



At the Limits of Pleasure: Forsaken Sexualities and Transformations of Desire



A Conference on Disabilities, Arts and Sexualities



Thursday March 11th, Friday March 12th & Saturday March 13th
2021

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Programme at a Glance p.2



Full Programme pp. 3-6



Abstracts pp. 7-32



Organisers & Participants pp.33-35



Programme at a Glance

Day 1 Thursday March 11th

13:45/14:00	Opening	
14:00/15:15	Panel 1	Erotics and Transformations: Queer/ Crip Epistemologies
15:15/15:30	Break 1	
15:30/16:45	Panel 2	Disabled Be-Cummings: Porn and Fanfiction
16:45/17:00	Break 2	
17:00/18:00	Keynote 1	Crip Lockdown: Disability, Art, Sexuality in a Moment of Crisis, <i>Professor Robert McRuer</i>

Day 2 Friday March 12th

10:30/11:30	Interview 1	<i>Mr Robert Softley Gale</i>
11:30/12:00	Break 3	
12:00/13:15	Panel 3	Reclaiming & Imag(in)ing Subjectivities
13:15/14:00	Break 4	
14:00/15:15	Panel 4	Visual & Queer Deconstructions of Compulsory Able- Bodiedness
15:15/15:30	Break 5	
15:30/16:30	Panel 5	Interrogating Stigma & Marginalisation: Practicalities and Realities
16:30/17:00	Break 6	
17:00/18:00	Plenary 2	<i>After almost 100 days of Biden: Race, Disability, and a Head, Professor Therí A. Pickens</i>

Day 3 Saturday March 13th

10:00/11:00	Panel 6	Subverting the Heroine through Visual Modalities
11:00/11:15	Break 7	
11:15/12:15	Panel 7	Performance & Reformulation of Disabling Imaginaries
12:15/12:30	Break 8	
12:30/13:45	Panel 8	Literary Perspectives: Liminal Spaces of the Traumatic Body
13:45 / 14:30	Break 9	
14:30/15:30	Panel 9	At the Limits of Pleasure: (Un)desirability & Representation
15:30/16:00	Break 10	
16:00/ 17:00	Interview 2	<i>Professor Mark Mossman</i>
17:00/17:15	Farewell	



Full Programme

Day 1: Thursday March 11

- 13:45/14:00 **Welcome**
Angelos Bollas, Dr Alicia Castillo Villanueva, Jean-Philippe Imbert
& Dr Sarah Meehan O’Callaghan, Dublin City University, Ireland
- 14:00/15:15 – Panel 1 **Erotics & Transformations: Queer/ Crip Epistemologies**
Chair: Mr Jean-Philippe Imbert, Dublin City University, Ireland
- Schizo* is Sexy: The Eroticism and Exoticism of the "Mysterious Madness"*
Ren Koloni, George Washington University, United States of America
- Perverting Liberation*
Dr Johnathan Smilges, Texas Woman's University, United States of America
- 'Shade[s] of Queer': Autism and the Inventiveness of Sexuality*
Abby Stannard Ashley, University of Bristol, University of Exeter, United Kingdom
- 15:15/15:30 Break 1
- 15:30/16:45 – Panel 2 **Disabled Be-Cummings: Porn and Fanfiction**
Chair: Mr David Carroll (IRC), Dublin City University, Ireland
- Fucking, not Fetishising: Agency, Devotees and Representation of Disabled People in Porn*
Dr Caroline West, Independent Scholar, Ireland
- Blind Fingering, Hurt/Comfort, and other Tropes: How Disability is Used in Explicit Fanfiction*
Lindsay Mixer, Widener University, United States of America
- On Queer Disability and Sex**
Andrew Gurza, Disability Awareness Consultant and Cripple Content Creator, Canada
- 16:45/17:00 Break 2
- 17:00/18:00 – Keynote 1 *Crip Lockdown: Disability, Art, Sexuality in a Moment of Crisis*
Professor Robert McRuer, George Washington University, United States of America
Chair: Dr Kit Fryatt, Dublin City University, Ireland



