective event which permits felt communion with other individuals—spectators as well as performers" (15). She cites Jill Dolan's writing on the "moments of transformation" that can occur in the theatre, where audiences can "experience themselves as part of a congenial public"

(qtd. in Simpson 14). For Dolan, these congenial experiences inside the theatre hold the potential to construct theatre audiences as participatory publics that experience moments of *communitas* that "might become a model for other social interactions" (*Utopia* 11).[102] Simpson outlines how RPs further extend these opportunities for connection, understanding, and solidarity because they "ope[n] up the auditorium to a broader spectrum of society" in ways that offer the "possibility of 'affinity' or fellow feeling across bodily and/or mental differences" which "might equally operate outside the theatre" (15). In making these claims, Simpson gestures towards the many positive benefits of RPs, something that is reflected in the rhetoric of the practice as well. For example, removing the stipulation of the quiet audience is often cited as being a benefit not only to disabled or neurodiverse patrons, but also to people with young children, or people who are unfamiliar with theatre. This perspective argues that RPs hold ancillary benefits for a whole range of audience members, a concept also highlighted by one interviewee in the British Council report who explained: "We've been playing around a bit with the idea of: 'Oh, like we should mention that they're great for people on the Autism Spectrum or they're great for people with sensory sensitivities or first-time theatre-goers, or arts experiencers.' But actually, they're just for everybody" (LaMarre et al. 39).

This offers an important way of framing access, which is that it is something that has a wide range of benefits, both anticipated and unexpected, which serve everyone. Similar rhetoric underlines Universal Design, a term coined in 1985 by disabled designer Ronald Mace which proffered "a way of designing a building or facility . . . so that it is both attractive and functional

[102] Dolan describes *communitas* thusly: "Communitas, a term popularized in performance studies scholarship by anthropologist Victor Turner, describes the moments in a theater event or a ritual in which audiences or participants feel themselves become part of the whole in an organic, nearly spiritual way; spectators' individuality becomes finely attuned to those around them, and a cohesive if fleeting feeling of belonging to the group bathes the audience" (11).

for all people, disabled or not" (qtd. in Hamraie, *Building* 175). Universal Design is intended to be distinct from barrier-free design, which is more compliance-based and which emerges in response to access requirements in building codes. Universal Design, in contrast, aims to design accessible buildings from the onset, rather than having to upgrade them retroactively to be accessible. This approach became popularized five years after Mace conceived of it with the emergence of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Aimi Hamraie describes how, following this popularization of Universal Design in response to the ADA, "the meanings of this term soon proliferated. Builders' magazines, newspapers, textbooks, and conference workshops began to tell a new story about Universal Design: that this approach was not about accessibility for disabled users at all but rather about a commonsense approach to 'good design' for everyone" (*Building* 7).

Because RPs make changes that support a diverse array of people—including people who may not identify as part of the disability community—they resonate with the ways that Universal Design thinks broadly about the applicability of access practices (Hadley, "A 'Universal Design'" 183-184). As noted above, theatre venues that implement RP have noticed how the benefits extend across many different groups of people and are starting to understand the practice as being good for all. Certainly, it is clear that RPs assist in broadening the scope of who is imagined, anticipated, and welcomed into the theatre space. While RPs remove many barriers for disabled people, they also reduce barriers around etiquette or cultural conventions that are unrelated to impairment but which can make people feel as if they are not part of a theatre's public.

One could also argue that positioning access approaches like RPs as broadly beneficial can be useful because—when it counters the tendency to view accessibility as only a concern for

people with disabilities—it holds the potential to reduce stigma related to disability because of how it integrates these concerns into broader social life. Further, making these approaches visible and broadly applicable can help pique the interest of theatre patrons who may not be familiar with RPs, it may assist spectators in identifying ways that their theatre-going experience could be improved, and it can help elicit buy-in from policymakers, funders, staff, and the general public that could bring about important advances in disability inclusion (LaMarre et al. 9-10, 66-68). However, Hamraie's work on critical access offers an important qualification to this argument. Hamraie notes how the common-sense rhetoric of Universal Design as "good for everyone" has actually served to distance the practice from its roots in disability experience and politics. As they explain, "Despite Universal Design's origins in the work of disability activists and in disability rights efforts preceding the ADA, the term has become a popular discourse in the design world—not by *centering* disability as a category of marginalization but by *disavowing* it" (*Building* 7; emphasis added). Universal Design has emerged as a widely used term with imprecise applications, and, through its many twists and turns, become instrumentalized as an approach that can benefit 'everyone,' but which has lost its specific focus on disability. As Hamraie observes, the nuances of Universal Design's internal theory have become mislaid in marketing justifications that "also left behind the politicized claims of disability rights advocates for inclusion in public life in favor of appealing to more normate, mainstream consumers' desire for freedom or more usable consumers products" (*Building* 211). As such, the move to broaden an understanding of access as "for everyone" risks divorcing it from disability communities, politics, and histories, or justifying it only from the perspective that people with disabilities are an untapped population of consumers. This can tilt access towards a kind of "normalizing

impulse" (Kafer 23), whereby it becomes a way of assimilating difference into a hegemonic normativity through the depoliticization of disability.

Though they do not address artistic work in their writing, Hamraie's critical pass across the history and discourse of Universal Design is a helpful caution from which to also think about RPs. This is a necessary perspective for considering how—even when advances like RPs usefully disrupt and reconstitute the administrative infrastructures of the theatre—these practices hold their own politics that must be considered through a critical lens. What Hamraie's scholarship offers is not a refusal of the narrative of the broader utility of access measures, but a measured approach that retains a focus on disability politics, disability justice, and disability community. What might it look like if this perspective was included in discourses and deployments of RP? How might it encourage theatres to retain a specific focus on the disabled audiences that they seek to invite into their spaces, even as they recognize the wider benefits of the practice? In the British Council report on RP, for example, interviewees who had undertaken RP training provided feedback that future trainings should consider the importance of language when describing and promoting RP; integrate the tenets of disability justice into future RP training; and develop a set of best or promising practices to offer clarity to theatres seeking to integrate the practice. This feedback makes it clear that there is a desire to retain a close connection between the practices of RP and a history of disability activism and community work, and signals the concern that *without* this explicit connection, practices like RP might become removed from these important histories. Perhaps then, even as theatres encourage a diverse spectrum of patrons to attend RPs, they could include an acknowledgement of the histories of the various access measures that they are implementing, and how these measures connect to specific disability communities. Perhaps the rhetoric of "access for everyone" could be usefully

harnessed as a way of acknowledging and celebrating the many contributions of disability activism that have improved spaces, technologies, and practices for many populations. As RP continue to grow in popularity across Canadian theatres, retaining this critical lens on how they are positioning access is imperative so as not to lose the important connection between accessibility and disability.

ON THE STAGE

Access Aesthetics in Performance

Access aesthetics, or the aesthetics of access, is another example of how disability art and performance reconfigure administrative infrastructures in artistic spheres. To start, we can think of how the inclusion of access measures like sign language interpretation, captioning, touch tours, or audio description within a performance is *already* an intervention into the usual administrative infrastructures of a performance. These additions, many of which were outlined in the previous section on relaxed performance, “present art in various modes that anticipate artists and audiences with diverse abilities,” and thus allow audiences with varying embodiments and sensory capabilities to access performances that might otherwise be inaccessible (Bunch 251). Including these access measures is important because they provide functional forms of access for disabled patrons and signal an expectation that disabled patrons will be present in artistic spaces.

However, as Taraneh Fazeli observes, even when large, well-funded cultural institutions offer various access measures (such as wheelchairs, assistive listening devices, sign language and captioning, large print and Braille gallery guides, etc.), “access is never guaranteed because of one or more of the following: these forms of interpretation fail, staff don’t know how to use them, or support may require two to three weeks advance planning” (23). An aesthetics of access does not necessarily remedy these issues, but it comes closer because of how it seeks to integrate

accessibility more deeply into the aesthetic and sensory experience of the work. In so doing, it shifts the provision of access from being present in the infrastructure of the *venue* to being present in the infrastructure of the *performance*. An aesthetics of access extends the provision of access from being a translation of a performance or a purely functional mechanism into something that is incorporated into the artistic fabric (i.e., dramaturgy) of a performance. For example, rather than have an interpreter positioned off to the side of the stage while signing the onstage dialogue, an aesthetics of access might integrate the interpreter into the performance—perhaps having them shadow actors onstage as they sign their lines. Or this approach might do away with the interpreter altogether, instead having the actors sign their own or each other's lines as they speak them. This was the case with *At This Hour*, a 2021 docudrama performance by Halifax's Zuppa Theatre that featured Deaf and hearing actors (one of the latter was also partially sighted).[103] In this production, each character was played by both a Deaf and a hearing actor so that all dialogue was simultaneously signed and spoken for the audience. The dialogue was captioned and projected as surtitles above the actors, providing yet another way for spectators to digest the text. In addition, the performance included a "mobility and orientation lesson" to orient spectators spatially in the venue. This choice demonstrates another key component of an aesthetics of access, which is that it goes beyond just *integrating* access more deeply into a performance to also drawing on the creative potential of accessibility. In this example, the orientation lesson was not held separately but was worked into the conceit of the show—which recounted the circumstances of the Halifax Explosion in 1917—as actors mapped the space of the venue in accordance with the position and trajectories of the cargo ships involved in this historic event. In this way, the lesson was not purely logistical nor solely for

[103] *At This Hour* was produced in partnership with The Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, Signs of the Maritimes Deaf Theatre Troupe, and CNIB.

non-sighted audience members but was drawn on as a method of explicating the many moving parts and players in the show's narrative.

The integration of access measures in *At This Hour* demonstrates how an access aesthetics approach reconfigures access—transforming it from merely being a representation or a translation of an existing performance into something that is deeply embedded into the work *and* which holds aesthetic value and meaning. As Mary Bunch describes and these examples illustrate, access is "not a mere supplement that is added on as an afterthought" but rather, "Such multisensorial engagements together comprise an aesthetic experience inextricable from access concerns" (251). With an aesthetics of access, the dramaturgy of the performance grows out of a commitment to accessibility, as was exemplified by Neworld Theatre's 2017 production of *King Arthur's Night*. This performance featured an integrated cast that included actors with Down Syndrome and prioritized access by including improvised text and movement and audible line feeding as a way to balance the demands of memorization. As I have described elsewhere, these techniques not only supported the cast in functional ways but also increased the energy of presence in the play and helped reinforce the relationships and emotional stakes between the characters (Johnson, "Integrating" 103). The production also ensured that the working methods used to create the performance were accessible to the entire cast, a commitment which led to a schedule that consisted of shorter rehearsal days spread over a higher number of weeks. This production transformed functional access measures into elements that impacted the narrative and affective aspects of the show, demonstrating how accessibility can be used as a means of amplifying or contextualizing artistic components of a performance. Here, rather than relegate accessibility to a secondary status, or think of it as a mere add-on to a work, an aesthetic of access is integrative and considers the creative and artistic potential of access and the lived

experience of disability, something Carrie Sandahl points to in noting the transformative potential of the "alternative aesthetic choices" that come from the "adaptive maneuvers" of atypical perspectives and bodyminds ("Considering" 23).

An aesthetics of access can also manifest in how artists use access protocols as a constitutive part of the form or content of their work. This was the case with Carman Papalia's *See For Yourself,* a series of artworks developed in 2015 for the virtual exhibition *Marking Blind*, curated by Amanda Cachia and produced by Arts & Disability Ireland.[104] Papalia played with the concept of visual description—"attempt[ing] to illustrate [it]," as Cachia observes, "as a creative process" ("Reflections" 102). Visual description, or audio description, is "the umbrella term for techniques meant to make visual media accessible to blind people" (Kleege, *More Than* 97). Emerging out of the US theatre scene in the 1980s (Snyder 936), it describes the process of narrating visual imagery or elements—translating them into spoken or written text so as to make them accessible to people who are blind or partially sighted. For this series Papalia drew on this process by inviting seven participants to write visual descriptions of well-known historical artworks (such as Sandro Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* and Théodore Géricault's *The Raft of the Medusa*). He then provided these texts to seven artists and asked them to create two-dimensional visual artworks based solely on the descriptions. The artists were not informed of the original titles or artist of the work, so as not to influence their creations. The artworks were then translated *back* into textual form by Papalia's partner Kristin Rochelle Lantz, who offered live visual description of the newly created artworks for Papalia. As Cachia notes, "Upon hearing Lantz's descriptions, Papalia was surprised by the resulting artworks—some, he says, were predictable, while others made him laugh" ("Reflections" 104). This process of moving between

[104] In addition to Papalia's piece, this exhibition included the work of Raphaëlle de Groot, Robert Morris, and Alice Wingwall.

text and visuals represents the shifting modes that accompany the process of audio description. As a visual image is translated into a verbalized or written description it shifts in response to the subjectivity of the describer and, as *See For Yourself* demonstrates, takes on its own aesthetic sense. In this series, Papalia fuses access and aesthetics in such a way that the practice of providing access becomes the aesthetic process through which the work is developed.

What these examples illustrate is the way that the aesthetic of the performance is transformed by integrating access practices in creative ways or by considering the artistic potential of access protocols themselves. Recalling Ric Knowles's expanded model of the performance experience, these examples demonstrate how accessibility becomes a thread that connects all three poles: access is considered and integrated into the conditions of production (ensuring the creation and rehearsal process is accessible to all), into the conditions of reception (so it is accessible to audiences), and into the performance text (thus inspiring and becoming part of the aesthetic). These performances and artworks also recognize the complex and layered ways through which people engage with aesthetic experiences. As Cachia notes, "Access is not monolithic, nor uniform; it is always variable and dependent on a number of conditions" and forms of access aesthetics, or what she describes as artistic access "means advocating for a politics of access that takes into consideration how access will be seen, felt, and heard to both privilege and prioritize a complexly-embodied audience" ("Reflections" 116). These examples also exemplify the importance of incorporating access from the very beginning of the creation or development process of the work; a key component that is highlighted in Rose Jacobson and Geoff McMurchy's definition of access aesthetics as a method that "declares access to be an integral part of creative content and the artistic process from inception to presentation" (8). For access to not be considered solely as a functional element that is just "added on" after an artistic

work is created, it is integral that it be included from the very start of an artistic process and considered to be part of the dramaturgy of the performance akin to a work's direction or set design.

What I want to advance here is the idea that an aesthetics of access *even more significantly* transforms the initial intervention that traditional access measures make into the administrative infrastructure of the theatre. That is, when performances add features like sign language interpretation or audio description to their productions, they are already intervening in the administrative infrastructures that structure performance, because of how they are including elements that make the work accessible to a diverse range of audiences. An aesthetics of access, however, takes this further and *intervenes within this intervention.* Access aesthetics is about more than just the translation of something into another form. It takes us beyond simplistic notions of "access as inclusion" to instead think about how access can radically remodel a performance's dramaturgy and become part of the aesthetic sense of a work. By centring disability from the outset and dramatically reconfiguring the way that access is provided, an aesthetics of access reveals the politics of the traditional forms of access and opens up new ways of understanding the core tenets of accessibility related to transparency, community, and agency.

Audio Description in Performance

To demonstrate how this occurs, in this section I discuss how disability performance has transformed the access provision of audio description through an aesthetics of access approach. As blind theatre maker Alex Bulmer describes:

> Audio description, if it's done in its most traditional way where you're hiring an external company that comes in and writes a script and then has consultants and sits in a booth and speaks down a microphone into a headset. You know, you got the equipment cost,

> you got the labour. And I'm not saying in any way, shape or form that that is not a worthwhile investment for your audiences. I think it is. But I also think there are other alternatives. (qtd. in Nightwood)

It is these "other alternatives" referenced by Bulmer that interest me. I argue that the examples discussed here offer a creative approach to audio description that illuminates some of the politics of access that may not be apparent in more traditional offerings of this access service. However, even in its basic form and before questions of aesthetics come into play, audio description holds particular politics and considerations. When framed in a compensatory way—as "verbal commentary providing visual information for those unable to perceive it for themselves" (Fryer, qtd. in H. Thompson)—audio description is positioned only as the translation of visual images into words or a way of mediating the "lack" in the experience of not seeing. This reductive approach reinscribes the hegemony of the visual by insinuating that sight and vision form the dominant mode of knowing. To combat such ocularcentrism, we must remember that what is seen cannot alone account for the fullness of a performance experience, nor, as Bunch notes, does it allow space for the phenomenological experience(s) of blindness (247) or the possibility that "blindness enhances, rather than diminishes the visual domain" (244). Further, while a description of a performance can never be neutral, as audio description services have increased, attempts to standardize the practice have emerged. Georgina Kleege argues that while the desire to increase consistency and professionalism of audio description is worthwhile, in practice this has led to "problematic assumptions about what blind people can understand and should know about visual phenomena" (*More Than* 98). The desire for objectivity in description, Kleege notes, leads to banal descriptions that do little to convey the emotion, affect, humour, or aesthetic of the art. Further, a describer's intention to remain neutral

can also mean that they omit or withhold key information so as to not draw attention to it. For example, although early audio description standards advised *not* to describe a person's race or ethnicity, more recent standards from the American Council of the Blind's Audio Description Project have advised that describers "Identify ethnicity/race as it is known and vital to the comprehension of content" (qtd. in Kleege, *More Than* 104). The 2020 report *Describing Diversity* emphasizes this further by noting that the choice to describe (or not) the "diverse characteristics" of performers has implications both within the "world of the play" but also for the "world at large," given that performance takes place within a broader socio-political climate (Hutchinson et al. 32).[105]

Audio description that is rooted in an aesthetics of access does not transcend these important questions, and they remain topics that require further consideration. However, what interests me here, along with the infrastructural focus of this dissertation, is more so how the *method* of delivering audio description specifically reveals questions around the politics of access. That is, here I do not engage as directly with these issues of identity, but rather focus on what kinds of access politics and infrastructural questions emerge when audio description is engaged with as a form of access aesthetics. I offer examples of how disability performance has engaged with audio description in creative ways—beyond that of being merely a description or translation of a performance—and, in so doing, explore how this reveals infrastructural politics related to the transparency, agency, and individualism of access.

Transparency

[105] This report was a collaboration between art access organization VocalEyes and Royal Holloway, University of London and was written by Rachel Hutchinson, Hannah Thompson, and Matthew Cock.

Bulmer worked on a production with Graeae Theatre that offers a salient example of a creative approach to audio description. Graeae is a disability theatre company in London (UK) that has been instrumental in developing the concept and practice of access aesthetics. Jenny Sealey, Graeae's artistic director since 1997, describes how "everything that Graeae does is absolutely fueled by accessibility . . . accessibility and inclusion are absolutely permeated within Graeae's DNA" (qtd. in Johnston, *Disability* 154). In the company's 2006 production of Sarah Kane's *Blasted* (1995), co-directed by Sealey and Bulmer, the play's stage directions were spoken out loud by the actors as part of their dialogue. Each scripted action, therefore (such as "He gulps down the gin" or "She puts down her bag and bounces on the bed"), was verbally described alongside its physicalization, which embedded audio description into the performance. Both the dialogue and these descriptions were also signed by Deaf actors—a video of which was projected on a screen behind the actors onstage—and together, the embedded audio description and projected sign language fused the text, speech, and action of the play into a multi-sensorial experience that was available and accessible to a wide range of audiences. Though some argued that this approach "detract[ed] from the raw physicality of Kane's text" (Random), Sealey describes how it drove home the emotional and affective intensity of the play. *Blasted* is a play with extreme emotional ranges, and, as Sealy notes, "Our production . . . forced everyone to hear or see every single word. It became so claustrophobic, you couldn't switch off" (qtd. in Johnston, *Disability* 155).

We find another example of embedded audio description in Erin Ball's work. Ball identifies as a Mad, disabled circus artist and coach and is a double below knee amputee. Ball primarily works with aerial silks and incorporates various prostheses into her performances. As a performer deeply committed to practices of accessibility, Ball seeks to include many different

access practices into her performances, including embedding visual descriptions into her shows. In one performance at Cripping the Arts in Toronto in 2019—a three-day Deaf and disability arts symposium—Ball worked with audio describer Kat Germain to develop the descriptions, and Germain offered a live description of the performance that was amplified for the entire audience to hear. At a Halifax Fringe performance in 2021 in which Ball performed alongside stilt artist Vanessa Furlong, the duo was also joined by disability theatre maker April Hubbard who performed these descriptions live onstage in response to Ball and Furlong's movements.[106] The descriptions used in Ball's work are often more poetic and imaginative than purely explanatory; they go beyond just describing the shape and position of Ball's body in space to also use imagery and metaphor that offer a sense of the affect and kinaesthesia of Ball's physicality.

In both Ball's work and Graeae's production of *Blasted*, the audio description is embedded in the performance so as to be experienced by the entire audience. This is distinctly different from the usual method of audio description being piped through an individual earpiece. In the latter, the audio description remains separate, hidden away, and only heard by a select few. This approach reinforces the idea that disability and access are impediments to the smooth functioning of performance. It also mimics the way that many infrastructures are obscured and function as behind-the-scenes forms of support—a trait which risks them being devalued, ignored, and under serviced. In contrast, with embedded audio description the visual descriptions are woven into the dramaturgy of the performance; taking up time and space within the work and becoming a part of the aesthetic that is experienced by everyone. This approach engenders a transparency to access that shifts access from being something included for the benefit of a few, to becoming part of the experience of the entire group of spectators.

[106] Furlong and Ball co-founded the performance company LEGacy Circus.

Community

This transparency is distinct from the concerns voiced in the previous section regarding the "access is for everyone" rhetoric because embedding audio description into performance does not de-emphasize disability and impairment. Rather, the transparency of embedded audio description invites the entire audience into the experience of access and becomes a way of prioritizing disability rather than hiding it away—*centering* disability within the performance, even if the content of the performance might not explicitly be "about" disability. This leads to two notable outcomes. The first is that the inclusion and overt presence of audio description highlights its *absence* in other venues/performances. Spectators experiencing audio description for the first time might be led to reflect on how few shows offer this form of verbal description, and they might notice its absence in other contexts. The second, even more significantly, is that this form of access aesthetics shifts accessibility from being an individual concern into a communal experience—something that is experienced and engaged with by everyone. By virtue of its inclusion and transparency, embedded audio description encourages spectators to consider the various sensorial modes though which others might access and experience artistic work. Returning to Jill Dolan's figuration of the ways that "spectators experience themselves as part of a congenial public constituted by the performance's address" (14), I surmise that this attention and awareness of other sensory modes of experiencing performance can be a way through which this "congenial public" might form. In this way, rather than consigning the politics of access to a select few artists and patrons, this approach invites everyone to consider their responsibility with regards to access, even the access measures they might not themselves require.

Petra Kuppers models a similar approach to communal access when she lectures on disability arts. Both in-person and virtually I have witnessed Kuppers invite her audiences to

describe the images included in her presentations. Because she asks multiple audience members to describe the same image, Kuppers demonstrates how highly personal and diverse the experience of the visual can be. In addition, this shared audio description also demonstrates how access can be a communal concern—a responsibility that is to be engaged with and shouldered by everyone. I read Kuppers's approach as a micro practice that reflects a radical perspective on access. Often, in accordance with the medicalized framing of disability as a personal malady, requests for access and accommodation are viewed as individual issues. From this perspective, accessibility measures can be relegated as unimportant or low priority because they appear to only benefit a single individual. Such isolating politics are antithetical to a disability justice perspective, which (as articulated in Sins Invalid's collectively compiled principles of the concept), includes *collective* access, or the recognition that responsibility for access needs can be shared among all (Berne et al.). By situating access as a communal endeavour, a practice enacted by everyone, Kuppers counters the tendency to reduce access to an individual pursuit. This too is a form of embedded audio description, one that does not justify access through allegiance to an "access is for everybody" rhetoric, but which seeks to coalesce a community in which all take part in creating, experiencing, and maintaining accessibility. When this occurs, even within a temporary community such as a group of theatre spectators or lecture attendees—it enacts a form of community care that is intrinsic to disability culture.

Agency

The final example of creative audio description that I want to highlight is pioneered by the disability arts ensemble Kinetic Light in the United States. As part of the performance *DESCENT* (discussed in Chapter Two), Kinetic Light's Laurel Lawson designed the mobile app *Audimance*, a technology that allows audiences to select from a variety of audio description

tracks that are synced to accompany the performance. With *Audimance,* audiences can select from audio descriptions of the performance that range from traditional description or a sonification of the stage sounds, to soundscapes, poetry, and prose.[107] Each track is synced to the timing of the performance, and users can switch back and forth between the tracks throughout, which means that *Audimance* provides the user increased choice in how they listen to, engage with, and experience the performance.

This ascribes a level of agency to the user that is typically absent in audio description offerings. While this agentive approach may seem individualistic and thus counter to the communal approach to audio description outlined above, *Audimance* is a very community-oriented project. It emerged out of close collaboration with Georgina Kleege and Joshua Miele, who provided feedback on Kinetic Light's early attempts at audio description as the company sought to develop an approach that prioritized blind and nonvisual audiences. The specificity of this approach moves away from the idea of access as a monolith, and instead views access as something created in direct relationship with the needs and expertise of a community. As Lawson explains, "[*Audimance*] absolutely centers Blind users who have advanced listening skills. Obviously anyone who is hearing can use it but this isn't a question of trying to make it work for everyone. It is made for and it centers this population that was being underserved artistically" (qtd. in Reid). In this way, Kinetic Light recognizes the specific strengths and capabilities of blind and partially sighted audiences and has created an access provision that directly enhances their aesthetic experience. Not only did *Audimance* emerge out of a community need and desire, but because of how it provides the user with a certain level of agency, it brings them into the community of the performance experience. Critically, even when audio description

[107] Eli Clare wrote the poetry for one track, and Dylan Keefe composed the soundscape track.

is provided, it does not always pull blind and partially sighted audiences into the work because, as Sheppard observes, “What you’re getting is this kind of displaced description. You’re not getting a sense of the art” (qtd. in Reid). *Audimance* seeks to counter this because its audio tracks are not displaced or separate from the performance onstage but are created and conceptualized as accompanying artworks in and of themselves. The tracks do not seek to provide an identical artistic experience per se, but they offer the user an entry point into the work that Lawson describes as “equitable in terms of a rich, multi-dimension, complicated artistic experience” (qtd. in Reid). By providing multiple different and simultaneous aesthetic entry points into the work, *Audimance* proffers a marriage of access and aesthetics that advances a unique and exciting development in audio description. As Lawson articulates, “I think we’re opening a lot of stuff up . . . We’re not replacing audio description, we’re blowing it open” (qtd. in Reid).

Balancing Form and Function: The Politics of Access Aesthetics

These examples of creative audio description demonstrate how access aesthetics can extend usual provisions of accessibility into an artistic realm. Much of this work also grows out of a politics that seeks to center the experience of disabled spectators and acknowledge the importance of providing diverse modes of engagement with artistic work. Because of how it situates accessibility as a core dramaturgical and structural component of performance, the practice of access aesthetics is transformational in how it reorganizes administrative infrastructures in artistic venues. At the same time, as I noted in my discussion of relaxed performance practices, there is a need to critically examine how even this approach can risk depoliticizing access when it struggles to find the right balance between the functionality and creative potential of accessibility.

To explicate this issue, I want to highlight similar questions of balance with regards to accessibility that emerged in my conversation with staff from Tangled Art + Disability, Canada's first disability art gallery. In speaking with Sean Lee, Director of Programming, and Kristina McMullin, former Communications Manager, we spent some time unpacking the limits of what I describe as the "checklist" approach to access. In different ways, we each articulated our desire to move beyond thinking of access as merely a checklist of logistical items to instead think of access as a more iterative, complicated, evolving, and responsive way of creating and being in community. The checklist approach can be conceived as an introductory level of access—"access 101"—or access that is mandated via legislated accessibility standards. It typically begins with physical access (i.e., ramps and accessible washrooms) and may also extend into practices like interpretation or captioning, audio description, and the development of plain-language summaries. The risk with the checklist approach is that it positions access as a series of tasks that, once completed, mean that accessibility will be "achieved." In reality, bodyminds and access needs are constantly changing, evolving, and oscillating between moments of accord and conflict. The 'fixed' commitment to access conveyed by the checklist approach removes the possibility of being in relationship to an individual's or a community's shifting access needs. As jes sachse articulates, this fixity "ultimately interferes with your ability to approach anyone from a place of conversation and curiosity and listening . . . It just cancels out that possibility of building and of depths of roots . . . and learning, in a way, to listen to each other better" (Personal interview). In short, access is more complicated and changeable than the checklist perspective implies.

Because it is often rooted in compliance, the checklist approach can also feel obligatory and becomes an experience of responsibility "that [leaves] [disabled people] feeling like a

burden, violated or just plain shitty" (Mingus). Further, Lee recalled the work of Kelly Fritsch in observing how it sets up access as something that is put in place to encourage the productivity of disabled bodyminds—as that which ascribes value to disability only insofar as it is made available to the labour market (cf. Fritsch 50). As Lee describes:

> As I came into disability community, and I realized the messiness, and the kind of interdependent ways that disabled folks are generating culture for one another, I—at least in my own practice—moved away from this idea of the minimum check box and began to understand that a compliance-based approach is often one that's just trying to create a productive person, a productive disabled person, and [I began] really trying to question what that means. (Personal interview)

Part of the challenge here, as Bess Williamson observes, is that access has been interpreted in both technical and metaphoric ways, a duality which "has yielded some contradictory results" ("Access" 53). At times, even when technical change occurs (such as improvements in the accessibility of transit infrastructure), this "does not necessarily translate to the deeper goals of openness, inclusion, or opportunity" that align with the broader figuration of access (Williamson, "Access" 53-54). This is another critique of the checklist approach, which—although it aligns with the concept of the social model in how it locates barriers externally to the person and seeks to make changes to the environment rather than the individual—risks addressing technical issues without enacting true structural change. As Brewer and colleagues note, "access is a moving target, a concept that sounds promising on its surface yet frequently offers little more than empty gestures" (151). In this way, access checklists can become "performative" in the sense of being hollow; they perform an institution's commitment to accessibility but become, in reality, *non*-performative (perhaps what J.L. Austin would term an

unhappy utterance) in they that enact no (or limited) actual or lasting change (cf. Titchkosky, *The Question*). Sara Ahmed describes a problem with diversity initiatives with similar language: referring to the "tick box approach" as that through which "institutions can 'show' that they are following procedures but are not really 'behind' them (showing can be a way of *not* committing)" (114; original emphasis).

Making changes to an inaccessible environment is important, and I am certainly not suggesting that spaces should *not* be reconfigured to be more accessible to people with disabilities. My concern is that the checklist approach, even when it does address some barriers, stops short of addressing the deep-seated structural ableism embedded in many social, political, and economic systems, and thus does not go far enough in reversing the ongoing oppression of people with disabilities. Here I echo disability rights activists like Marta Russell who voiced concern over the tendency to celebrate inclusion measures like the implementation of ramps. Recounting Russell's *Beyond Ramps: Disability at the End of the Social Contract*, Bess Williamson writes that "Ramps, for Russell, represented the 1990s 'leaner, meaner' approach to rights, one that accepts physical changes such as ramps but avoids deeper, systemic change that would alter the social and economic status of not only disabled people, but poor and minority groups as a whole" (*Accessible* 185). In short, ramps are wonderful, but they alone will not rid the world of ableism. The checklist approach might enact some key material changes, but does it shift how we understand and relate to diverse bodyminds? Does it reorder our approach to access so that it is less instrumentalized and autonomous and more rooted in community and interdependence? Does it "open up space to desire disability differently"? (Fritsch 55). As Brewer and colleagues assert, too often "individuals seeking access are positioned as consumers, as bodies in need of help from those more able and privileged" (151). This consumptive

approach does little to develop what the authors describe as a "culture of access" that is attuned to how vectors of identity and power come into play with efforts of accessibility. It also risks replicating a neoliberal understanding of access as an individualized pursuit aimed at increasing disabled people's capacity for labour and consumption.[108] Like Lee and Fritsch, my issue with the checklist approach to access is whether it is committed to the true well-being and flourishing of disabled people or whether it is an attempt to mold people with disabilities into "productive" citizen-consumers.

In extending beyond the logistical to also consider the artistic, an aesthetics of access is a significant counter to the checklist method. Access aesthetics demonstrates the creative and generative potential of the disability experience and the ways that thinking about access, care, and interdependence as a fundamental part of the artistic process can open up new and exciting creative avenues. However, there is a critical balance to be struck here. Though I have personally espoused the benefits of access aesthetics, more recently I have been reminded of the need to temper my excitement with an equally critical eye to the balance between the aesthetic and the political. It is necessary to remain aware that the politics and functionality of access is not obscured by aesthetic interest (Hadley, "A 'Universal Design'" 185-187). Alex Bulmer notes how this can become a problem when artistic approaches to access become "unacceptably experimental to the point where [they] ha[ve] no function" (Personal interview). For Bulmer, these approaches must remain tethered to the functionality of access because "if you get too artistically clever with access it's not access anymore. It's just an attempt to be artistically clever . . . And it is a fine line, for sure. I think you really have to understand how access functions in

[108] This is a worrying trend that has been at the forefront of debates around disability policy and the provision of state benefits, particularly in the United Kingdom. In line with the neoliberal insistence that participation in the labour market is required to be considered a citizen, governments have reformed their disability policies to link state assistance to labour and employment conditions. See Cross; Owen and Harris.

order to . . . play around with it creatively, and really understand where to draw that line. And it's been blurred too often" (Personal interview). Lee likewise offers a caution in this regard by noting that the excitement of engaging in what he termed "creative access" should not become an excuse to ignore standard access measures. As Lee describes, "[creative access] really complicates conventional access. But it's not an excuse for curators to only engage creative access. It doesn't mean don't budget for ASL, don't find an accessible venue . . . this is a community activation, and it's a political activation. I think those who engage with creative access need to bring a commitment before they engage with it" (Personal interview).

This commitment to functional access allows us to locate more value and significance in what is offered by the checklist approach. In my conversation with Lee and McMullin they pointed out how, in many ways, instigating more and better options for access (however they manifest) is a move in the right direction. McMullin warned against the impulse to critique organizations and people who are doing what they can, starting from where they are, or who are seeking some easily implementable tactics.[109] She also noted how this nuts-and-bolts approach can work *in tandem* with justice-based imaginings that go beyond questions of access to also consider how the world might be restructured without reliance on ableism or saneism. As McMullin observes, "Because a sans serif, 14-point font is in direct opposition to the fact that, for so long, typefaces have been hard to read. Well, what if we looked at this idea that typeface doesn't necessarily need to be hard to read, nor that reading needs to be easy? What if we just communicated in a really invitational way to our communities and made it fun and engaging and

[109] McMullin's caution brings to mind Shannon Jackson's call to rethink the equivalences between agency, radical art, and anti-institutionality. As Jackson observes, the push for aesthetic autonomy and forms of institutional critique become complicated when we acknowledge our interdependence with public support systems. Critically, the language of anti-institutionality used by "progressive artists and critics" can inadvertently mimic neoliberal divestment in public welfare and infrastructure (*Social* 16).

joyful?" (Personal interview). Here McMullin points to the fact that the accessibility standard for font size and type is in service to a history of disability activism and advocacy. While acknowledging and affirming that history, she simultaneously proposes that this "checklist" item can be paired with an imagining of how written communication might further untether itself from this history of exclusion to become something that is rooted in fun, community, and joy. This is a powerful way of intervening in and reimagining the administrative infrastructures that organize performance, but it does so without disavowing the functionality and necessity of the checklist approach.

Attending to the balance between function and creativity is also important for considering what an aesthetics of access is *doing* and who it is *for*. In downplaying the functional aspects of accessibility, creative approaches to access can fascinate *non*-disabled audience in a way that again relegates disability to the margins of the experience. Bulmer quips that, at times, when creative forms of access are celebrated, "the celebration is often from the non-disabled communities, who feel titillated" by the novelty of the approach (Personal interview). As Bulmer notes, "It's so important that a disabled person is there when those kinds of creative discussions are happening. Because it gets carried away. And it really does become for the non-disabled audiences" (Personal interview). Bulmer points to the risk that creative access can become so artistically engaging that it misses the purpose and the community it is there to serve and becomes something for non-disabled spectators to consume and celebrate.

Critically, however, is to recognize that this imbalance can also emerge within disability community. I am reminded, for example, of a powerful moment at the Cripping the Arts Symposium at the Harbourfront Centre in 2019. This symposium—co-organized and presented by the British Council, Creative Users Project, Tangled Art + Disability, Toronto Metropolitan

University (then Ryerson University), and the Harbourfront Centre—was a three-day event filled with a tremendous lineup of disabled artists, performers, scholars, and activists. Panels ranged across topics and issues related to access, intersectionality, and crip futures, and the evening performances emerged as incredible examples of the creative potential of disability arts. However, during a panel that aimed to explore "Deafhood, madness, and disability within the framework of digital transformation, cultural futurisms, and Disability Arts culture," the photographer and disability activist Allan Cullen spoke up from the audience and noted that the topics of discussion would have no relevance to the people with disabilities featured in his photographs, many of whom lived without secure housing and below the poverty line. The art projects being discussed on the panel—art imbued with exciting new technology and heady conceptual ideas—seemed far removed from the material realties of the many disabled people who formed Cullen's local community in downtown Toronto. Where, Cullen's comments seemed to imply, were those people accounted for in this symposium?

I highlight this interaction not to disregard the importance of the panel discussion, nor to argue that we shouldn't be thinking widely, creatively, and conceptually about the power of disability arts. Indeed, much of this dissertation has attempted to do just that. But Cullen's observation tempered the discussion in important ways—recentering the most marginalized voices of the community and reminding attendees that our aesthetic interests and excitement should not stray too far from the political roots and emancipatory objectives of the disability movement. Other disability artists like claude wittmann also speak to this tension between the aesthetic and what he describes as "the urgencies of survival, with a desire for systemic change" (wittmann). For me, acknowledging this tension highlights the need to create a cross-disability politics that can engage with all corners of disability community (Kafer 11-19). It also unearths

the politics of access aesthetics and speaks to the issue of whether creative experimentation can destabilize the balance of form and function. As practices of access aesthetics continue to evolve, it is critical that we remain attentive to how these approaches can both further the politics of disability culture, but also to the risk that they might unintentionally elide these politics in service of their aesthetic aims.

ON THE PAGE

Cripping the Contract

This final section moves from the 'stage' to the 'page' to consider some of the ways that disability artists and organizations are intervening in contractual processes. I am not approaching this discussion from a legal perspective but rather am interested in how changes being stipulated within artist agreements reconfigure the working relationship between artist and institution, thus enabling this relationship to be more fully rooted in disability culture and connected to an ethos of community, justice, interdependence, and care.[110]

Contracts, as legal documents that hold links to a punitive legal system, risk being understood as more 'stick' than 'carrot' and implemented as a means of protecting against possible harm or deceit. Contracts often exist as a form of insurance so that—if a contractual obligation is not fulfilled—the aggrieved party has some recourse to recoup their losses. Ideally, contracts are tools that offer clear terms of engagement and important protections for all who sign. In arts and cultural settings, they can be helpful in clearly outlining the duties and obligations of both artist and institution and establishing a productive framework for the working

[110] For more on the legal particularities of infrastructure see Valverde.

relationship. Clear and comprehensive contractual agreements can help avoid disagreements and offer clarity should a conflict arise that requires attention, discussion, and/or meditation.

In light of the positive features and potential of contracts, it is important to clarify that I am not questioning the *usefulness* or *purpose* of contracts or artists agreements. Rather, I seek here to research, understand, and qualify the *kinds* of working relationships they engender. Like many of the administrative infrastructures discussed in this chapter, traditional artist agreements may not be wholly supportive to disabled artists, nor do they prioritize the ethos of disability culture. However, many disability artists are altering or adding new clauses to their contracts as a way of reorganizing their working relationship with arts institutions. I view these as an intervention into the typical administrative infrastructures that would organize that relationship and believe that, even when these changes are happening on an individual basis, they hold the potential to reconfigure the broader context in which artists and institutions interact in the future. Given that contractual agreements are a primary element of the administrative infrastructures that organize the relationship between individual and institution, any scale of intervention can have significant ramifications for reconfiguring these infrastructures on the whole.

Retooling Contractual Arrangements

Access riders

As a first example I want to highlight the concept of an "access rider," which I first learned about through the work of Korean-America artist Johanna Hedva. As a performer and writer who works across media, Hedva is well-known for the manifesto "Sick Women Theory," which they describe as "a call to arms and a testimony of recognition" for all those who face vulnerability,

fragility, and invisibility in relation to their experience of illness ("Sick").[111] More recently, they have publicly shared their access rider, offering it as a community resource that others can use as a template in their own work. The access rider is a document that riffs on the usual technical rider that a venue or organization receives from a performer. As a type of appendix or addendum to an artist contract, technical riders include information on the production or technical specifications of a performance, so that the venue can organize itself accordingly. This may include procuring special equipment, reconfiguring the stage space, organizing staffing requirements, and booking certain amounts of rehearsal time. High profile performers might also provide backstage riders that include stipulations around their hospitality and accommodation (stories of which become infamous examples of diva-like behaviour). Typically, however, riders are more focused on technical requirements and production demands of a performance.

After publishing "Sick Woman Theory" Hedva began receiving requests for an increasing number of speaking engagements. They compiled a document with information related to their access needs to share with institutions so that they could receive the support they needed to complete these events. However, Hedva's access rider goes beyond only detailing their personal access needs related to things like travel and accommodation. It is also a document that is decidedly community oriented. Hedva outlines the requirement that their public events are made accessible in a variety of ways. This includes the timing of the event ("I cannot participate in anything before 16:00. I, and my audience, cannot sit for longer than 90 minutes without a 15-minute break"), the access measures offered during the event (a clause which includes requests ranging from wheelchair access to all gender washrooms), and the publicity of those access

[111] Originally published by *Mask Magazine* (now closed) in 2016, Hedva revised and republished "Sick Woman Theory" with *Topical Cream* in 2022. Accompanying this piece was a new commissioned essay titled "Why It's Taking So Long," in which Hedva details the reception to "Sick Woman Theory" and their access rider.

measures ("I require that the accessibility information of the event be posted with all materials that include my name") ("Hedva's"). As such, although this is Hedva's *personal* access rider, it includes many stipulations around access for Hedva's audiences. The rider demonstrates a commitment to access that exists beyond the individual, and as such meaningfully reflects the community orientation of disability culture. It recalls the discussion of communal access discussed in the previous section, as well as jes sachse's assertion that access is a form of community care and that the point of the event is, in fact, the relationships within that community. For both Hedva and sachse, it would seem, the event is secondary to the community that it helps materialize. If that community cannot be properly welcomed into and supported in a space, the event cannot happen.

The language around access provisions in Hedva's rider is unapologetic. The clause outlining event accessibility reads:

> I require that the event take place in a wheelchair accessible space, no exceptions. I require every effort be made to provide both CART and sign language interpretation for the event; at least one of these has to happen. I require all-gender restrooms at the space. I require spaces to be as scent-free as possible (see reference below for more info). If someone makes an access request, I require that the hosts make every effort to provide it. ("Hedva's")

Again this recalls sachse's commitment to access as a nonnegotiable—the stance that "If there's no access, I'm not doing it" (sachse, Personal interview). This unwavering commitment to access is significant and demonstrates Hedva's sense of care and responsibility to their community. But alongside this decisive language, Hedva's rider also positions access as a process and something that is embarked on in partnership. Although insistent, the rider is framed

not as a list of demands but an invitation into the process of working through the messiness of access together. Throughout the document, Hedva very much implicates themself as a partner in creating accessibility:

> Before I can commit to that process with you—and honey, it is a pro*cess*!—please take a moment to read the below, and let me know *how* you can support *each* item. If you need more specifics about any component, ask me. I'm happy to clarify and assist where I can. If you can't provide something on this list, let's have a conversation about it. I am more interested in accessibility as something for which we work together, rather than a punitive standard I measure you against. ("Hedva's"; original emphasis)

Here, Hedva's words are invitational and encouraging. They position access as an ongoing journey that develops through communication and relationship, as something that can be worked through together. It is not an approach meant to punish an organization or institution that cannot provide a full set of access measures. Rather, it is an approach that values transparency in what forms of access *are* available, and shares a commitment to finding solutions to any lingering inaccessible elements. Here again we might recognize similarities with how sachse describes their understanding of access requirements—although they are nonnegotiable, the requirement for access is not a refusal but an invitation for improvement. Recall sachse's words from Chapter Two that when they cancel or postpone an event due to its inaccessibility, their refusal is "actually a lot kinder and generous than people take it as" (Personal interview). This refusal is chance to choose a different path, and a chance to rescript usual ways of doing things.

Labour and fees

As utopic as the invitation toward collective access offered by Hedva's rider might seem, it is crucial to also acknowledge the labour and emotional energy to which Hedva is committing in

making this offer. They note that their decision to "grade on improvement, rather than us[e] my rider punitively" has resulted in "the costs of the institution's 'improvements' hav[ing] been borne by me, for free" ("Why"). There are multiple clauses in the rider that directly invite the institution to share this labour, but in recent writing Hedva details the uneven responses they have received to this invitation, including venue staff complaining about the additional workload the rider asks of them. What the rider makes clear, both in its prose and in practice, is just how much labour and cost access requires. For Hedva, this is precisely the point. The rider surfaces the social, structural, and institutional ableism that makes access impossibly expensive, messy, and laborious. Acknowledging this impossibility, in turn, exposes what Hedva describes as the "magic trick of capitalism" that would insist that we are autonomous beings without needs or dependencies ("Why"). To get to this point, however, takes a vast amount of labour and cost. While Hedva notes that access supports should not be funded by them (nor taken out of their artist fee), they do not explicitly request payment for their labour in helping to organize access. It is typical that disabled artists take on the role of unofficial access consultant, particularly when working with non-disability arts organizations. Disabled artists are frequently forced to undertake this additional labour (sometimes almost to the scale of conducting full access audits) because their personal access needs are not addressed within a venue. While many might rationalize this labour as an important form of advocacy, and as a form of community contribution (since, ideally, this work would mean that organizations would become more accessible in the future), it can be onerous, labour-intensive, and emotionally taxing work that deserves adequate compensation.

Recognizing this, artists are requesting that this labour be better captured in their contracts. sachse, for example, after receiving an interview request from a Toronto arts

organization, recounts how they requested that their contract and remuneration be expanded to include two components. The first was their role as an interviewee, and the second was that they be brought on as an access consultant. In part sachse links this request to an awareness of the unsettling trend that, even when it is non-disabled or non-Deaf consultants who organize institutional access, "when things go awry or the ball gets dropped with access it's the disabled or Deaf artist that gets thrown under the bus" (Personal interview). To counter this, sachse requested more ownership over the access components related to their public appearance and stipulated that their labour be formally acknowledged, contractually noted, and compensated accordingly. Here, sachse is pre-emptively recognizing that they are going to shoulder the responsibility for many access components related to their artistic work. Rather than take on this labour pro bono, sachse insisted that a description of these tasks be included in their contract, and they petitioned for a higher fee in response. For sachse, this approach is primarily about a community investment. As they note, "it's not just the money to attach to the labor that I know I'll have to do. But the [job] title to acknowledge institutionally that I did that labour, you know, it was *community* that did that labour" (Personal interview; emphasis added). This not only means that sachse will be remunerated for their additional work, but formalizing the role extends them more authority when navigating access requests within the institution. Importantly, this also offers a template for restructuring their working relationships with institutions in the future. As sachse observes, "I'm excited to now have this contract as an artifact to be able to show to other institutions, [to say] 'oh, no, this is just how it goes'" (Personal interview).

Disability loading

Another contract modification related to fee and labour emerged in my conversation with performer Hanna Cormick (whose work I discuss in Chapter Four). As an artist with chronic

illness, Cormick experiences high amounts of fatigue and requires long periods to rest and recuperate between artistic projects. This means not only that Cormick must carefully manage her energy output, but that she needs to space out her projects differently than a non-disabled artist. This results in longer periods where Cormick is not earning an income. As she describes, "If you have a fatiguing disability and go and do something, yes there are the number of hours that you work, but you've also got a certain number of hours of recovery time, where you can't do anything for ages" (Personal interview). Recognizing this, Cormick recently negotiated the pay structure for one of her performances to recognize what she describes as "disability loading"—essentially monetizing her recovery time between projects. As she explains, "I said [to the presenter] 'this is my fee, this is the disability loading on top of that, because I'm going to be sick, I'm going to be exhausted, and it's going to take me months to recover'" (Personal interview).

Though in this case, Cormick negotiated an increased fee, she notes that including "disability loading" into a contract does not necessarily need to result in monetary compensation. At its core, Cormick understands this concept as being about building in what she describes as "care time" around the creation or presentation of a work, and about creating resources and space that allows for that care time to be honoured. This approach recognizes the effort required by disabled artists in creating work and seeks to support these artists by including compensation for this effort into contractual agreements or pay scales. For Cormick, in a system where artists are being paid, monetizing that recovery time seems apt. But we might also imagine a scenario in which disability loading is found in contractual amendments to rehearsal schedules, where additional rest and recovery time is built in to support disabled artists. (As mentioned earlier in this chapter, this was the approach taken by the production team of *King Arthur's Night* when

they scheduled shorter rehearsal days over a longer period of time). Ultimately, this concept holds the potential to reconfigure a variety of scheduling, workload, and payment structures so that the health and well-being of the artist is prioritized and supported. As I discuss in Chapter Four, this type of approach runs counter to a capitalist mode of production that relies on constant growth, acceleration, and output. Instead, it balances production and regeneration and accounts for both parts of this cycle of creation. Disability loading brings back an awareness of this kind of cyclical pacing by acknowledging and compensating an artist for their work time *and* their recovery time.

A crucial component of the concept of disability loading is that it challenges normate ideas concerning health, thus rejecting ableist assumptions and standards. As Hedva argues, the assumption of normative health is dangerous not only because it positions illness and disability as temporary deviations from this state (thus bolstering the impulse to cure or rehabilitate disabled bodyminds), but because it consequently positions the provision of care and support as also only temporary ("Sick"). When 'health' and 'ability' are presumed to be default modes of being, any vulnerability, dependency, or need for the provision of care merely constitutes a passing obligation, a status that renders it temporary and thus easily expendable. But as many have argued, dependency and the need for care are endemic to our existence and societal structures, our framing of morality, and vulnerability is not only an inherent component of our relation to life but also fundamental to forms of political resistance (Butler, "Rethinking"; Held; Kittay; Tronto). To position these states as temporary to our experience or as tangential to the infrastructures that support us is to misunderstand their centrality to our lives. While these concepts might be more easily discernible in relation to infrastructures that enact or directly engage with modes of bodily support or care work, it is equally possible to locate them in the

administrative structures of the art world. Disability loading is radical in part, therefore, because it integrates care into the working relationship between artist and institution, thus embedding an ethic of care as fundamental to the administrative infrastructures that organize that relationship.

CONTRACTUAL CARE AS CRIP CURATION

I want to conclude this chapter by highlighting one other contract change enacted through disability culture which exemplifies how an ethic of care can transform administrative infrastructures. This example is found at Tangled Art + Disability, an organization which, as part of their commitment to disability community, is working to integrate "care clauses" into their artist agreements.

Tangled Art + Disability in Toronto is Canada's first disability-led art gallery. Founded in 2003 as the Abilities Arts Festival, the organization has evolved into its current form as a fully accessible physical gallery space at 401 Richmond, an arts and culture hub in downtown Toronto. The organization supports "Disabled, d/Deaf, chronically ill, neurodiverse, k/crip, Mad, sick & spoonie artists" in the development, curation, and exhibition of their work and has also emerged as an important community hub and connector for disability arts (Tangled Art + Disability, "About Us"). Tangled primarily focuses on visual art but has made forays into intermedial and performance works. Tangled promotes disabled artists and disability art through touring school programs, curator/artist-in-residence programs, and partnerships with organizations like British Council and Harbourfront Centre which resulted in large scale events like the Cripping the Arts symposiums in 2016 and 2019. The organization also consults with and provides accessibility support to other arts organizations.

Crip Curation

One critical part of Tangled's work within disability arts is their ongoing development and articulation of crip curatorial practices. Crip curation enacts similar approaches to relaxed performance and access aesthetics in that all three approaches involve deep attention to making art accessible to creator and spectator, centering diverse bodyminds in positive ways, and exploring the creative potential of disability and impairment. The difference in terms signals their emergence from different artistic forms; whereas relaxed performance and access aesthetics tend to refer to live performance forms, crip curation is usually ascribed to a visual art context and in reference to museums and art galleries.

Tangled's commitment to crip curation is evident in many of the gallery's working practices. The gallery space is physically accessible, and events like exhibition openings are also made accessible because they are free of charge, they have personal support workers present, they include flexible seating arrangements, they offer access measures like ASL interpretation and CART, and they are stipulated as being scent-free.[112] Events are also livestreamed for people who are unable to attend in person, and always operate on crip time (a flexible temporality attuned to the needs of disability and which I discuss in more detail in Chapter Four). Gallery staff and volunteers are trained in how to provide visual descriptions of the artworks, so that they can guide blind or partially sighted patrons through the exhibits.[113] Tangled's crip curation also extends to the installation of the exhibits themselves. For example, artworks are often hung lower than the "57 inches on the centre" that is standard in museum practice, a choice that recognizes

[112] As a volunteer with Tangled for many years I also found it significant that they offered volunteers subway tokens to offset the cost of their travel to the gallery. Removing such potential financial barriers is another important form of access that Tangled pursues.

[113] Tangled's access provisions are also importantly adaptive. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, the gallery began offering remote tours of the gallery for patrons who could not attend exhibits in person. As part of the exhibition #CripRitual (curated by Aimi Hamraie, Cassandra Hartblay, and Jarah Moesch), they also mailed virtual attendees a physical care package as a tactile mode of engagement with the exhibit. For more on the experience and meaning of these remote tours, see MacPhee-Pitcher.

that "eye level" is not the same for spectators in wheelchairs or those who are shorter in stature. In addition, it is rare to find an artwork exhibited in the gallery that you are not allowed to touch—many of the pieces shown at Tangled include a tactile component as a way of offering a multisensorial experience of the work. Most of the text associated with a show (such as the exhibition's didactic statement) is translated into sign language and video-recorded so that patrons whose first language is ASL can easily access the information. All of these practices evoke the ethos of crip curation, which, as articulated by Tangled's Director of Programming Sean Lee, is an approach that is "trying to not replicate the harms of outsider art where the curator comes in and dictates everything about a show; we really want crip curation to be about centering the artists and centering care" (Personal interview). Lee also describes how crip curation is devoted to accessibility—not as an impulse for the mere inclusion of Deaf, Mad, and disabled people, but "understanding [access] to be one of the conditions we need to create disability culture" (Personal interview). As with access aesthetics, access is considered from the very beginning "as one of the kind of ways to think through the framework of the show, and to think through what is being offered as part of th[e] exhibition" (Lee, Personal interview).

Crip curation resists any formulaic conception and emerges differently in relation to each artist and within each exhibition. It certainly does not preclude the basic foundational components of accessibility, but seeks to be individually responsive in considering how to support the artist, the work, and the spectators. For example, Lee describes how the audio description for *Body Farm*, a 2019 exhibit by artist Valentin Brown that engaged with themes of intergenerational trauma and queering the human body, emerged from conversation about how a large number of two-dimensional works could be translated into description. Brown elected to write short "Captain's Logs" to accompany each piece, which were poetic descriptions meant to

"deepe[n] the mythology of the Body Farm, expressing the complexity of Mad dreamworlds" (Brown). These logs are not literal or didactic descriptions but rather evoke emotions and states of being—they imply that "memories need not be complete or understood in a purely literal way to be useful" (Brown). These texts were audio recorded by Brown and strung together into an audio sound station that accompanied the exhibit. Patrons could listen to the artist describe the works in a way that reflected the artistic and personal ethos of the exhibit, and these poetic descriptions were presented in tandem with the knowledge that Tangled staff were available to offer more traditional or literal descriptions of the art if patrons wanted more information about a specific piece. As this example illustrates, crip curation starts from the framework of the working relationship between artist and gallery, informs the work itself, is central to the installation and presentation of the work, and effects the type of access elements included. Here, the offering of audio description as an access measure is stretched creatively in response to the work, but still seeks to retain its functionality and connection to the differing ways that patrons might engage with the work.

Care Clauses

Because of the close working relationship that Tangled enacts with its exhibiting artists, it is possible to discern how the organization's administrative practices also enact the ethos of crip curation. One example is the inclusion of a care clause in their artist agreements, a practice that emerged from an exhibition curated by Gloria C. Swain. In early 2020, Swain curated the exhibition *HIDDEN*, which featured the work of Black artists with invisible disabilities and engaged with themes of intergenerational trauma, ancestry, isolation, and the lived experiences of Black artists.[114] In the lead up to this exhibition, one of the contracted artists was unable to

[114] *HIDDEN* featured artists Tamyka Bullen, Peter Owusu-Ansah, Kyisha Williams, and Gloria C. Swain.

complete their artwork. Rather than demand a finished work or cut the artist from the show, Swain chose to devote a section of the gallery space in recognition of the artist and other members of the disability community who were absent from the space. Titled “Holding Space,” the piece features an empty white plastic stool in front of a text-covered wall. The text, written by Swain, begins by acknowledging that “This is a space for the artist who couldn’t be here today.” It goes on to explain the many barriers that absent disabled people, including invisible disabilities, the inaccessibility of public spaces, and the forces of systemic injustice. “What does it mean,” Swain asks, “to hold space for someone with hidden disabilities?” The text ends by offering an answer, noting that “Holding space is about allowing someone to take all the time they need to heal. It’s about assuring them they are loved, valued and irreplaceable.”

It is hard to overemphasize the significance of a work like “Holding Space” for a community who have and continue to be absented in both insidious and overtly violent ways. In their review of *HIDDEN*, Wit López describes how

> I began to read the prose by Gloria C. Swain, which cascaded down the wall. I was overcome with such deep, tender emotions that had never before been evoked for me in an exhibition space. The text explained that the empty seat served a dual purpose: to welcome the spirits of disabled artists who have passed on due to injustices, and to remind us to make space for living disabled artists who could not be present due to their disabilities. For me, a Black disabled queer artist, Gloria C. Swain’s “HIDDEN” was one of the first times I truly felt my whole self being welcomed and considered in someone else’s exhibition. I did not have to choose to celebrate my Blackness, my disabilities or my queerness; I could bring all of those portions of my identity and know that—for once—I was not the only one holding space for people like me.

Swain's acknowledgement of those who are not physically present is artistically and emotionally powerful, as López's words can attest. To acknowledge the absence that stems from the forces of ableism, saneism, racism, colonialism, or other oppressive power structures is a powerful moment of recognition and reclamation. Equally significant is how this work has since enacted a change in the administrative structures of Tangled. Already an organization that is deeply devoted to the promotion and well-being of Deaf, disabled, Mad, sick, and crip artists, Lee notes how Swain's exhibition pushed the organization to scrutinize even more closely their working relationships with artists. The artist who could not present a work in *HIDDEN* was still paid their artist fee, a powerful move that signals the prioritization of their well-being above and beyond their capacity to produce work. Counter to the extractive and production-focused ethos of capitalism, the choice to compensate an artist regardless of their material output is a human-centred approach that echoes the idea that accessibility is about relationships and community, not events and artworks. For Tangled, access is not (just) about making sure that artists can be in the space to produce work. Rather, access is about cultivating safety, support, and care for artists in whatever way they need.

This has impacted the organization's working practices in a few ways. The first, as mentioned, is that the gallery is now including a "care clause" in their contracts, which tries to capture the essence of what Swain outlined in her curatorial statement: that Tangled is a space where artists are welcome to bring their full selves, and where their physical, emotional, and mental well-being is more important than any artistic deliverable (Lee, Personal interview). Lee notes that this is an ongoing process for the gallery and acknowledges that it is pushing the staff to review and evaluate many of their other working practices. For example, when Tangled's exhibition *Undeliverable*, curated by Carmen Papalia, opened on September 17, 2021, none of

the exhibition statements were ready to display next to the artworks.[115] Lee notes how the gallery sought to adopt a more flexible approach in response to this: in lieu of the statements the word "undeliverable" was posted on the wall, with an understanding that the longer texts would be added as they were completed. In line with this, artists were also able to continue to add to their work after the opening of the exhibit, installing new pieces as they were completed and thus allowing the exhibition to be a living, breathing entity that evolved in response to the artists. Resonantly, Tangled's attempts at enacting this flexible approach to deadlines fit with the theme of the exhibition, since *Undeliverable* was about questioning the demands of curatorial practices and "re-envisioning the museum around the demands and desires of the disabled body/mind" (Tangled Art + Disability, "Undeliverable").[116]

Adaptability and responsivity to disabled peoples' needs enacts the care clause ethos by accounting for an artist who may require extra time or flexibility to complete their work. The practice exemplifies what Max Liboiron (Red River Métis/Michif) describes as "administrative mutual aid" (qtd. in Critical Design Lab, "Solidarity"). Liboiron discussed this term in the context of universities mobilizing financial support during the COVID-19 pandemic, but notes that this approach—and the kind of "administrative activism" that it evokes—can happen at all levels of scale. This approach embeds care within administrative decisions and within the scope of administrative responsibility. The care clause, however, also challenges many of Tangled's existing administrative infrastructures. For instance, it holds the potential to add stress to staff who may be thrown out of their usual workflows and timelines, complicates the creation and

[115] *Undeliverable* featured artists Vanessa Dion Fletcher, Chandra Melting Tallow, Jessica Karuhanga, jes sachse, Aislinn Thomas, and Carmen Papalia with Heather Kai-Smith. sachse contributed the title of the exhibition (Lee, Personal interview).

[116] We can find a similar questioning of deliverables, outputs, assessments, and unceasing productivity in the "slow scholarship" movement in academia, which, as Catherine E. Karkov describes "offers a means of resisting and fighting back, a means of saying no to the constant demands for more, for better, for newer and more elaborate ways of counting, or assessing or establishing accountability" (5-6). See also Berg and Seeber; Mountz et al.

dissemination of marketing materials, and increases the workload in developing access measures like the audio descriptions that accompany each piece. Noting these logistical and administrative challenges is necessary given how the artistic implications of the word "curation" (and the imprecise deployments of the word) risk obscuring the infrastructural and immaterial labour that accompanies this work (McTavish; Reckitt). However, the potential disruption is part of the process of questioning administrative infrastructures and helps to illuminate the ways they resist alterations that may be in the best interest of the artists. In other words, the challenges wrought by these new ways of working demonstrate that current administrative infrastructures are not flexible enough to accommodate more supportive ways of working. In the case of Tangled, the staff's willingness to work through these obstacles also demonstrates the gallery's commitment to the artist above and beyond the artistic production. It also prompts the question of how administrative, programming, and artistic staff might likewise be better supported in their work. For instance, in my conversation with Halifax-based access consultants April Hubbard and Sara Graham they raised the issue of the emotional labour and toll of providing access recommendations to institutions. Hubbard describes the challenge of offering access recommendations to organizations which—even when they are acknowledged as being important—are then refused because of a lack of budget, overwhelm, or a fear of making mistakes. For Hubbard, this refusal can be emotionally taxing when so much time, labour, and personal effort has been put into identifying gaps in access and developing recommendations for improvement (Personal interview). Graham similarly observes that, despite the usual practice of theatres holding a debrief session for performers at the end of a production, there is often no follow up, check in, or decompression time offered at the end of a consulting process. Hubbard's and Graham's remarks point to the necessity of acknowledging how working practices and

administrative infrastructures must also be interrogated for their impact on those working in parallel to artists.[117] Kristina McMullin further notes that during her time working at Tangled, the gallery made strides towards implementing more sustainable working practices for staff after a moment of transition in the organization in 2018. As she describes, “feeling an immense amount of pressure to produce for [the disability] community required us to build . . . more generative and sustainable systems. And [that included] a lot more interdependence, and a lot more interaction from the artist, especially for me” (Personal interview). For McMullin in her role as Communications Manager, working in a more sustainable way meant having direct contact with the exhibiting artists in order to develop marketing materials and communication approaches that aligned with their artistic work. We can read this approach as a component of crip curation, where even the administrative aspects of the art emerge from disability community. It is an approach that also supports the needs of the staff by helping them work in more sustainable ways, particularly in relation to their workload and capacity.

Swain’s curatorial decisions in *HIDDEN* had a profound impact on the administrative infrastructures of Tangled, shifting how the organization understands its relationship to artists. Although the origins and practices of crip curation are distinct from those of access aesthetics and relaxed performances, given that each practice focuses on a different part of the artistic process, we can observe how they each contribute to a restructuring and reimagining of the kinds of administrative and organizational practices of art and performance. This restructuring emerges in the way that relaxed performance protocols increase the accessibility of the theatre experience and reimagine who is invited into and able to participate in the experience of live performance; in the way that an aesthetics of access creatively deploys access protocols within the fabric of

[117] Hubbard’s and Graham’s comments also resonate with the concepts of care time and spacious time that I discuss in Chapter Four in relation to Hanna Cormick’s work.

performance itself; and in the way that artist agreements can be reimagined from an ethos of care. Together, these approaches invert the usual administrative infrastructures that organize how we experience art and performance—revealing but also remedying the exclusionary aspects of these practices in relation to disabled bodyminds.

CHAPTER FOUR

CRIP TIME AS INFRASTRUCTURE IN PERFORMANCE

In the three readings of the turtle walk that opened this dissertation, Benjamin, Kuppers, and Jackson each commented on how the unusually slow pace of the flâneur and the turtle shifted the duo's relationship to the city. In this final chapter, after traversing across sidewalks, ambling up ramps, and meandering through a series of art and performance venues, this dissertation concludes by reflecting on one of the turtle walk's most salient and impactful aspects—time. Critical infrastructure theorists have considered the temporality of infrastructure in terms of its tendency to ruin, its ability to evoke the future, and the way it impacts lived experience of time (Anand et al.; Besedovsky et al.; Hetherington, "Waiting"). Here I take a different approach by focusing less on the temporal dimensions of infrastructure and instead consider how time itself is a form of infrastructure. I do so by discussing three works by Finnish-Australian performance artist Hanna Cormick, a disabled performer with a background in dance, circus, and physical theatre. Using Cormick's performances and her creative process as an entry point, I consider the ways that time is organized, imagined, and implemented within and around the artistic process so that it becomes an infrastructural aspect of the artistic work—one that is embedded in the performance and which also speaks to broader infrastructural politics related to time. My intent is to show that thinking of time as an infrastructure provides insight into how our temporal choices and modes of organizing time enact palpable social, material, and political consequences in the world.

In my conversation with Cormick a consistent theme was how drastically her understanding of time changed after she became ill in 2015. She noted how she had previously worked at an intense pace that was indicative of the "scarcity mindset" held by many artists—

wherein they feel the need to be producing work at breakneck speed because, as Cormick articulated, there is a sense that "if you miss out for a second or if you stop creating for a second you'll become irrelevant and disappear" (Personal interview). Once Cormick's bodymind shifted, however, and she was diagnosed with a series of chronic and fatiguing illnesses, her relationship to and understanding of the concepts of time, speed, and productivity altered drastically. As she notes,

> [A] . . .myth . . . has been placed upon artists for centuries that we are lazy, untrustworthy, and selfish. The culture that has developed as a response . . . is like a constant performance of proving ourselves to not be that. So we are hard-working, super productive, we'll burn ourselves up in the service of the arts, absolutely extractivist levels of behaviour, one-way kind of systems with our body. It was when I became disabled I noticed those patterns which for me were very, very strongly embedded in my practice. I was . . . into serious work ethic and working as hard as you could and all those ideas of independence, and strength, and productivity, and speed, and diligence. And I realized that they were hyper-ableist [and] . . . complicit with the extractivist and capitalist agenda. (Personal interview)

Since this time, Cormick has come to recognize how destructive the culture of strict deadlines, time-scarcity, and over-work can be, particular for disabled bodyminds. Consequently, she makes a distinction between the time-scarcity mindset that she locates in "capitalist time"—a time "which is rigid and constantly accelerating"—and a more "spacious time" which allows for "time around things" as a way "to not feel that restlessness of speed and stress" (Personal interview). The former aims to produce artistic work in the shortest amount of time possible and leads to the pervasive sense of never having enough time. It characterizes a perspective on the

temporality of contemporary life that Sarah Sharma describes as "speed theory"—a critical inquiry into the impact that technologies and fast-moving capital have on politics and the pace of life (5). The latter—"spacious time"—is how Cormick now chooses to organize her artistic practice. This approach connects to a more radical sense of time that includes soft deadlines, shorter workdays, and longer-than-usual creation periods. While this approach might seem to align with the various "slow living movements" that have emerged in recent decades (found in relation to food, fashion, scholarship, and general living), I argue that it invokes a more complex, heterogeneous, and revolutionary temporal infrastructure that better aligns with disability culture's concept and practice of crip time.[118]

Inspired by Cormick's approach, this chapter parses through three of Cormick's performances in order to investigate their temporal infrastructures and to consider the kinds of ethico-political imaginings that they call forth. Performance is an apt site for this temporal exploration, given its ontological status as a durational or time-based medium, an element that is "often considered one (if not the most important) of performance's strengths" (Manninen 8). I first consider how Cormick's performance *The Mermaid* integrates crip time into its temporal infrastructure, thereby encouraging new temporal imaginings. I then turn to her work *Canary* and discuss how it presents a simultaneity of time across past, present, and future, while also challenging us to think at the scale of ecological time. I conclude by reflecting on how Cormick's performance installation *Little Monsters* brokers a conversation between disability and environmental movements through its focus on crip futurity. Together, this chapter moves backwards and forwards across time, and traverses from the scale of the individual to the planet.

[118] For examples of slow living across these domains see Andrews; Berg and Seeber; Honore; Jung and Jin; Mountz et al.; Parkins and Craig.

In so doing, the following analyses illuminate particular themes within Cormick's work and demonstrate different ways of organizing and living time.

TEMPORAL INFRASTRUCTURES IN *THE MERMAID*

Crip Time

"Time," Barbara Adam succinctly asserts, "is everywhere and it permeates everything" (xv). Although we cannot touch it or access it sensorially, time is still felt and sensed because it is "our prime organising tool" and "forms an integral part of daily life and work experience . . . [it] is part of our implicit knowledge base" (Adam xv). But time's integral and implicit nature does not mean that it is equitably or universally experienced. Different ways of organizing time engender highly divergent experiences and uneven material consequences. Because of the significance of time to both performance and disability culture, disability performance offers a generative entry point for investigating various modes of time and temporality.

Disability community and disability studies frequently invoke the concept of crip time, which is a multivalent, nonlinear, and flexible rendering of time that prioritizes disabled bodyminds. Alison Kafer describes how "Rather than bend disabled bodies and minds to meet the clock, crip time bends the clock to meet disabled bodies and minds" (27). In common parlance crip time is often assumed to mean 'more time' or 'slower'—"a wry reference to the disability related events that always seem to start late or to the disabled people who never seem to arrive anywhere on time" (Kafer 26). Indeed, Petra Kuppers traces the first printed reference of crip time to Anne McDonald, a nonspeaking disabled woman, who writes:

> my time is different than yours in a more important way. Imagine a world twenty times slower than this—a world where cars travelled at three miles an hour, lifesavers took an hour to chew, a glass of water half an hour to drink . . . I live life in slow motion . . . A

> slow world would be my heaven. I am forced to live in your world, a fast hard one . . . I need to speed up, or you need to slow down. (qtd. in Kuppers, *Eco Soma* 161)

McDonald's words describe the incompatibility of her slow crip time against the fast pace of the world. They speak to a temporal politics that counters the hyper-efficiency and extreme speed of normative time—evoking how quotidian engagements with objects like cars, lifesavers, and water transform into "moments out of time, out of productive, forward-leaning, exciting time, [and] can become moments of disability culture politics" (Kuppers, "Crip Time" 29). I argue, however, that crip time's temporal reorientation does not necessarily mean that it is slow (when extrapolated broadly, we find that crip time is unconcerned with any particular pacing or speed), but that it does engender a nonlinearity and a flexibility that counters the exactitude of clock time (Marathe 424). As Kafer articulates, it is "flex time not just expanded but exploded" (27).

Crip time enacts a wide range of temporalities which allow disability communities to reconfigure how time is organized, approached, experienced, and felt. It is inherently adaptable, flexible, and responsive—"a reorientation to time" that "requires reimagining 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). In practice it often enacts, somewhat paradoxically, an equally malleable and strict relation to time. For example, disability events often begin later than their advertised time because disability culture recognizes that people often need additional time to arrive and settle into spaces due to delays related to public/accessible transit, support workers schedules, and unpredictable bodyminds. However, this flexibility is less likely to be replicated on the back end, and events are often committed to ending precisely at the advertised time, knowing that attendees may have scheduled rides, arranged childcare and/or

support workers, and timed medications around the event window. Leah Lewis exhibits such a strictness in her solo theatre show *The Dialysis Project*, which she performs while simultaneously administering her own dialysis treatment for kidney disease. By discussing how her life is organized around her treatment schedule, Lewis shows how her version of crip time is not flexible but is in fact controlled and directed by the timing of her treatments.

Works like *The Dialysis Project* also underline the close—if not always amicable—relationship between crip time and medical time. Although crip time should not be confused with the ways that the medical field situates disability in relation to time, medical temporalities remain central to many experiences of disability. Recognizing this, Kafer begins her chapter on crip time by recounting the many time-based descriptors used in the medical field in relation to disability, including examples like "chronic" fatigue, "intermittent" symptoms, relapse, and remission (25). S. Lochlann Jain also notes the important temporal dimensions that come into play before, during, and after experiences of prognosis, diagnosis, and medical treatments. As Jain describes, these experiences can, in particular ways, "seve[r] the idea of a time line and all the usual ways one orients oneself in time" (80). In a similar vein, Megh Marathe offers the example of how epilepsy diagnoses emerge in relation to time. Marathe argues that electroencephalography (EEG)—a medical process that measures patients' brainwaves in relation to clock time in order to delineate between normal and abnormal function—is a "temporal regime" learned by physicians which risks distancing doctors from their patients and the patient's lived experience (422).

<u>Capitalist Time</u>

Because of its allegiance to disability culture and nonlinear temporalities, I, like Cormick, locate crip time in direct opposition to capitalist time. Capitalist time is a mode of temporal

organization that is allied to linearity, economic rationality, and a desire to optimize labour production. Nigel Thrift charts the slow emergence of "capitalist time consciousness" in England from the 1300s to the 1880s, a period during which days, weeks and years began to be measured (rather than felt through the rhythm of the seasons), temporal reference points were synchronized across locales, and task-oriented labour gave way to weekly wage (time-oriented) labour in a way that bifurcated work and leisure. This shift in temporal organization, which devoted itself to the production of capital, materialized through the manipulation and control of labouring bodies. Labour began to be measured against clocks, timetables, and timesheets, and this fundamentally altered workers' relationship to and understanding of time (E.P. Thompson; Thrift). Thrift describes how this new time consciousness was inculcated into human awareness and behaviour through various means, including disciplinary tactics, wage incentives, and a pedagogy of "time discipline" in educational and leisure spheres (115-177). By the late nineteenth century, these coercive measures of time discipline were "replaced by a more pervasive and more effective hegemony relying on a culture based on economy" through which the subject was encouraged towards a mode of constant self-improvement (Thrift 118). This is similar to what Michel Foucault describes as a tactic of "exhaustive use"—a mode of temporal control that

> poses the principle of a theoretically ever-growing use of time: exhaustion rather than use; it is a question of extracting, from time, ever more available moments and, from each moment, ever more useful forces. This means that one must seek to intensify the use of the slightest moment, as if time, in its very fragmentation, were inexhaustible, or as if, at least by an ever more detailed internal arrangement, one could tend toward an ideal point at which one maintained maximum speed and maximum efficiency. (154)

Writing more recently, Jonathan Crary observes how this drive towards productivity has resulted in a "24/7" temporality encroaching on personal and social identity. As I noted when citing Crary's work in Chapter One in relation to Rhiannon Armstrong's work, 24/7 time is at odds with so-called unproductive time, and particularly incompatible with the "profound uselessness and intrinsic passivity" of sleep (Crary 10). Crary argues that sleep "will always collide with the demands of a 24/7 universe" because it is an activity that suspends the production and consumption of goods (10). Akin to the "extractivist" tendency that Cormick articulates in her description of capitalist time, Crary notes how 24/7 time "renders plausible, even normal, the idea of working without pause, without limits" (9-10). In a related example of capitalist time, Sarah Sharma details how jet-lagged business travellers, people who are "firmly entrenched in the time demands of global capital," are supported in their disavowal of sleep through an "elaborate temporal infrastructure" made up of technological gadgets, tactics, pharmaceuticals, and human labour (39, 43). This infrastructure, which is most evident at the airport, aims to "transform the body's capacity to produce as well as alter the subject's experience of time to match the rhythm of a capitalist work ethic" (44). Crary and Sharma show how, through a variety of means, time is organized around the unceasing production and circulation of capital.

The bodily implications of the temporal organization described by Thrift, Crary, and Sharma recall Elizabeth Freeman's concept of "chrononormativity." Freeman describes chrononormativity as a process whereby "time binds" humans in such a way that "naked flesh is bound into socially meaningful embodiment through temporal regulation" (3). Wider matrices of temporal organization (from schedules and time zones to domestic labour and body maintenance) are assimilated into individual embodiments and become naturalized to the point of being

invisible, whereby “institutional forces come to seem like somatic facts” (Freeman 3). Temporality and the somatic also converge via performance, which has used the body as a means of temporal exploration and experimentation. From avant-garde performances that played with repetition and rhythm (such as Beckett’s textual repetition in *Waiting for Godot* or in the minimalist music of composers like John Cage and Steve Reich), to durational performances that stretch the boundaries of the performance event (as in the work of Marina Abramović, Robert Wilson, and Tehching Hsieh), the liveness of the performing body (and its inevitable disappearance) inevitably foregrounds issues of time. As Peggy Phelan famously argued, it is the temporal, durational, and thus ephemeral nature of performance that prevents it from being (re)circulated through mass production, and which is thus its greatest resistance to capitalism’s desire for reproduction (148-149).

If, following Phelan, performance grinds the gears of capitalism through its irreproducibility, so too does crip time resist capitalism’s push for constant production. Because crip time shows a different way of living in relation to time, it emerges in opposition to chrononormativity and as an antidote to capitalist time. In much the same way that performance makes linkages between time and the body, so too is crip time a temporality attuned to the corporeal because of how it prioritizes the disabled bodymind over any arbitrary connection to an external organization of time. As Ellen Samuels describes, crip time “requires us to break in our bodies and minds to new rhythms, new patterns of thinking and feeling and moving through the world. It forces us to take breaks, even when we don’t want to, even when we want to keep going, to move ahead. It insists that we listen to our bodyminds so closely, so attentively, in a culture that tells us to divide the two and push the body away from us while also pushing it beyond its limits. Crip time means listening to the broken languages of our bodies, translating

them, honoring their words" ("Six Ways"). Samuels's words imply how the corporal focus of crip time is distinct because it organizes itself around care, reasonable capacity limits, and sustainable pacing instead of relentless (economic) productivity.[119]

While this embodied connection is often framed positively (in the sense of being attuned to personal capacity and need), it is not always experienced as such. Samuels also recounts the "less appealing aspects of crip time" that she has negotiated through her own transition into disability. For Samuels, "crip time is broken time"—a fragmented and unpredictable time that is misaligned with society's usual ordering of time. She describes how her disability causes her to look younger and feel older than her actual chronological age, and gestures to the feeling of dissonance that emerges when one's personal rhythms differ from the temporal rhythms of the external world. She says, "I want to be aligned, synchronous, part of the regular order of the world. Like the leaves just now turning as the year spins toward its end, I want sometimes to be part of nature, to live within its time. But I don't. My life has turned another way. I live in crip time, now" ("Six Ways"). This temporal dissonance is identified in a different context by Sarah E. Stevens who describes how her duties as care partner to her disabled spouse situate her in "care time." Stevens expresses care time as a "liminal place that shifts location between crip time and abled time in a complex, unpredictable dance." Attending to medication schedules, medical appointments, and domestic work, Stevens moves in and out of crip time, living in a changeable relation to time and unable to settle into one temporality for very long.

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[119] Articulating the limits of one's energy and capacity is often done via "spoon theory." Originating in a blog post by Christine Miserandino, spoon theory is the idea that humans only have a certain number of "spoons" (amounts of physical or mental energy) each day, and that daily tasks each cost a certain number of spoons. When a person has reached their capacity they are "out of spoons" and need to rest or recharge. Disabled or ill people are often accustomed to evaluating and budgeting the number of spoons that any one activity will require.

Against the backdrop of these many temporal framings, I will now discuss how crip time structures Hanna Cormick's performance *The Mermaid*. My analysis positions crip time as deeply attuned to the particularities of embodiment, and innately flexible and responsive to embodied experiences. Cormick so incorporates flexibility and responsiveness into *The Mermaid* that crip time becomes the temporal infrastructure of the work. The performance's distinctive, particular, and specific temporal infrastructure—which is deeply tied to Cormick's bodymind—brushes normative temporalities against the grain and prompts audiences to reimagine ways of existing in the world through time.

The Mermaid

Cormick's disability requires that her environment be highly regulated since her illnesses can be triggered by any number of airborne pollutants or toxins, including those that are seemingly benign. As she describes: "if someone walks past me with a coffee, I'll have a seizure because of the way the dairy particles pollute the air; I can't open the window of the single room I live in because if a neighbor has hung their laundry out, the petrochemicals in the fragrance of their laundry powder will trigger my mutated white blood cells to mount an allergic response, causing respiratory distress" (Cormick, "I Am the Damage"). Because of this, when she became ill Cormick was unable to create work or perform as she once had and assumed that her disability marked the end of her career. At the time, Cormick was not particularly aware of the disability arts community and she recalls thinking: "I can't make art now. That's just off the table completely. Because I didn't know how to make art without a hyper-able body" (Personal interview).

And yet Cormick felt pulled to create a work that expressed the values and experiences that she had confronted since becoming disabled, and she began to develop *The Mermaid*.

Cormick had initially hidden her disability from friends and colleagues, and creating this performance became a radical act of visibility "against the shame borne of internalized ableism and the cultural invisibility that facilitates us hurting each other and our planet" (Cormick, "I Am the Damage"). During this time Cormick also learned about how well-developed the disability arts scene was in various parts of the world, including in her home country of Australia. Now an important figure in that community, she notes that the disability arts scene in Australia "is really growing and really building, and it really does feel like there is this disability arts renaissance happening. It feels amazing to be part of something like that, and to just see all these people around you" (Personal interview).

The Mermaid debuted in 2018 at Art, Not Apart, a performance festival in Canberra. In the performance, Cormick dresses like a mermaid in a vibrant blue and purple scale-covered mermaid tail, matching bra, and a crown of spiky white seashells on her head. The costume is mythical, fantastical, and evokes a sense of fairy tales and lore. Its fantastical elements are contrasted with Cormick's lived material realities, however, as she also dons aspects of her personal medical equipment, including an IV drip, oxygen tank, full-face respirator, wheelchair, and body orthoses. During the performance, Cormick crawls across the floor or is pushed in her wheelchair—unable to walk in the mermaid monofin, her immobility replicates the mermaid's inability to move on land, but also the ways in which the environment can be inhospitable and inaccessible for Cormick's bodymind. The work also features co-performers wearing board shorts, aviator sunglasses, and floral shirts.[120]

The most striking aspect of the performance is the way it is structured by Cormick's corporeal vulnerability. Because her illnesses make her bodymind highly reactive to many

[120] In the 2020 version performed at the Sydney festival this included Lloyd Allison-Young, who also composed and performed live musical accompaniment, and actor Christopher Samuel Carroll.

different allergies and substances, when Cormick performs in front of a live audience she puts herself at extreme risk. Any number of pollutants, toxins, or odours in the venue could trigger an allergic response. Thus, in addition to its extraordinary contrast to fantastical costumes, the medical equipment also performs in the ordinary ways that Cormick requires when she leaves the safety of her controlled home environment.[121] *The Mermaid* incorporates the risk into the fabric of its performance, with the performance structured around the very real possibility that Cormick will react to a substance or pollutant in the space, and that spectators will witness her having a seizure or managing an allergic reaction during the course of the show. In fact, the performance *expects* that Cormick will experience a seizure or an allergic reaction while onstage: on Cormick's website the performance's duration is listed as "15-20 minutes, dependent on medical events." The temporality of the show, therefore, is unpredictable and held within a state of anticipation; when medical events are part of the performance, they happen irregularly and without warning.[122]

John Di Stefano and Dorita Hannah configure such moments of interruption in performance as "a suspended moment, or an 'intermission'—defined not only as a pause between acts but also as a traumatic interval that involves a momentary spatio-temporal cessation" (54). For Di Stefano and Hannah, these suspended moments—moments when something interrupts the expected progression of a performance event—evoke the Lacanian "irruption of the Real" whereby "the unexpected act . . . momentarily ruptures the field of symbolically constructed representations with something that exceeds it" (54). While Cormick's

[121] As Steve Dow describes, "Anyone entering Cormick's room has to go through a decontamination process, because many products derived from fossil fuels pose her serious danger. She lives in the house with her actor partner, and her safe room contains a positive-pressure air system, multiple air filtration devices and, by necessity, little furniture."
[122] At times the show has proceeded without incident, while in other contexts Cormick has had multiple reactions in one showing.

seizures and allergic reactions intervene in the smooth progression of the performance, however, these medical events are framed as constitutive structural elements rather than interruptions. There is time and space for them to happen as part of the show (rather than a pause from it) because they have been built into the dramaturgy of the performance, aided in part by the actions of Cormick's co-performers. As Cormick notes:

> For example, a mast cell seizure, which left my body thrashing about on the floor in a state of complete vulnerability and lack of agency, would result in very loud surf rock music playing as assistants held up cue cards and reiterated through a megaphone that I was having an allergic reaction, what it was potentially triggered by, and the audience's complicity in that event. (Cormick, "I Am the Damage")

There is a planned sequence of visual and sonic events that is triggered by the start of a medical event: loud music is played and Cormick's co-performers describe what is happening both verbally and through a series of large cue cards.[123] The shifting temporality of the performance is perhaps shocking to the audience but anticipated by the performers with a specific end goal. By drawing attention to the event through the use of a megaphone, cue cards, and music, *The Mermaid* seeks to implicate the audience directly in how they might have contributed to the event. Spectators are forced to confront the uncomfortable realization that their actions—be it wearing perfume, eating spicy food, or washing their clothes in scented detergent—may have been the catalyst for Cormick's reaction. In fact, this is made clear to them before the show even begins through segregated seating. As Cormick recalls, at the Sydney

[123] To my knowledge, no audience member has ever intervened or attempted to help Cormick during one of these medical events. I suspect that having co-performers present onstage provides the audience with a sense of security that they will intervene if necessary and thus impacts spectators' immediate sense of responsibility towards Cormick. This contrasts with, for example, a work like Marina Abramović's *Lips of Thomas*. Famously, in the 1975 performance of this work, which found the artist mutilating her body in various ways, the audience eventually intervened and removed Abramović from the playing space, abruptly ending the performance.

festival performances, “if they [the audience] were wearing fragrance, make up or hair product, they were ushered to a separate upstairs gallery and viewed the piece from above” (Personal correspondence). Even before the performance begins, therefore, spectators are asked to recognize how their presence in the space might impact Cormick.

There is much to say about the ethical implications of this work, and I have written elsewhere about *The Mermaid*’s themes of ethical spectatorship, audience responsibility, as well as its environmental and atmospheric connections (Johnson, “Performances”). Central to my argument here, however, is how Cormick’s foregrounding of her bodymind’s temporal and spatial requirements is imbricated in the dramaturgy. Her choices form an infrastructural component wherein the duration and pacing of the performance are organized around a particular orientation to time. My focus is on how *The Mermaid* rests on a structure of crip time via its unpredictable temporality, its responsiveness, and the subsequent temporal imaginings it evokes. I view these temporal choices as integral infrastructural elements of the performance, which contribute both to the unique dramaturgy of the work and to the envisioning of more sustainable worlds.

Crip Time as an Infrastructure in Performance

What does it mean to think of crip time as an infrastructure? If we think of time as an infrastructure that scaffolds performance, then the nature of that infrastructure becomes an important part of the work’s dramaturgy (or composition). In other words, in making time an infrastructure (or in excavating the temporal infrastructure of a performance), I intend something different from just the fact that live performance happens *in time* or for a particular *duration of time*. Performance theorists—as well as those in related fields of theatre studies, visual arts, and queer theory—have engaged questions of time and temporality to stage productive debates

related to concepts of liveness, presence, and ephemerality (Auslander; Diamond 142-179; Phelan), repetition and re-enactment (Butler, *Gender;* Schneider), embodiment and materiality (Wagner; H. Young), duration and endurance (Baraitser; Loveless; Shalson, "On Duration" and *Performing*), the archive and documentation (D. Taylor), and historiography (Bay-Cheng; T. Davis; Freeman), as well as noting how the shifting time of performance has blurred disciplinary boundaries (Jackson and Bryan-Wilson; Ross; Wilson). Though I do touch on some of this work, my interest is not in re-staging these debates. I would also distinguish my approach from the work of critical infrastructure theorists who think about the temporal dimensions of infrastructure in the context of ruin, repair, or future building (for that, see my discussion of jes sachse's work in Chapter Two). Rather, I mean to articulate something about the *quality* of the temporal infrastructure itself and how it makes space for disabled bodyminds and disability culture. I argue that *The Mermaid's* allegiance to crip time adds a particular quality to its temporal infrastructure that contributes, orients, constrains, or otherwise impacts the dramaturgy of the performance. I locate the crip temporal infrastructure of this performance in two aspects: i) the varying duration of the work, and ii) the duration's relationship to Cormick's bodymind.

First, the performance's shifting and improvisational timing is an important indicator of its cripped temporal infrastructure. In each performance, there is no way of knowing how long Cormick's episodes will be, or if they will even happen at all. The piece might flow through in its entirety, it could be interrupted once, or it could be interrupted multiple times—throughout the show's history, each of these scenarios have happened. This means that both performers and spectators must be responsive to the work's temporal uncertainty—like an improv show or a piece of aleatoric music there is an element of chance that is always at play. This reflects the flexibility of crip time and Kafer's description of it as time, "not just expanded but exploded"

(27). This flexibility is baked into the dramaturgy of the performance. As noted, while its creators offer an estimation of the work's length, its precise duration cannot be known in advance. *The Mermaid* does not expect or intend to follow a set temporal duration, or to unfold at precise time markers. It is fluid, changeable, and unknown—relying on and shaped around a temporal infrastructure that is inherently malleable and open to constant revision. As such, the work exists in a kind of anticipatory time, a time that Kafer describes as one of many potential "strange temporalities" that exist in relation to disability. In Kafer's reading of Mel Chen's writing on their experience of multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS), Kafer describes the necessity of scanning forwards and backwards through time to identify past and future allergens. As Kafer notes, "This time of anticipation is itself a kind of queer liminality, living always in anticipation of the moment that has not yet arrived: the rouge fragrance, the invisible gas, the passing smoke" (38). Not only does this resonate with Cormick's experience of navigating a world rife with allergens, but *The Mermaid* exist in this anticipatory time, its flexible temporal infrastructure poised to react and shift at any moment.

The *reason* for this malleability is the second marker of the performance's crip temporal infrastructure. The varying duration of the show is determined by Cormick's embodiment, a recognition that this is the reality in which she lives, particularly when in public space. As such, *The Mermaid's* shifting temporality impacts the aesthetic of the performance, but the decision to organize the performance's timing in this way more so aims to call forth a disability politics that would make visible Cormick's lived experience. The performance's temporality is because of, but also in service of, the bodymind of the performer. Recalling Kafer's articulation of crip time as "bend[ing] the clock to meet disabled bodies and minds" (27), it is clear that *The Mermaid* does precisely this—"bending" its temporal infrastructure to anticipate and meet the specific

needs and experience of Cormick's embodiment. This enacts what Tobin Siebers describes as a disability aesthetic, "a critical concept that seeks to emphasize the presence of disability in . . . aesthetic representation" (2).

The influence of crip time in *The Mermaid*, however, goes beyond the aesthetic. By making such a direct link between bodymind and time, *The Mermaid*'s uncertain temporal infrastructure opens its audiences into a space of what Mark Carrigan describes as "chronoimagination." Chronoimagination is Carrigan's neologism for recognizing that the temporal experiences of others may be/are different from our own. For the duration of the performance, spectators experience Cormick's personal temporality, one which may be interrupted at any time by a medical event. The temporal visibility that this performance provides is not about just providing an intellectual or empathetic understanding of Cormick's lived experience, but about putting the audience in the temporal framing in which Cormick lives, and thus providing them a space from which to imagine alternative temporalities from those they typically experience. As Carrigan describes, chronoimagination has the potential to lead to acts of "chronosolidarity," forms of solidarity wrought by a common interest in creating more sustainable temporalities. The potential for solidarity that Carrigan identifies echoes Helena Grehan's claim that performance has the potential to mobilize ethical action because of how it "provides an alternative space of resistance, of calm, or even of radical unsettlement within which spectators may hear the call of the other (in a different way)" (20). Chronosolidarity is easy when people live, work, and exist in similar spaces and social positions, when "people are bound to one another, engrossed, made to feel coherently collective, through particular orchestrations of time" (Freeman 3). It becomes more challenging when these spaces and positions are more divergent. Works like *The Mermaid* present Cormick's specific lived

experience of time and thus offer spectators insight into alternative temporal experiences. They become entry points into imagining (and potentially building) temporal infrastructures that structure time differently. What acts of chronosolidarity might emerge from the temporal visibility of this performance? What would it mean to structure workdays, deadlines, project timelines, events, performances, or social functions with a temporal infrastructure that could accommodate the varying temporalities in which Cormick lives?

Presenting in Crip Time

For Cormick, these questions are not merely thought experiments but a means for imagining alternative ways of approaching both the creation and presentation of artistic work. Therefore, beyond just the content of the performance, the presentation of *The Mermaid* can also be considered from the perspective of crip time. Cormick realized after one presentation of the work that she needed to create space to allow the audience time to process their experience following the performance. She notes that this is particularly true given the performance's intense subject matter and the ways that it foregrounds audience culpability in spurring on her allergic reactions. As Cormick recalls:

> One conference I performed at they had scheduled a talk straight after the performance. The audience left the space and went over to a different space for this talk. No one could walk for like 10 minutes or so—they were just totally shell-shocked from the work. The venue organizers spoke to me about it afterwards, and [said], 'we should have scheduled that differently, we should have had time afterwards to sit with the work.' That's something I really learned through the process as well. In the process of interdependence and care I've really thought a lot about my body and my collaborators, but I hadn't thought so much about my duty of care toward the audience . . . I just dropped this truth

bomb on everyone, and all this confronting stuff where they were suddenly thinking about their own fragility, their own mortality, the mortality of the planet . . . I [realized] . . . I should have built in (as part of the work) after-care. I should have had maybe a place for people to go and sit, or discuss it with one another, or just be in silence, to have this safety around that. I don't want to sugar coat what I'm saying, but I don't want to be violent towards [the audience] in saying it either. (Personal interview)

This performance was a learning experience for both Cormick and the conference organizers that encouraged them to reflect on their scheduling choices. It became clear that crip time could have been used *around* the performance—incorporated as an infrastructure to scaffold the presentation of the work. Although Cormick's words also recall broader discussions around content descriptions or trigger warnings in relation to difficult material, they more so centre the provision of time as a method of care. Cormick emphasizes the importance of providing time and space to process what might be challenging material. The normative scheduling of the conference program, which had Cormick's performance immediately followed by a public talk, did not give adequate time for spectators to properly transition between these two disparate experiences. In contrast, a crip time-informed infrastructure means that temporal flexibility is a core dramaturgical value. It provides spaciousness around experiences, either because the need for space is anticipated and therefore scheduled in advance, or because it emerges as an impromptu reaction to what the community needs in that moment.[124] This approach is also reflected in Cormick's previously mentioned concept of "spacious time," where gaps and moments of pause are structurally integrated into how performances unfold, allowing for a pacing that prevents any sense of being frantic, rushed, or unsettled. As an important component

[124] As discussed in Chapter Three, it is encouraging to note that this is happening more frequently as presenters and arts organizations commit to incorporating principles of relaxed performances into their work.

of crip time, she cites how this idea of spacious time is already a practice in many Indigenous and First Nations communities. Recalling a creative residency she participated in that included many disabled and First Nations artists, Cormick notes that

> One of the artists was a Pacific Islander who worked as a producer and . . . a lot of the work they do, [the work] they create, the time [when] it starts is really fluid. And in that whole concept of Island time, which is very similar to crip time. They say, 'the audience can start turning up from around here, it'll probably start around here,' and there's maybe an hour and half in there where [the audience] can turn up, sit around together, talk, just in a really casual energy. The performers can be there if they need to. And then there is a moment where it comes together and begins. That allows for everyone to arrive, to tune to the space to each other, where they are, the energy. And it just felt like such a radical shift from the normal theatre experience [where] you're running late, and you get there, and you're rushing, and you've got your ticket, and the lights go down, and the show starts, and your mind and your body is still somewhere else. And it takes a long time to settle in. Well let's build that 'settling in' into it. So time, spacious time, slow time, decelerated time to allow for a more sincere connection to the work from both sides, to each other, and to the ideas that are being brought up and the feelings that are being brought up. (Personal interview)

As I have noted, these notions of crip time and spacious time are not necessarily about doing things slowly. They are about affording events and experiences and people the time that is needed to support them in that moment. This is an expansive and responsive approach to time, an approach in which community and connection are prioritized over any fidelity to strict scheduling. Because of this, I consider crip time to be more than just an access protocol or a form

of accommodation. It is a chronopolitics that enacts a different way of existing in the world. By orienting time towards the varying rhythms of the disabled bodymind, in performance crip time emerges as a dramaturgical element rooted in disability culture. *The Mermaid* shows us a variety of ways in which crip time can be structurally embedded into performance, and it also enacts crip time in its own temporal infrastructure. In so doing, it reimagines ways of being in the world in time.

SIMULTANEOUS TEMPORALITIES AND ECOLOGICAL TIME IN *CANARY*

> I sometimes wondered what the use of any of the arts was. The best thing I could come up with was what I call the canary in the coal mine theory of the arts. This theory says that artists are useful to society because they are so sensitive. They are super-sensitive. They keel over like canaries in poison coal mines long before more robust types realize that there is any danger whatsoever.
>
> — Kurt Vonnegut

Like *The Mermaid*, Cormick's performance *Canary* presents themes related to environmental sensitivities and Cormick's lived experience and offers a fascinating intermingling of temporalities. *Canary* is a short-form solo performance in which Cormick is present only through her conspicuous absence. That is, the performance is a monologue written *by* and *about* Cormick and her chronic illness, but which is delivered by another performer, listed in the script as "The body that stands here." From the onset, Cormick is present in the text but her body is noticeably absent from the stage. "I am standing here for a body that cannot stand here," the monologue begins, "I am speaking for the voice that is writing that is Hanna. This body stands here for her body" (Cormick, *Canary*). The performance proceeds in a similar manner, with the actor frequently reminding the audience that they are there in Cormick's stead, having been asked to convey Cormick's words: "I am standing here for a body that is 16,264

kilometers away. This body is standing for that body, her body, that cannot stand here. And not just because of the distance" (Cormick, *Canary*). The distance, we learn, is not what is preventing Cormick from being in the space but rather that her illnesses mean it is too big a risk for her to be in a performance venue filled with scents, toxins, and chemicals. Therefore, the actor onstage is here

> For a body that lies in a bed, breathing through respirators. Unable to open a window to feel the breeze on the skin of her body. This body feels the breeze for her body. This body stands in the public air for her body, that can no longer stand in the public air or under public gaze. I am standing here amongst you for that body . . . A body whose throat swelled up because her nurse accidentally wore eyeliner. A body swollen with hives from a piece of plastic. A body shaken by 100 seizures daily because of the propylene glycol in your soap. A body that can smell your laundry powder from across the street. Smell what you ate three days ago through your skin. (Cormick, *Canary*)

In this and in other moments *Canary* directly addresses the numerous toxins and pollutants that surround us in everyday life, drawing attention to the ways they make spaces uninhabitable for people. Critically, the performance it not intended only to induce guilt or berate its audiences. Instead, *Canary* is meant as a warning, an exhortation that our present actions (and, perhaps even more notably, our *inactions*) are carving a dangerous path. Just as the canary was taken into the coal mine so that its eventual silence would warn miners that the air they were breathing had reached dangerous levels of toxicity, so too is Cormick's intolerance of her environment intended to signify the environmental harms that might come to befall us all. As she does with the mermaid in *The Mermaid*, Cormick conflates her body with another non-human figure—this time that of the canary. Both Cormick and the canary are harbingers of the dangers

of fossil fuel extraction, and the absence of her body from the stage is akin to the silence of the caged bird. Hers is a body, as the actor onstage tells us, "Whose genes have mutated, developed a warning signal. A body whose white blood cells attack petrochemicals, treat them like an allergy, a poison. With a potentially fatal immune response" (Cormick, *Canary*). Cormick is the canary in the coal mine, her body's reaction to petrochemicals and fabricated toxins a warning of the dangers of polluted environments.

Cormick describes how the idea for *Canary* emerged in tandem with an interest in "the way privilege can be leveraged in activism—particularly the sort of activism that puts one's body on the line" (Cormick, "I Am the Damage"). During protests or acts of civil disobedience, for example, bodies that hold forms of racial, economic, or class privilege are usually afforded higher levels of safety in comparison to more precariously positioned bodies. As such, the privileged body can act as shield or surrogate, and, in so doing, potentially provide a form of protection to those more marginalized. In the case of this performance, Cormick uses another performer as a proxy—not because of a concern for carceral violence but because of a concern about the polluted air and harmful toxins that swirl around public space. The performer who speaks Cormick's words mitigates the risk that she (Cormick) would take on if she was physically present. Unlike in *The Mermaid*, where Cormick uses that risk as part of the work's dramaturgy (i.e., integrating her corporeal vulnerability into the structure of the work), in *Canary* she paradoxically performs her vulnerability by being noticeably absent from the stage. The crip time of this performance is perhaps less obvious in comparison to *The Mermaid*. There are no interruptions to the flow of the work because of Cormick's illnesses but the show makes explicit that it is only because of Cormick's absence that the performance can enact its smooth temporal progression. The fact that the temporal continuity of *Canary* (unlike the interruptive temporality

in *The Mermaid*) is conditional on Cormick's absence indexes an everyday reality of ableism—that disability is absented from public because its presence is deemed disruptive to the flow of normativity. But what the performance also evokes is a complex and multilayered crip time that is enmeshed with Cormick's bodymind. The way that *Canary* figures as a warning to its audiences situates it in a kind of prescient, future time. I read this as enacting a conflated temporality in which past, present, and future converge upon each other in the moment of this performance. Therefore, in addition to the way that *Canary* enacts a crip time that is indicative of Cormick's individual bodymind, it also presents an intriguing temporal infrastructure in how it blends past, present, and future.

Simultaneous temporalities—past, present, and future

Cormick's absence from the stage recalls the many debates regarding the liveness of the performance event and the presence of the performer's body in performance art. For many, it is the presence and immediacy of the performing body that sets performance art apart from other mediated art forms. This point of view advocates for the experience of "being there," both in terms of the presence of the performer and the presence of the audience. The fact that performance is happening *now*—at a particular moment, in a particular location, and with a particular group of people—is central to its ontology. Peggy Phelan captured this sentiment with her well-cited assertion that "Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations *of* representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance . . . Performance's being . . . becomes itself through disappearance" (146; original emphasis).[125] Phelan articulates

[125] Some have (mistakenly, in my opinion), read Phelan's words as an unmitigated allegiance to the liveness of performance. But Phelan's point, as part of her broader project on the subjectivity of non-visibility, is that

an understanding of performance as something that happens in the moment and which cannot be copied or reproduced. As a live performance that happens in front of a live audience, *Canary* does not appear to be mediated in any way that would contradict Phelan's stance. In the temporal infrastructure of the work, however, there is a simultaneity of presence and absence that complicates the reading. I locate this primarily in the ways that the text positions Cormick in relation to the actor onstage and the audience.

As Rebecca Schneider argues, although many situate theatre and performance as a temporal medium specifically attached to the live, "The live act does not necessarily, or does not only, precede that which has been set down, recorded" (90). For Schneider, theatre's temporality is not straightforward, but rather "given to interruption and remix" (89), evoking a complicated inter(in)animation between the live act, its archival record, and its continual re-performance. Tracy C. Davis extends this temporal slippage into historical study, noting how "performative time"—in contrast to the dual chronicity of theatrical time—"is a distinct way to account for people's location in history" because of how it "allows for nonlinearity, or nonseriality . . . overturning a straightforward concept of temporal succession" (149). Schneider's and Davis's work troubles and also rethinks chronological readings of performance (in) time, demonstrating how performance allows the past, present, and future to co-mingle both on and off stage.

Similarly, *Canary* presents a complex weaving of temporal states that are manifest through the simultaneity of Cormick's presence/absence. Audiences know, on a very practical level, that Cormick wrote the performance text in the past, having set her thoughts down so that another person might present them, live (here, now) to an audience. As the text focuses on her

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performance's irreproducibility offers an oppositional advantage against capitalism's dependence on continuous reproduction. It cannot be copied or precisely reproduced, and as such—for Phelan—"Performance's independence from mass reproduction, technologically, economically, and linguistically, is its greatest strength" (149).

obligatory absence, however, *Canary* pulls Cormick from the past into the present moment of the performance and its inclusions and exclusions; she is thus both in the past and actively not there, in the present moment but also absent—all seemingly at the same time. Simultaneously, the performance text also orients spectators towards the future, and seems to cast Cormick herself into a future moment in how it enacts a warning that aims to deter us from a particular course of action. That is, Cormick's text positions her own bodily response to fossil fuels as a signal from the future—a warning being sent back to the present to those that have not (yet) become sick. Hers is the evolution of a body that cannot tolerate the current and rising levels of toxicity in the world, and it is a body that symbolizes a potential future for many others. As the actor onstage notes, "This body stands here for those bodies that are changing into bodies that cannot stand here like this body. The 34% and rising of bodies that are noticeably injured by these scents and plastic and beautifiers we pretend we need, but we could be free from in an instant" (Cormick, *Canary*). There is a prescience that is implied by the text, a looping of the future back onto the present. It is a warning that our continued use of chemical compounds—the way "Our bodies [are] soaked and wrapped in fossil fuels" through our use of "makeup, hair product, synthetic fabrics, synthetic leathers, moisturizers, clothing detergents"—is causing harm not only in the present, but is also a practice that will likely come to impact all of us in the future (Cormick, *Canary*). The performance's conflation of present and future has the effect of multiplying the image of the single canary in the coal mine into a flock of birds—she may be the lone canary now, the performance seems to say, but the increasing rates of sensitivity to chemicals and fossil fuels imply that we may all become canaries too. *Canary*'s temporal infrastructure is not organized chronologically but rather through simultaneity; its warnings come from the past and the future, collapsing a myriad of temporalities into one.

Ecological Time

The temporal infrastructure of *Canary* is not just an interesting way to consider the simultaneity of different moments of time. It is intended as a call to action to its spectators with regards to our reliance on fossil fuels and the ubiquity of petrochemicals. In this performance Cormick stands in not only for the canary, but also for the Earth itself.[126] As the actor onstage tells the audience: "My body asks her body what it feels like, for her body to be so damaged by all the tiny personal choices of our day. Her body tells my body that she feels like the Earth. So this body here also stands here for the Earth that cannot stand here. And that cannot speak to us. Except through the envelope of her silent corpses" (Cormick, *Canary*). The temporality of this performance must therefore also be understood, in part, as a kind of *ecological time*—a time that pulls our thinking from the scale of the body to the scale of the planet, and which asks us to consider what kind of (future) world are sustaining given our (present) actions.

It is not easy to contemplate events on the scale of ecological time. Timothy Morton describes global warming as a "hyperobject" that pushes us to think at temporal and spatial scales that are, for the most part, unthinkable (130-135). Similarly, Rob Nixon notes the many representational challenges of portraying the extended time of climate change and toxic accumulation—its incremental pace can make it nearly impossible to witness day-to-day. Nixon describes how the destructive effects of these processes are a form of "slow violence" that is hard to account for because it is delayed, dispersed, and attritional, rather than immediate and

[126] Cormick makes a similar conflation between her body and the Earth in *The Mermaid*, which connects Cormick's incompatibility with her surroundings to the experience of living in an inhospitable environment wrought by ecological destruction. The performance makes explicit connections between Cormick's experience of illness and the state of the planet, such as when Cormick recounts the time following her diagnoses: "On the ride back from the hospital, I saw the rocks peeking from the mountainside and I felt like I looked at the ancient face of the country. And I said: 'help me, I'm sick.' And it replied: 'me too'" (qtd. in Cormick, "I Am the Damage"). Here, the performance correlates the substances that make Cormick sick with those that are wreaking havoc on the planet: the fossil fuels embedded in detergents and makeup products, for example, which set off allergic reactions for Cormick, are extracted from the earth through ecologically destructive means.

observable (2). This is true not only in terms of actions that negatively affect the climate (i.e., those which contribute to global warming), but also for any current actions that aim to *stabilize* changes in the climate. One part of the sixth assessment report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) notes that "If global net negative CO2 emissions were to be achieved and be sustained, the global CO2-induced surface temperature increase would be gradually reversed *but other climate changes would continue in their current direction for decades to millennia*" (IPCC Working Group I 39; emphasis added). Timothy Clark sums up the problem by noting that "As a global catastrophe arising from innumerable mostly innocent individual actions, the issue does not present an easily identifiable or clear-cut political antagonist. Its causes are diffuse, partly unpredictable and separated from their effects by huge gaps in space and time" (11).

As such, the extreme temporal scales of the planet make it challenging to represent the impacts of climate change, to observe the consequences of our actions on the climate, and to galvanize public interest and action around the problem. The imperceptibility of a changing climate creates a disconnect between individual action and global consequence. This disconnect leads to an impotency in the affective pull of the crisis, which Claire Colebrook describes as suffering from 'hyper-hypo-affective disorder,' or as garnering affect without intensity (qtd. in Nemanis and Walker 559). As such, while we might *sense* the extreme affect of the climate crisis, this alone does not push us towards action. This might also be attributed to the dominance of short-term thinking, which Roman Krznaric argues has brought about a "temporal myopia" in public policy and social imagining that has landed humanity at a crisis point where ecological destruction and the breakdown of civilization are now very real possibilities for the future (6). However, by collapsing the past and future within the present time of the performance, *Canary*

helps us to reconcile the enormous scale of ecological time and aims towards generating a more useful affective response. The performance bridges long- and short-term perspectives because of how it links our actions both to Cormick's absence in the immediate *present* moment, as well as how it implies that our actions will affect us and others in the *future*. Through Cormick's absence we can sense that the apocalyptic future that the performance warns us about is, in fact, already here. The canaries, Cormick's text insists, are no longer caged in the coal mine, but have burst forth and emerged as a warning signal across the globe: "The canaries drop themselves onto the bonnets of cars of New York. On to department store skylights in London. On to ferries full of tourists in Paris. Their bodies catch on the girders of the Sydney harbour bridge. Talons tangle in the hair of Hitchcock heroines. Tiny, pink blistering bodies fill the chlorinated fountains" (Cormick, *Canary*). They implore us to listen, to notice our dependence on fossil fuels before it is too late: "In their death rattle, the canaries say: This is the message we send with our bodies. We are not your warning signal anymore. You don't need a warning signal if you just stay the fuck out of the coal mine" (Cormick, *Canary*).

In her discussion of ethical spectatorship, Helena Grehan explores performances that engage with pertinent social, cultural, or political issues. She notes how these kinds of performances, even if they are not overly didactic or political, remain entangled with their audiences even after they conclude: "This kind of work does not—if it works well—allow spectators to leave the space and enjoy a Chardonnay, feeling as if they have actually done something by attending . . . Rather, it follows them, nags and irritates them, and although they might attempt either to suppress these responses or to establish ways of being in the world with them, the nagging remains and demands consideration" (6). I experienced a similar kind of discontent after watching a performance of *Canary*—its message lingered in my thoughts,

nagging me about my actions and inactions regarding my environmental politics.[127] I felt vindicated in my choices and habits that I deem sustainable, and culpable for those that I know are not. Nevertheless, while the performance does focus on individual actions and choices, I do not read it as advocating for consumer responsibility at the expense of corporate or government accountability. *Canary* does not proffer any kind of "performative environmentalism" (smith, "The Personal") whereby we might feel self-congratulatory because of our decision to switch to a scent-free laundry detergent. What it does is help us to conceptualize our individual connection to global environmental issues because it condenses the extreme temporal scale of those issues. It brings issues of fossil fuel extraction, chemical additives, and rising global temperatures down to the feet of its audiences and implores them to understand that the problem is here, now, rather than in some distant future. It transforms the vastness of ecological time into the immediate, present time.

Despite its clear message, however, the performance does not assume that its pleas will be heard by its audiences. Mid-way through the show, for example, the actor onstage describes how Cormick has asked them not to wear scents of any kind as they stand in for Cormick's body. We might assume this to be an act of solidarity, but the text also points to the absurdity of Cormick even having to make such a request, since, it asks bewilderedly, "what kind of climate activist's body would wear scent? What kind of activist, when 90% of the chemicals that make up scent are petroleum derived?" (Cormick, *Canary*). *Canary* asks the question, however, because it is sensitive to the fact that knowledge and awareness do not always or automatically correlate to behaviour change. Stacy Alaimo offers an example of this in her discussion of journalist David Ewing Duncan's 2006 *National Geographic* article titled "The Chemicals

[127] I attended an online version of the performance mounted by Imago Theatre in Montreal. Performed by Julie Trépanier, this production was part of the theatre's Eco-Anxiety Festival in February 2021.

within Us." For this investigative piece, Duncan tested himself for 320 different chemicals and attempted to trace back his exposure to them. Despite acquiring an awareness of the dangers and unregulated use of many chemicals, in the article Duncan admits: "So I'll keep flying, and scrambling my eggs on Teflon, and using that scented shampoo. But I'll never feel quite the same about the chemicals that make our life better in so many ways" (qtd. in Alaimo, *Bodily* 108). Duncan now lives with an uneasiness about his now-visible chemical world, but that alone is not enough for him to enact material changes in his day-to-day routines. I can sense my frustration in reading Duncan's words and notice my urge to condemn him for not overhauling his life in response to his newfound knowledge. And yet I am aware of my own hypocrisy here—how many chemicals or toxic compounds have I put on or in my own body since watching *Canary*? Undoubtedly, countless.

In the case of *Canary*, we never learn if Cormick's request for her onstage proxy to go scent-free has been honoured. The actor, presumably, does not have the same medical conditions as Cormick and therefore does not have to adhere to such directives on account of their own health. Regardless, *Canary* asks its actor, as well as its spectators, to heed the warning. To notice the countless places in which we all use petroleum-derived products. To not adorn ourselves with scented products that impede the safety of others. It asks us to stop and notice the silence of the canary—a warning that we push off into the future even as it is here now, a booming silence. And the question is, will we? Grehan notes that even if the "irritation" that follows spectators after a performance eventually drives them towards making a personal or political change, this drive is not necessarily aimed towards changing the world. What it does, however, is open up space for "spectators [to] wor[k] out how to respond and ultimately what responsibility might mean for those who engage with politically inflected work" (7). By collapsing multiple

temporalities, as well as evoking the long scale of ecological time, *Canary* likewise provides such a space, but it does so with an edge of ambivalence around whether its call will be taken up. The ambivalence and uncertainty linger through the last moments of the performance, underlined by the actor's final admission: "And I will go home to my home that is not a cage. I won't notice the air freshener on the bus. And the hidden petroleum ink embedded in my recycled toilet paper. And the plastics in the product in my hair. Or the scent that maybe I did or didn't wear today when the body I stood for asked me not to" (Cormick, *Canary*).

CRIP FUTURITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL FUTURES IN *LITTLE MONSTERS*

Content Warning: This section discusses eugenics

The future-focused temporality of *Canary*, along with its engagement with environmental themes, resonates with the third and final performance of Cormick's I analyze here. *Little Monsters* is a "living installation" created by Cormick in 2019, in which she is present alongside her two non-blood-related nieces. Although her nieces do not share Cormick's illnesses, in this twenty minute performance they wear pieces of Cormick's medical equipment such as a respirator and neck brace, in effect, "set[ting] [Cormick's] real heritable disability against the make-believe play of her non-blood-related nieces" (Cormick, "Current Works"). By making this juxtaposition between Cormick's bodymind and the bodyminds of her nieces, the work asks confronting questions around what it means to knowingly pass on a disability to the next generation. In this installation, spectators witness Cormick's disabled body in direct proximity to her nieces, and watch the children play while wearing obvious signifiers of disability. In so doing, through this work "we are called upon to question the tangle of emotions and moral judgements we hold around life-creation and the spread of a diverse species" (Cormick, "Current Works").

By asking whether its audiences would knowingly and willingly pass on an inheritable disability, *Little Monsters* confronts spectators with their personal feelings regarding a future *with* disability, and grates against the dominant social narrative that would seek a future *without* disability. The crip time of *Little Monsters*, therefore, is future-oriented; it is found in how the work evokes the concept of crip futurity. Crip futurity is a project of desire, of hope, and a form of resistance against the eugenic impulse to eradicate disability. It orients us towards futures in which disability is present and valued as a generative and meaningful form of difference—"futures that embrace disabled people, futures that imagine disability differently, futures that support multiple ways of being" (Kafer 45). *Little Monsters* further complicates this future by referring to the "ethical dilemma of procreation in a post-climate-disaster world," thus gesturing towards the intersection between environmental concerns and reproductive decisions (Cormick, "Current Works"). In so doing, the performance foregrounds complex questions related to disability, heredity, and intergenerational responsibility, asking if "Our mutating genes and changing environment set up our offspring for a more difficult life than we have ever known—is it fair to inflict that struggle onto a human? Is it fair to deny it?" (Cormick, "Current Works"). In this section I use these provocations as an entry point for considering how crip time might offer a pathway through this complex terrain of crip futurity and environmental futures.

Disability and the curative imaginary

Alison Kafer writes that we "need to imagine crip futures because disabled people are continually being written out of the future, rendered as the sign of the future no one wants" (46). For Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, the incompatibility between disability and the future is because disability and illness "frustrate modernity's investment in controlling the future" and thus upend "modernity's fantasy that we determine the arc of our own histories" ("The Case"

352). One significant way that disabled people are written out of the future is through the assumption and expectation that impairments be rehabilitated and cured. For Kafer, this move towards cure is constituted by what she describes as a "curative imaginary," an ethos she locates as a form of compulsory able-bodiedness/able-mindedness that is enacted under a frame of curative time (27). As she notes, "[disabled people] are not part of the dominant narratives of progress, but once rehabilitated, normalized, and hopefully cured, we play a starring role: the sign of progress, the proof of development, the triumph over the mind or body. Within this frame of curative time, then, the only appropriate disabled mind/body is one cured or moving towards cure" (28).

Eli Clare writes about the reach and pervasiveness of a similar phenomenon, which he describes as the "ideology of cure." Clare notes how the desire to eradicate disability and difference is embedded in everything from medical research and fundraising campaigns to weight loss surgery and skin-lightening creams (*Brilliant* xvi). The curative imaginary/ideology of cure also permeates artistic and cultural spheres. Kafer observes that while the progressive feminist future outlined in Marge Piercy's 1976 dystopian feminist novel *Woman on the Edge of Time* embraces people of all skin tones and sexual orientations, it imagines this future as devoid of disability. The lack of disability in the novel (which has been achieved through genetic screening for "defective genes") is presented as a universally agreed upon and self-evident goal, and this framing thus positions the removal of disability as an objective that is apolitical and requires no debate (Kafer 73-74). While writing this chapter I happened upon a kitschy television series called *Salvation* (2017) that conveys a similar perspective. The plot of this show centers on the American government's attempt to divert an asteroid from colliding with Earth, a collision which would undoubtedly be an extinction level event. Among the many proposed solutions for

managing this apocalyptic threat is to select a small subset of the population who will board a space shuttle and leave Earth, presumably to colonize another planet and ensure the continuation of our species. In selecting the people who will secure a seat on the shuttle, applicants are weeded out based on genetic testing for any current or future health conditions. The matter-of-factness with which the show approaches this issue is striking—even the billionaire scientist who conceptualized and built the shuttle is rejected when it is revealed that he has genetic markers for Hodgkin's disease. Like Piercy's novel, *Salvation* reflects the cultural dominance of the curative imaginary in how it takes as self-evident the idea any genetic "anomalies" should be selected out of the future population.

The curative imaginary is also frequently attached to discussions of children. Following queer theorists like Lee Edelman, Lauren Berlant and José Esteban Muñoz who have identified how the future is contained within the imaginary of "the Child"—a figure meant to stabilize the continuation of the heteronormative family/nation/society—Kafer adds that from a crip perspective the Child is also always imagined to be able-bodied/able-minded. Kafer's analysis foregrounds how disability is deemed as incompatible with idealized visions of the future: the Child is meant to exceed and improve upon current generations, and to do so requires the elimination of disability. As such, as Kafer argues, "pregnant women with disabilities and pregnant women whose fetuses have tested 'positive' for various conditions are understood as threats to the future: they have failed to guarantee a better future by bringing the right kind of Child into the present" (29). Thus, instead of being understood as an individual decision, reproductive choice becomes linked to ideas of the broader "health" of the nation. Sharon Snyder and David Mitchell detail how, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the United States, "citizens were called upon to police their own reproductive participation" in the

recognition that "disabled bodies [were] constituted as unduly discordant within a rapidly solidifying fiction of an idealized American body politic" (*Cultural* 22, 23).

It is these histories and assumptions that *Little Monsters* is highlighting—it is built on the acknowledgment that because disability has been linked to suffering, unhappiness, poverty, and many other negative states, the "contemporary . . . social imaginary remains firm in its ableist assessment that disability is not a desirable form of being" (Fritsch 46). Rachel Robertson describes how this ableism is imbricated temporally, as when her son was diagnosed with autism and "his future suddenly became both present and unimaginable to many people" (3). Robertson recounts how people expressed concerns around how she and her son would fare in the future and argues that "all mothering involves planning for a child's future but because the future of a non-disabled child is assumed to be predictable, it does not cast the same shadow over the present" (9). As another example, Kafer describes the case of a deaf lesbian couple who received extreme backlash when they chose to use a deaf sperm donor to increase the chances that their baby would be born deaf.[128] Conservative critics accused the women of being "selfish" for imposing the "disadvantage" of deafness upon their child (Kafer 77). Further, as Kafer notes, some detractors sought to bolster their argument by equating deafness with other impairments, a rhetorical move that "suggests that some disabilities are worse than others, that eventually one can substitute a particular disability that is so 'obviously' undesirable that the disabled person will change her mind" (78). This backlash evinces how, for many, the future is about eradicating disability, not passing it on to the next generation.

The curative imaginary is also dangerous because it justifies the neglect of the immediate and present needs of people with disabilities. Kafer notes how "Disability activists have long

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[128] Kafer notes that the women had to enlist a friend to be their donor since men with congenital deafness are prevented from donating to sperm banks (76).

railed against a politics of endless deferral that pours economic and cultural resources into 'curing' future disabled people (by preventing them from ever coming into existence) while ignoring the needs and experiences of disabled people in the present" (29). In other words, the impulse towards a future without disability reverberates back into the present and fortifies the current and ongoing oppression of diverse bodyminds, evidenced by how commitment to the care regimes, social programs, and economic resources that would support the flourishing of disabled people take a backseat to the investment in curative technologies.

The project of crip futurity is therefore about rebutting the curative imaginary on multiple fronts.[129] It stems from a desire to both value disability in the present and redress the social and economic inequities unfairly levied against people with disabilities, and to imagine disability as part of a vibrant, flourishing, just future world. Garland-Thomson pushes for a "counter-eugenic logic" and advances a case for conserving disability, situating it as a narrative, epistemic, and ethical resource. Put this way, Garland-Thomson argues that we lose more than the individuals themselves when we eliminate disability—we also lose the ways that "disability generates circuits of meaning-making in the world" ("The Case" 344). *Little Monsters* is well aligned with this complex and animated theorizing on disability futures and crip futurity because it forces its spectators to confront the challenging realization that they too may be participating in or perpetuating the curative imaginary. Rather than leaving it as an unthought given, *Little Monsters* pushes us to face the question head on, asking: "What does it mean to knowingly pass

[129] Importantly, theorizing against the curative imaginary is not equivalent to rejecting individual pursuit of medical interventions, rehabilitation, and cure. Nor should cure be positioned as wholly negative or antithetical to a disability politic. As Kafer observes "a desire for cure is not necessarily an anti-crip or anti-disability rights and justice position" (27). Rather, it is about critiquing the sociocultural dominance of and imperative towards cure as the only acceptable option for disabled people. Eli Clare's work is helpful for locating the nuance in this issue: he notes how the stories of people with chronic illness, people who have survived cancer, and even his own gender transition force him to grapple with the ambivalence of cure and "jostle [his] anti-cure politics" (*Brilliant* 61). For more on the complexity around disability and cure see Beauchamp-Pryor; Bunch et al.

on a disability to a child? Why are we so afraid of it? What does it say about how we really feel about disabled lives?" (Cormick, "Current Works").

Crip Time in *Little Monsters*

Critically, *Little Monsters* invokes a crip time that imagines disabled people to be part of the future. In so doing, the performance rejects the assumption that an idealized future requires the eradication of disability. But because *Little Monsters* situates itself in a "post-climate-disaster world," it also questions the ethics of procreation given our rapidly changing and degrading environment. Thus, the performance also opens space for new avenues of thinking with crip time, specifically through its invocation of environmental themes.

Disability studies—as a human-focused enterprise with an understandable resistance to essentialism—has been slow to engage with the non- and more-than-human; instead, it has primarily allied itself to a social constructivist view of disability. Kim Q. Hall contends that, despite a few notable exceptions, scholarship on queer and crip futurity has primarily attended to social, political, and economic factors without duly considering the planetary implications of these discussions.[130] Thus, this work has failed "to extend concern to what is arguably one of the most urgent, very material, crises in our world . . . climate change" (205). However, the recent critical turn in disability studies has led not only to a (re)turn to the materiality of the body and impairment (Feely; Garland-Thomson, "Misfits"; Kuppers, *Eco Soma*; Wendell), but also to disability scholars connecting their work to non-human focused disciplines like animal studies (Jenkins et al.; S. Taylor, *Beasts*), ecology (Clare, *Exile*; Ray and Sibara; S. Taylor, "Disabled"),

[130] Hall cites Alaimo, *Bodily*; Clare, *Exile*; Chen; Kafer; Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson as those who have attended to the "entanglement of queerness, gender, race, disability, and the non-/other than/more than human world" (205). To this list I would add Belser, "Disability"; Kuppers, *Eco Soma*; Ray and Sibara; and the work of the disability performance collective Sins Invalid, specifically their 2020 performance *We Love Like Barnacles: Crip Lives in Climate Chaos.*

and new materialism (Alaimo, *Bodily*; Belser, "Vital"; Chen; Mitchell et al.). The nascent focus on ecological and environmental issues that has emerged in critical disability studies scholarship is reflected in the way that Cormick's work engages with *both* a disability and an environmental politics. As such, when Hall queries the implications of discussions of queer and crip futurity "for understanding and grappling with the realities of climate change," I view performances like *Little Monsters* as generative sites for thinking through a response.[131]

This chapter has shown how time and temporality are intrinsic to disability and crip futures. Time is also deeply connected to environmental issues, including tracking the impacts of climate change (Nixon) and the development of climate action (Marquardt and Delina). Despite this temporal commonality, however, disability and environmentalism are spheres of thought and activism that have had a tenuous relationship (Ray and Sibara). Nature, often held as an "idealized and unpoliticized fantasy," is a space that is often not imagined as one that includes disabled bodyminds and thus the disabled body has frequently been cast out of nature or viewed as at odds with excursions into the natural world (Kafer 130). In fact, mainstream environmental movements have drawn on disparaging representations of disability as a way of explicating the harms of environmental injustice; a rhetorical move that calls for justice by (inadvertently) denigrating the existence of another rights-seeking group (Bretz 170-174; Clare, *Brilliant* 61-62; Kafer 159-160).[132] Further, the push to "restore" degraded or polluted ecosystems or

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[131] Linking themes of disability and the environment is also becoming more evident in disability art and performance in Canada. Many of these works includes a particular focus on issues of toxicity and chronic illness. For example, Marie LeBlanc's 2021 photography series "Overdressed" presented by Arts AccessAbility Network Manitoba; Syrus Marcus Ware's durational piece *Antarctica*, presented in 2019 at SummerWorks festival in Toronto; the work of site-specific improvisational performer and scholar Bronwyn Preece; and the 2022 exhibit "Crip Ecologies: Vulnerable Bodies in a Toxic Landscape" co-presented by the Art Gallery of Windsor and Tangled Art + Disability, curated by Amanda Cachia.

[132] Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring,* often credited as the text that ignited the environmental movement via its indictment of DDT, cites the "defects and malformations in tomorrow's children" as one of the effects of "these chemicals that permeate our outer and inner worlds" (205).

environments bristles against a disability politic that would resist the ableism inherent in that trajectory; the way it evokes "a simple one-to-one correspondence between ecological restoration and bodily restoration" and, in so doing, "reveals cure's mandate of returning damaged bodies to some former, and nondisabled, state of being" (Clare, "Notes" 247-248). Eunjung Kim describes this as "folding time," where attempts at cure "mak[e] the present disappear by replacing it with the normative past, simultaneously projecting onto it a specific kind of normative future" (4).

By invoking questions related to future generations, *Little Monsters* gestures towards another sticking point between disability and environmental movements—how a concern for environmental futures leads to a reluctance to procreate. The figure of the Child reappears in these debates, with (mostly) women voicing concerns about over population and the kind of lives their children would have to endure (Hunt). Some scenario-based modelling has suggested that even rapid transitions to population control measures (such as worldwide one-child policies) will not have an immediate or substantial impact on population levels, and thus efforts would be "directed more productively toward adapting to the large and increasing human population by rapidly reducing our footprint as much as possible through technological and social innovation" (Bradshaw and Brook 16615). Despite these findings, however, population size is generally still viewed as a significant variable in environmental sustainability and addressing climate change (Delacroix 44, 53).

The risk with this association between reproduction and environmental sustainability is when these debates fail to acknowledge how they advance eugenic arguments against disabled futures. First, concerns about overpopulation that focus on individual consumption of natural resources risk reigniting a discourse of deservingness that justifies resource allocation for some populations over others, particularly those deemed as "unproductive" members of society. As

Stacy Alaimo notes, this was an underlying thrust of the environmental conservation movement in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, where the "frenzy to conserve . . . was, in part, driven by the desire to demarcate the country's resources as belonging to some groups and not others as waves of immigrants came ashore" (*Exposed* 170). This discourse also re-emerged more recently during the COVID-19 pandemic, as governments and medical establishments adapted triage protocols related to economic and medical care (Rice et al.; Scully). Second, arguments against procreation often cite concerns about the well-being of future children as a key deterrent against the decision to reproduce (Helm et al. 123; Schneider-Mayerson and Leong 1013-1015), thus replicating a discourse that devalues disability on the basis of an assumed low quality of life. For all of these reasons, disability studies and activism has been reticent to align with environmental movements or fields like the environmental humanities (Bretz; Kafer; Ray and Sibara). However, while the uneasy alliances between these fields and political movements are understandable, scholars argue that there are possibilities for coalition that could strengthen the work on both sides (Belser, "Disability"; Clare, *Exile*; Grossman; Kafer 129-148, 157-161). In line with this work, I offer that crip time could become a generative entry point for theorizing such coalitions and ask: how might crip time become a way of thinking through the connections—or of brokering a conversation—between disability futures and the environment? How can crip time counter some of the ableist impulses that undergird discourses of environmental sustainability? These are avenues of thought and activism that warrant concerted attention, and which deserve more investigation than I can offer here. As a beginning to future theorizing, then, I conclude this chapter by imagining how the alternative temporalities of crip time could open up pathways that bridge the dual interests of disability and environmental futures.

Bridging Disability and Environmental Futures

I opened this chapter by situating capitalist time as a temporality organized around and allied to economic productivity. We can draw a parallel between this temporal frame and the desire for unimpeded progress and development has led to the overextraction of fossil fuels from the earth, the polluting of the earth's waters, an overproduction of greenhouse gases, and the destruction of countless acres of rain- and old-growth forests. These colonizing and extractive practices are enmeshed in a present-focused temporality that does not concern itself with the long-term implications of its actions nor acknowledge the limits of the natural world. One concept that has emerged to counter these practices is "sustainability." Etymologically, "sustain" comes from the Latin *sustinēre,* comprised of *sub* (up from below) and *tenēre* (to hold). To think about sustainability is therefore to query the things that "hold us up from below," making it a natural companion to the concept of infrastructure. But the word also implies futurity because it evokes a sense of ongoingness—an enduring, a maintaining, a prolonging—that unfolds over time. Indeed, the related concept of "sustainable development" alludes to the future in its very definition[133] as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission 41).[134] Though these

[133] Sustainable development is an approach that initially came into parlance in 1980 via the "World Conservation Strategy Report" of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. It then gained prominence with the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development's 1987 report "Our Common Future" (often referred to as the Brundtland Report after the Norwegian politician Gro Harlem Brundtland, who chaired the Commission). As Jeremy L. Caradonna shows, there are essentially no books with 'sustainability' or 'sustainable' in the title prior to 1976, but a plethora of books dealing with the topic in the decades following (2). Despite this terminology absence, however, Caradonna argues that the "conceptual roots of sustainability stretch back to at least the late seventeenth century" (6).

[134] Critically, the Brundtland report from which this definition emerges extends the term beyond the environmental domain to acknowledge that sustainability is deeply linked to human actions, social structure, and the political economy. This report acknowledges poverty, population growth, environmental degradation, and economic development as interconnecting themes that drastically impact social, economic, and environmental sustainability. Further, while noting that sustainable practices were likely to differ between countries and sectors, the report argues that "sustainable development should be seen as a global perspective," thus positioning the issue as a common issue facing the world (World Commission 39).

concepts appear to address the problematic of the extreme speed of capitalism, they have still received much critique. Sustainable development has been criticized for retaining an economic focus indebted to notions of efficiency and expansion (Banerjee), for replicating heterosexist power relations (E. Foster) and for its enmeshment with neoliberalism (Tulloch and Nielson). Sustainability, as Stacy Alaimo argues, denotes a "sanitized" rhetoric now espoused across academic, corporate, and government contexts and which risks becoming apolitical and focused on creating "efficiencies" rather than enacting just and equitable social and economic change (*Exposed* 170-171). For Alaimo, sustainability is merely the newest guise of a "conservation" discourse that, as mentioned previously, would shore up resources for some groups at the expense of others (*Exposed* 170). Bree Hadley makes a related and disability-focused critique of the concept by querying where people with disabilities "fit into the social, economic, and environmental discourse of sustainability when it so often runs hand-in-hand with an equally global discourse of austerity that tends to position our dependence on others to support and sustain us as a problem" ("Disability, Sustainability, Austerity" 35).

As a way of taking seriously these critiques of sustainability, but also insisting that an alternative to capitalist time is needed, what would it mean if the temporal infrastructure that supported and arranged economic and ecological projects was aligned to and organized by the tenets of crip time? How might crip time become a way of imagining environmental futures without denigrating or excluding disability and impairment? I offer that the specificity and heterogeneity of crip time materializes temporalities through which we might organize our relationship to the planet, but in a way that centers disability and embodied/enminded difference, rather than positioning disability as antithetical with environmental aims. Thus, the antagonisms

found at the nexus of disability advocacy and environmentalism might be alleviated by considering how crip time can become a mode of effecting the aims of both movements.

First, crip time opens us to temporalities that respect the limits of energy and capacity. It is a time that intends to be responsive and flexible enough so that the bodyminds it supports can continue on without extending past their personal thresholds. One of its fundamental characteristics is true sustainability—not as a concept that has been co-opted as technocratic jargon, or greenwashed in service of corporate interests, or as a guise toward higher productivity—but the *real* desire to work within the limits of one's capacity, and to garner support when one is stretched beyond that capacity. Recall Samuels's observation that crip time "forces us to take breaks, even when we don't want to, even when we want to keep going, to move ahead" ("Six Ways"). From this perspective, thinking of sustainability in relation to crip time disabuses us of any misguided rendering of sustainability that might use the concept as a sly, sideways entry into modes of "efficiency" or "productivity." Crip time proffers an understanding of sustainability whereby the limits of the planet's resources would be observed as a boundary that we had to live within—"even when we don't want to, even when we want to keep going"—an outlook that might quell the unfettered expansion of our current ways of living (Samuels, "Six Ways"). The ethos of 'sustainability over progress' that crip time espouses and enacts is the attitude that is required to manage economic and environmental resources in the face of the climate crisis.

Second, through crip time we can envision a way of caring for the planet that is rooted in, and which reflects, the many conflicting temporal states that characterize contemporary life in relation to the environment. Climate change and ecological crises exist in temporalities that are both fast and slow. For example, this chapter has alluded to the high velocity of capitalist time

and also made reference to slower temporalities like Nixon's concept of the "slow violence" of environmental degradation, a violence that is delayed, dispersed, and attritional, "its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales" (2). How can we find ways of navigating these heterogenous temporalities and their effects?

In *Matters of Care*, María Puig de la Bellacasa argues that the multiple unfolding temporalities of "soil care," or the ways that humans attend to the health and vitality of soil, offer an antidote to the rapid, progress-driven temporalities of a technocratic future. For Puig de la Bellacasa, practices of human-soil involvement transform the progressive direction and marching temporality of production not because they elicit "slower" temporalities, but because they require "making time" for practices of care across a range of coexisting temporalities (213-215). These "Interdependent models . . . disturb the unidirectionality of care conceived within the linear timescales of productionist time traditionally centered in human-crop care relations" (191). I argue that the heterogeneity enacted by crip time, which mimics the interdependent and nonlinear modes of care identified by Puig de la Bellacasa in ecological spheres, signals a way of being in time with the planet that resists the singularity of extractive, linear, normative time.

This is because living in a multiplicity of temporalities is endemic to those who live in crip time. Deaf artist Christine Sun Kim's drawings in *Six Types of Waiting in Berlin* (2017), for example, detail how Kim's sensorial experience of time and waiting varies across different cities, as do her modes of communication. Kim uses American Sign Language and writes notes on her iPhone to communicate, and her crip time "is thus also punctuated by the pauses in writing/scrawling questions, in reading, and the creativity involved in ad-lib responding between deaf and non-deaf sensorial modalities" (Kim and Cachia 280). These experiences are captured in Kim's drawings through music notes and dynamic markings, meant to symbolize the different

pacing and duration of time that Kim experiences in different settings.[135] *Six Types of Waiting in Berlin* is an example of how disability arts represents the heterogeneity and multiplicity of crip time, and it also gestures towards how crip time—which holds temporalities that range in speed, pace, intensity, and duration—can become a mode of uniting and reconciling these seemingly incompatible temporal states of environmental futures.

Third, and perhaps most critically, the heterogeneity of crip time means that it is attentive to specificity and difference in a way that offers important insight into the intersection of disability and environmental futures. That is, while the climate crisis is a global concern, its mitigation requires attending to specific populations, locales, and challenges because the impacts of climate change fall unevenly onto marginalized populations, thus exacerbating existing inequalities (IPCC Working Group II; Islam and Winkel; Thomas et al.). People with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to climate change, for example, because structural ableism and systemic barriers "intensify the risk disabled people face in times of crisis and . . . become even more life threatening in disaster situations" (Belser, "Disaster" 24). However, as Jasbir Puar has persuasively argued, the kinds of bodyminds who are legible as "disabled" (and thus available for some measure of rights, resources, or protections), excludes populations who acquire impairments through global injustices of war, colonialism, resource disparity, exploitative labour, and environmental toxicity. These injustices create and sustain impairments that are eclipsed within a disability rights framework that seeks to universalize disability as a means of countering its framing as personal misfortune and malady. This occurs, for instance, through the adage in disability rights discourse that "we will all become disabled if we live long enough," a

[135] We might read the *sforzando* marking, for example, as representative of a sudden moment of being thrust back into time, while a series of quarter notes or half notes might indicate the sense of time slowly and consistently plodding along.

phrase that temporalizes disability as an inevitability, but, as Puar notes, “does not take into account the politics of debilitation that render some populations as definitively unworthy of health and targeted for injury” (68-69). Specificity of identity and positionality matters immensely in terms of what kind of future is imagined, expected, and enacted, and both disability and environmental studies have more work to do in attending to these differences.

Investigating the relationship between disability and climate change demands that we use a lens that can account for the complexity and specificity of how disability and environmental futures are enabled and foreclosed. I offer that attending to the particular ways that crip time emerges for people (depending on the state of their bodymind, their relationship to impairment, the social, economic, and infrastructural contexts in which they live, the availability of care networks and accommodations, etc.) exemplifies the specificity that must be accounted for when theorizing how different bodyminds will relate to the future. Further, because crip time evokes a cross-temporality in its refusal to temporally bracket states of ‘before’ or ‘after,’ it might become a way of grappling with the specific causes and diverse manifestations of environmental harm. Environmental harms and climate change disasters exist cross-temporally in that they produce impairments, exacerbate existing inequalities, and further expose bodyminds to vulnerability in the future (Mörchen et al. 537). The disabling and debilitating impacts of these events are thus diffuse, and any concern with environmental futures must consider how the future does not unfold evenly for all, but rather how it emerges within a complex temporal framework of causes, effects, and repercussions.

Conclusion

The scholarship on crip time discussed in this chapter demonstrates that disability studies scholars are well positioned to consider the challenge crip time extends to normative

temporalities at the level of the individual. Though the final meditations on the links between crip time and disability/environmental futures that I offered are brief and somewhat speculative, I contend that they might inspire future work that considers how such learnings can be applied to the planetary scale. How can the specific practices and experiences of crip time that exist in disability communities be scaled up to approach the most macro of challenges: the global climate crisis? This is not about instrumentalizing crip time per se, but about recognizing the transformative potential that emerges through the reconfiguration of the temporal infrastructures (at any scale). It is a recognition that as part of the call to imagine, plan, and build disability and environmental futures together, critical disability studies must consider how these futures are organized temporally and how methods of living in crip time—even at the individual level—might be levied as components of wider, more systemic change.

Thinking with Cormick's work through a temporal lens surfaces a range of different manifestations of crip time, both within the dramaturgy of the performances themselves and in Cormick's approach to art making. *The Mermaid* exemplifies how crip time can be incorporated into the dramaturgy of a performance, becoming an infrastructure through which the pacing and duration of the work unfolds in direct response to a crip bodymind. In addition, Cormick's thinking regarding the presentation of this performance demonstrates the connection between care, responsibility, and crip time. By considering the temporal structure *around* the presentation of the work, and anticipating the time that spectators might need to digest and sit with the material, Cormick shows how crip time is more than just a way of accommodating bodyminds, but also a way of offering care. *Canary* then demonstrates the multiplicity of crip time and how it serves to situate us across past, present, and future simultaneously. The themes of this performance also lead us into thinking about ecological time—a time that exists on a scale

beyond the human body, but to which our individual actions contribute. Finally, *Little Monsters* extends this future-thinking even further as a performance that points towards the temporality of crip futures. I have used the questions asked in this performance as a way of considering how crip time can be a site of coalition between disability and environmentalism.

On one hand it might appear that living in crip time is a form of survival, a way of managing life within a temporality that does not align with one's own bodymind. But what Cormick's work demonstrates is how living in crip time can also become an act of world building that invites us into different temporalities. As Samuels and Freeman write, crip time is *both* a way of "surviving the normative violences of capitalist time and, in the key of liberation, [a way of offering] strategies for inventing new models of work, sociability, and being" (249). Such strategies are aptly demonstrated in Cormick's performances, and they hold the potential to open us towards new ways of structuring and living in, across, and through time.

CONCLUSION

"WHEN IS A STRAW MORE THAN A STRAW?"

When disability activist Alice Wong posed this seemingly innocuous question in her article "The Rise and Fall of the Plastic Straw: Sucking in Crip Defiance," she referenced the complex tangle of social, ethical, political, and environmental issues that swirl around this everyday object. The answer, Wong observes, "depends on who you ask" (3). For example, environmental activists, concerned with the amount of plastic being dumped into the world's oceans, have vilified the straw (along with other plastic objects) as a pollutant that is harmful to marine life. In 2018 these concerns coalesced around the social media campaign #StopSucking, which saw various Hollywood celebrities pleading with their followers to discontinue their straw use (Houck).[136] The straw became a lightning rod for issues of sustainability and consumer culture—held up as a non-essential single-use plastic that was directly counter to the goal of building a sustainable world.

For other people, however, the straw does not signify waste but instead represents an important conduit of accessibility. When Wong queries "when is a straw more than a straw?" she alludes to the fact that for many disabled people the straw is an object that offers independence, agency, and freedom. Despite its disposability, the straw has a sustaining function because of how it facilitates easy and independent access to food, drink, and medication. As the #StopSucking campaign gained traction across the United States it led to municipal and corporate policy changes that disappeared plastic straws from public space.[137] In response,

[136] The #StopSucking campaign was started by Lonely Whale, an organization that describes itself as "an incubator for courageous ideas that drive impactful change on behalf of our ocean" (Lonely).
[137] Campaigns against plastic straws have resulted in corporations like Starbucks Coffee Company and Alaska Airlines eliminating their provision of plastic straws, and cities like Seattle, WA instituting a city-wide ban on plastic straws and utensils (CBS News; Drumheller; Starbucks). In Canada, Vancouver, BC became the first city to

disabled people and disability activists pushed back against the hard line of the campaign. The hashtag #SuckItAbleism emerged as a form of online resistance that attempted to highlight the ban's ableist assumptions and its obliviousness to the realities of disability and impairment (smith, "Valuable"; Szymkowiak; Thom). This hashtag drew attention to the deleterious consequences of the straw ban and showed how the compensatory measures suggested by proponents of the ban (like switching to metal or paper straws) were not supportive of the realities of disability experience.[138] Activists identified these alternatives, and the ban itself, as perpetuating a disingenuous performance of greenwashing. They argued that these approaches encouraged nominal changes in consumer behaviour without addressing corporate and government accountability on climate issues, and that they promoted the use of eco-friendly and zero-waste alternatives without acknowledging their links to capitalism.[139] Wong enacts this contrarian stance in a social media post that features a photo of her wearing a BiPAP mask over her nose and holding a paper coffee cup with a straw at her mouth, defiantly gazing into the camera. Alongside the photo is the text: "Shove your performative environmental wokeness in a cup and suck on it with a straw" (Wong 7; cf. smith, "The Personal").

Years before the #StopSucking campaign and the resulting emergence of robust online activism, disabled artists were mounting artistic responses to this issue. One such work is jes

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ban plastic straws (effective April 22, 2020), while noting the accessibility requirement that plastic straws be provided upon individual request (City). In December 2021, the Government of Canada announced draft regulations for banning six types of single-use plastics nationwide. These include checkout bags, cutlery, foodservice wares, ring carriers, stir sticks, and straws. These regulations do cite some allowances for the manufacturing and provision of straws specifically for people with disabilities and in medical or healthcare settings (Environment).

[138] Paper or biodegradable straws disintegrate too easily, especially for people with limited jaw control. Silicone straws often do not offer the same amount of flexibility as their plastic counterparts. And metal straws pose a safety risk because of their hard material and because they conduct heat.

[139] There are many examples of corporate greenwashing that have emerged in response to the consumer demand for eco-friendly and sustainable products. Starbucks announced it would eliminate use of disposable plastic straws by 2020 and would be replacing them with fitted plastic lids for cold drinks. This exchange has been criticized for its failure to reduce the company's use of plastic, though Starbucks argues that the type of plastic used in the fitted lids is recyclable, unlike the plastic in their disposable straws (Mahdawi).

sachse's *Freedom Tube*, a process-oriented artwork comprised of thousands of red and white plastic drinking straws. *Freedom Tube* is a work that sachse began in 2013 as part of the inaugural Intergenerational LGBT Artist Residency at Artscape Gibraltar Point on Toronto Island. The work plays with the scale and configuration of the straw by weaving and arranging it into various site-specific configurations. While the work has frequently been formed into a "waterfall like curtain" (Fisher), its physical manifestation is not fixed but evolves in response to each installation site (sachse, Personal interview). sachse has mounted the work multiple times since 2013 and—like their work with ramps discussed in Chapter Two—*Freedom Tube* is a piece that continues to evolve and shift through multiple iterations. When viewed in comparison to the straw ban debate, this artwork becomes a marker for the disability activism surrounding the issue. It is also a work that aptly summarizes the themes of this dissertation because it embodies three key infrastructural qualities. First, *Freedom Tube* emerges differently according to context and user, thus evoking infrastructure's relational nature. Second, the work requires ongoing maintenance to retain its shape, a trait which is intrinsic to infrastructure. Third, it is embedded with a particular political view, evoking the political nature of infrastructure. Thus, to summarize and conclude this dissertation I read *Freedom Tube* through the primary principles of infrastructural dramaturgy and further draw out these infrastructural connections. It is a final, short case study that brings together the key ideas and arguments of the previous chapters and illustrates how disability performance reveals infrastructural politics and models a form of world building that desires disability and crip futures.

jes sachse's *Freedom Tube*

Freedom Tube's consistently large size and use of thousands of straws means that, regardless of its configuration, it boldly confronts spectators with its scale. The sheer volume of straws used in

the piece "blows up what goes unnoticed . . . to proportions so large that an audience is forced to reckon with it" (Mohamed). This reckoning, however, is not just about plastic straws' environmental impact, as it might be in a work solely focused on ecological issues. sachse's connection to disability culture means that *Freedom Tube* is about reckoning with straws' utility for disabled people. Spectators are forced to grapple with the reality that plastic straws are objects linked to the destruction of marine life *and* icons of accessibility for people with disabilities. Like Wong, sachse refuses the single narrative of the plastic straw as a piece of disposable waste, noting that, for many disabled people, the straw "represents a tether, a connection, and ability to access something . . . Alone, it is a symbol of freedom; woven together, it is home" (sachse, "Crip" 204). Counter to the vilification of plastic straws in environmental contexts, in calling the work *Freedom Tube* sachse draws attention to straws' many affordances that go unnoticed by environmental campaigns. In this work straws perform differently; themes of destruction and environmental degradation are eclipsed by freedom, independence, community, and access to full participation in social life.

Relationality and Responsivity

Freedom Tube embodies many of the qualities of infrastructure discussed in this dissertation. First, it emerges differently in relation to use, thereby invoking Star and Ruhleder's assertion that the key question is to consider *when* something is an infrastructure, since infrastructure emerges "in relation to organized practices" (113). Different ways of relating to *Freedom Tube* are encouraged by the fact that sachse configures the piece differently each time it is installed—its form is never final. Two years after the work was created at the 2013 Artscape Gibraltar Point residency, *Freedom Tube* was installed in the lobby at 401 Richmond in Toronto as part of Tangled Art + Disability's 2015 festival *Strange Beauty*. Here, sachse attached the straws

together into one large sheet, creating a curtain-like structure. In a 2017 installation at Xpace in Toronto, sachse chose to pile a large number of straws on the floor surrounding a white pillar in the space. They also positioned straws overhead, lying on large swaths of translucent plastic draped from the ceiling. Responding to the "de-contextualized space of the white cube" gallery, sachse invited spectators to "to freely explore and interact in any and all manners, including the object's utilitarian purpose" (Rozario). More recently, in 2019 *Freedom Tube* was installed at the Small Arms Inspection Building in Mississauga as part of the exhibition *Public Volumes* curated by Noa Bronstein. In this iteration, thousands of straws were woven together to form two large curtains that were hung next to each other to create one large panel. sachse describes how for this exhibition they also "created this tiny little tunnel so kids . . . —or people— . . .could hide inside it" (Personal interview).

The different form that the work takes in each installation—as a hanging curtain of straws, or a tunnel fashioned out of straws, or a pile of straws on the ground, or straws suspended overhead on plastic sheets—invites spectators to interact with the work in different ways. At times this offer is explicit. At the 2019 installation at the Small Arms Inspection Building, for example, sachse projected colourful text on the floor underneath the two straw curtains that read "touch me, move me"—a direct invitation for tactile engagement that aligns with the convention in disability arts of encouraging multiple modes of sensory engagement. Thus, the work exists in relation to its spectators, who might move, caress, brush up against, or even remove the straws.

The shifting configuration of *Freedom Tube* means that the relationality it encourages changes depending on context and user. This directly mimics the way that infrastructure emerges differently depending on use. It also echoes my discussion of Rhiannon Armstrong's and Alex Bulmer's work in Chapter One in which I highlighted how infrastructures—specifically those of

the sidewalk—hold different meanings and uses. Further, the shifting form of sachse's straw sculptures evoke the flexible and responsive nature of disability culture and practices of access. Responsivity was another theme that emerged throughout this dissertation, perhaps most prominently in Chapter Four's discussion of crip time in relation to Hanna Cormick's performances. Cormick's work helped to demonstrate how disability performance is adjusting modes of temporality to be amenable to disabled bodyminds and the tenets of disability culture. Responsivity also surfaced strongly in the analysis of administrative infrastructures in Chapter Three, which explored the ways that disability artists and organizations are amending logistical, organizational, and administrative infrastructures to better support disabled artists and audiences. The changes being made in this domain indicate how disability culture encourages an important re-evaluation of sedimented structures.

Maintenance

Allowing spectators to touch the work means that *Freedom Tube* requires constant maintenance to retain its shape. This is the second infrastructural quality that the work evokes. sachse does not use any adhesives to attach the straws together, so even though the tough plastic makes the individual straws quite durable, the structure itself can easily be disassembled if a spectator tugs at it. When the piece was installed at 401 Richmond it was on display for a month. sachse describes how they "would show up once a week and hop over to [the gallery] and [the staff] would be like 'here you go.' And it was all the straws that had fallen that week. I was a little gardener; I would go remake [it]" (Personal interview). As infrastructures of all kinds require regular repair and maintenance, *Freedom Tube*'s need for ongoing repair connects it to the precepts of infrastructural dramaturgy I argue for here. These frequent repairs also recall the case studies from my second chapter wherein I focused on ramp performances and their highlighting

of infrastructural maintenance. The artwork and performances by sachse, Adam G. Warren, and Kinetic Light each demonstrate how disability performance draws on the symbol of the access ramp to communicate aspects of disability experience, and how crucial attending to the maintenance of built infrastructures is to support disabled bodyminds.

Approaching *Freedom Tube* through a lens of infrastructural dramaturgy situates it in a lineage of other artworks that comment on infrastructural repair. For example, *Freedom Tube* resonates with Mierle Ladermann Ukeles's "maintenance art," a term devised by Ukeles to describe her focus on bridging acts of maintenance and domestic labour with the aesthetic realm. Ukeles's *Washing Series* involved her washing the inside and outside spaces of a museum, and *Touch Sanitation* found her shaking the hands of 8,500 sanitation workers in the five boroughs of New York City, a task which took eleven months to complete. Both *Washing Series* and *Touch Sanitation* drew attention to the durational and domestic maintenance labour and infrastructural systems that support artistic and social realms, but which are often ignored and neglected in public imagination. Like Ukeles, sachse spotlights the labour that supports artistic work, which often extends beyond the individual artist. When sachse solicits help from others to weave together the straws, for example, as they did for the installation of the work at the Small Arms Inspection Building, this assistance is credited through a shared artist fee (Mohamed).[140] This gesture is a small moment of infrastructural inversion that ensures acknowledgement of the labour that supports sachse's work.[141]

[140] For this exhibit, the collective that assisted sachse included Safia Abdigir, Noa Bronstein, Hannia Cheng, Nadine Forde, Petrina Ng, Sanchari Sur, Emmie Tsumura and Elizabeth Underhill.
[141] In the case of this particular exhibit, it also emphasized the labour history of the site. The Small Arms Inspection Building was a munitions factory opened in 1940 by Canada's Department of National Defence. Primarily employing woman, the factory manufactured rifles and small arms to supply to the Canadian Army during the Second World War.

Themes of maintenance and repair extend into Ukeles's work with objects, which offers another link between their work and sachse's *Freedom Tube*. For example, in *Public Offerings: Made By All, Redeemed By All*, Ukeles invited people to donate objects of personal value, which were then "bar-coded, recorded, inventoried, encased in glass, and maintained—to be visited and examined by other citizens over time" (qtd. in Jackson, *Social* 76). The items were not treated as waste or devalued as second-hand objects, but rather repositioned as art through Ukeles's use of "the value-making structures of museum exhibition" as a means to care for, repair, and display the items (Jackson, *Social* 76). Shannon Jackson points out how Ukeles's work echoes the practice of the "readymade" through its "effort to bring forth new interpretations of the object world and its institutions by re-contextualizing objects in an unexpected environment" (*Social* 79). In *Public Offerings*, these "new interpretations" occurred through Ukeles's choice to bar code, inventory, and display the items, thus prompting "alternate principles of categorization . . . [that] makes us look anew at the object world and its institutions" (Jackson, *Social* 79). sachse's work evinces a similar impulse by playing with scale to elevate the plastic drinking straw. They transform the straw from a small, quotidian object into something much larger, extraordinary, and spectacular. However, sachse's aggrandizement of the straw is possible only because of the ongoing maintenance that they offer the work. Most configurations of the piece require that sachse return regularly to repair and maintain it. Like Ukeles's maintenance performances, which signal the care needed to maintain artworks and venues, *Freedom Tube's* need for ongoing repair recalls how the need for maintenance is an inherent quality in all infrastructure.

Political Nature

Finally, sachse's use of plastic drinking straws as the material for this work and the way they spotlight this ordinary object infuses *Freedom Tube* with a specific political perspective. This is

another shared quality between this artwork and the infrastructures discussed in this dissertation. Infrastructures—whether they be spatial, built, administrative, or temporal—are built around their own specific politics and ideological leanings. Like every other case study in this dissertation, *Freedom Tube* prompts attention to these foundational politics and ideologies, illuminating them so as to interrogate their inequities and then reimagine them in service of a more just world.

On the surface, the use of a disposable, single-use plastic appears to communicate an environmental politic, as in installations like Benjamin Von Wong's *#TurnOffThePlasticTap* or Iiina Klaus, Skye Moret, and Moritz Stefaner's *Perpetual Plastic.* However, the pertinent thing about *Freedom Tube* is that its politics related to the drinking straw are rooted in disability culture and disability justice, and thus bring a much more nuanced and complex perspective to this quotidian object. This is evidenced by sachse's choice to title the work *Freedom Tube*, a phrase coined by disability artist, curator, and scholar Eliza Chandler (Fisher). sachse heard Chandler use the phrase in 2013 when the pair were "joking about plastic coffee lids, and our disability-informed inability to sip without spilling" (sachse, "Statement"). As sachse recalls,

> I asked if [Chandler] was able to use those plastic lids, and she tossed her delightful spasm-rocking head back, and laughed. 'Of course not!' I immediately joined in the laughter, remembering who I was, where I was— and of course it's a common crip struggle. I told her that's why I will subjugate myself to potential roof-of-my-mouth burns and use a straw. She shot me a glance without missing a beat and said, 'You mean freedom tube' (sachse, "About").

This was a transformative moment for sachse. Chandler's words repositioned the straw as an object of independence, autonomy, and self-sufficiency, but in ways that are distinct from

how these concepts are wielded in liberal or neoliberal discourse. Chandler's rendering positioned the straw as a portal to independence, but in a way that embeds this concept with a sense of community, connection, and care. sachse describes how they suddenly recognized how the straw was a conduit into disability community:

> It was at that moment, perhaps a moment I had waited for my whole life, that this thing, this innocuous and yet repeatedly used object became a montage in my mind—of every time I'd seen a disabled person using a straw in an unconventional . . . way; a pint glass of beer, a hot coffee, a larger straw to power a wheelchair, a breathing tube. Each use its own little revolution. It had a name. A name given by community. (sachse, "Statement")

The "little revolution" of the straw then emerged in sachse's mind as an artistic rendering:

> I wasn't able to sleep after [the conversation with Chandler]. I kept imagining straws—the classic red and white bendies, thousands of them in front of me. Sitting, creating long strands of piping, weaving them into a tapestry. The straw becomes a network of straws, one for every coffee, one for every daily adjustment to make bodies 'fit.' And with patience and the passing of time, this mundane ritual becomes something larger . . . a symbol of culture and an honouring of an invisible tradition. (sachse, "About")

I quote sachse at length here to convey how profound this experience was for them. sachse's words reveal how this small exchange of disability culture with Chandler ruptured their preconceived ideas of the straw and connected them to a range of disability experiences beyond their own. Early in this dissertation I made reference to Chandler's definition of disability community as emerging "any time . . . wherein people come together motivated by or through the desire to dwell with disability; a desire which is antagonistic to the normative desire to cure

or kill disability" (*Disability* 3). The conversation between sachse and Chandler, and the artwork that emerged from it, perfectly demonstrates such a coalescing of disability community. The words "freedom tube" allowed sachse to connect their own experience to myriad others and to appreciate the politics of their own everyday use of the straw.

Queer, Crip, Infrastructural Intimacy

Together, the case studies in this dissertation demonstrate the myriad ways that disability performance enacts infrastructural inversions and surfaces the inequitable impacts and hidden politics of infrastructures. Some of these politics are in service of normative ways of being in the world—ways that are often antithetical to the flourishing of disabled people. Other infrastructures, particularly those created by the disability performances highlighted in each chapter, are embedded within a politic "motivated by or through the desire to dwell with disability" (Chandler, *Disability* 3). This desire emerges as a form of world building, a world where disabled people can flourish amidst infrastructures that support the specificities of their bodyminds.

Freedom Tube, like all the performances discussed throughout this dissertation, is a work that inhabits this desire to dwell with disability. The politics of *Freedom Tube* challenge simplistic pro-environment or anti-pollution rhetoric and demand that plastic straws be taken seriously for the support they offer disabled people. Though the strong activism of disabled resistance to the plastic straw ban would seem to set up an antagonism between disability and environmental movements, as discussed in Chapter Four, there are significant overlaps and possibilities for coalition between these movements. This resistance is not about celebrating the destructive impacts of single-use plastics, nor about derailing the aims of the environmental movement. It is, however, about expanding perceptions of how plastic straws can and have been

used and what they can symbolize, understanding straws' place within wider infrastructural systems of support, and considering their relevance and value in different contexts. *Freedom Tube* does not reconcile the inherent tension of debates around the straw ban, but it does helpfully complicate perceptions and provide an opening through which spectators might grapple with these issues. *Freedom Tube* calls forth a world created by, through, and for disability culture and community and in so doing pulls us back to larger questions around what it means to be sustained. What kinds of objects, relations, and infrastructures have sustaining functions, and for whom?

Similar questions arise from a recent presentation by Alison Kafer, which drew attention to a different kind of tube when Kafer quoted a disability activist's writing about queer, crip desire in relation to their feeding tube. This person wrote: "I love my feeding tube. And people don't understand at all how I could feel that way about a couple of tubes inserted into my abdomen to add and remove things from my body. But I do, I love my tube so much. I wish I could write amazing poems about my feeding tube" (Cssc Departmental 00:16:57-17:19). In reflecting on these words, Kafer observes how "Feeding and breathing tubes are often the technologies people feel go too far—rendering life not worth living, draining it of its quality." But the way this person expresses their love for their feeding tube fosters a different perspective, leading Kafer to ask, "How might we take this person's love for their feeding tube more seriously? . . . Can we recognize the radical potential of insisting on intimacy, relationality, and animacy at the very points where life is presumed to end?" (Cssc Departmental 00:17:24-17:42).

Such forms of queer, crip intimacy can bring us into different ways of relating to the infrastructures that sustain our lives. The larger stakes of this dissertation are rooted in its desire to bring an infrastructural lens to how we exist in the world—a lens that necessarily calls out the

violence and exclusions of infrastructural systems, but which is also in intimate enough relation to these systems so as to reimagine them and build them out to be supportive of more just and inclusive ways of being. Disability performance is one way that such infrastructural intimacies are enacted. In attending to these performances infrastructurally, it becomes possible to trace the ways they engage in this intimacy by committing to interdependence, by revaluing the inherent vulnerability and contingency of our bodyminds, and by prioritizing the transformative power of community (and) care. These infrastructural reckonings can be undertaken in relation to all forms of art, performance, and cultural production, and thus the potential application of this approach is vast. When we, each of us, can locate ourselves in an inevitably complex relationship with systems of support—whether these be in the form of a straw, a feeding tube, a sidewalk, or a ramp—we are enacting an infrastructural dramaturgy that is as applicable to quotidian life as it is to a theatrical performance.

The methodology I have espoused in this dissertation brings a critical lens to systems of support that can evince moments of discord or moments of infrastructural strife. It can also, equally, show how such moments of impasse or misfitting can be transformed so that they propagate a sense of justice, care, interdependence, community, and perhaps even—as with the deep intimacies one might feel for a feeding tube—love. Shannon Jackson writes that "To avow support is to expose the conditions of unconditional love" (*Social* 247). This truism has been joyfully and painfully present for me during the writing of this dissertation and the completion of my doctoral program, as during this time my relationship to disability was reoriented due to a series of shifts in my own bodymind, as well as my becoming a caregiver to a disabled family member. The sustaining qualities of the built, interpersonal, and administrative infrastructures of the disability arts ecology, and the many infrastructural reconfigurations exemplified by the

performances in this dissertation, have therefore been refracted against my experiences of providing and receiving care. Experiencing the complicated twists and turns between avowing, requiring, rejecting, and denying support—whether it be institutional, relational, financial, material, or otherwise—has thrown the themes of this dissertation into stark relief, and emphasized the centrality of infrastructure to the ways I/you/we exist in the world.[142]

The impulse that started this research project was an insatiable curiosity about the structures and supports that allow me/you/us to make and receive performance. It concludes, here, with an even broader aspiration to understand what it means to be supported and sustained in a world that often feels unsupportive and unsustainable. Although the world seems regularly to be in a state of unceasing crisis, I remain bolstered by the resilience, aptitude, and community-mindedness of disability arts. I am reminded of a public lecture given by Lauren Berlant shortly before her death, in which she described herself as an "infrastructuralist." "I'm interested," she explained, "in how we build out difference from within the world we're living . . . I'm also a heterotopian in the sense that I'm looking for accomplices in building other worlds from within the [current] world" (Mark S. Bonham Centre 00:43:55-44:20). I strongly resonate with Berlant's identification as an infrastructuralist and her heterotopic imaginings. The people, work, objects, structures, practices, and conventions within this extended and multifaceted community of disability arts—both those featured in the preceding pages and many others—have become my accomplices in this pursuit. They have shown me how to hope and work for a better, more just, and more equitable world; bolstering my belief that it is possible to build out a world flourishing with disability and crip desire. Disability arts has shown me how we might sustain each other

[142] I borrow this oscillation of pronouns from Petra Kuppers's *Eco Soma*, and I employ it as a moment of destabilization and reflection for both writer and reader. Kuppers notes that her "play . . . with I/you/we pronouns is a deliberate invitation—not to overidentify but to wonder" (1).

despite, or perhaps because of, the ambivalent and often painful complexities of contemporary life. For this, I am indebted to the artists and organizations whose names appear in these pages. It is my sincere wish that the hope which they have imparted to me can be felt in my writing about them.

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