Day 2: Friday March 12

10:30 / 11:30 – Interview 1 Robert Softley Gale, Scotland
With Dr Sarah Meehan O’Callaghan, Dublin City University, Ireland

11:30 / 12:00 Break 3

12:00 / 13:15 – Panel 3 **Reclaiming & Imag(in)ing Subjectivities**
Chair: Dr Michael Hinds, Dublin City University, Ireland

Disabilities, Subjectivities and Sexualities (Reclaiming and Celebrating)

Denise Beckwith, Western Sydney University, Australia

A Room with a Lesbian, Autistic View: A Queer, Transdisciplinary Perspective of Great Art

Dr Suzanne van Rossenberg, Independent Researcher, United Kingdom

Reclaiming the Viral Body: Eroticism, HIV, and Danez Smith’s Poetry

Alex Torres, University of Bristol, United Kingdom

13:15 / 14:00 Break 4

14:00/15:15 – Panel 4 **Visual & Queer Deconstructions of Compulsory Able-bodiedness**
Chair: Dr Alicia Castillo Villanueva, Dublin City University, Ireland

Challenging Devaluation! – Cinematic Portrayals of Disability and Queerness

Dr Petra Anders, University of Bamberg, Germany

Disabled Sexualities and Neoliberal Values in Orange is the New Black,

Irena Jurković, University of Zadar, Croatia

Disability and Sexuality in the movie Sanctuary

Dr Paul McNamara, Mary Immaculate College, Ireland

15:15 / 15:30 Break 5



15:30/16:30 – Panel 5

Interrogating Stigma & Marginalisation: Practicalities and Realities

Chair: Dr Briega Casey, Dublin City University, Ireland

Tactile Art-Based Teaching and Sexual Behaviours in Young Adults with Dual Sensory Impairment: Perspectives of Professionals Working with Them

Supriya Das & Dr Atul Jaiswal

Perkins India, India & Université de Montréal, Canada

“They Were Shaving My Head and It Was Even More Upsetting than the SCI Itself”: Liminality and De/sexualization of the Disabled Body

Laura Sanmiquel-Molinero & Dr Andrea García-Santesmases Fernández

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain & Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spain

16:30/17:00

Break 6

17:00/18:00 – Keynote 2

After almost 100 days of Biden: Race, Disability, and A Head

Professor Therí A. Pickens, Bates College, United States of America

Chair: Dr Briega Casey, Dublin City University, Ireland

Day 3: Saturday March 13

10:00/11:00 – Panel 6

Subverting the Heroine through Visual Modalities

Chair: Anindita Bhattacharya, Dublin City University, Ireland

Crippin’ the Disabled Heroine: Queer and Enabling Futures in Shonali Bose’s Margarita with a Straw (2014)

Shabnam Rathee, Murdoch University, Western Australia

Visual Art as Visual Literacy: Interdicting the Delusion with Reference to ‘Sexualities, Desires, and Emotions’ of Disabled Humans

Dr Amodini Sreedharan, Independent Researcher, India

11:00/11:15

Break 7

11:15/12:15 – Panel 7

Performance & Reformulation of Disabling Imaginaries

Chair: Máighréd Medbh, Dublin City University, Ireland

Rolling in the Gap: Desire and Sexuality in Performance Art as a Means of Processing and Formulating Crip Pasts, Presents and Futures in the Austerity Phase of the Swedish Welfare State

Christine Bylund, Umeå University, Sweden



Dance, Disability and Dissidence in Lectura fácil by Cristina Morales

Dr Patricia García & Dr Aina Pérez Fontdevila
Universidad de Alcalá, Spain

12:15/12:30

Break 8

12:30/13:45 – Panel 8

Literary Perspectives: Liminal Spaces of the Traumatic Body

Chair: Dr Michael Monaghan, Dublin City University, Ireland

The Sexual Uncanny in J.G. Ballard's Crash

Nouha Aouine, University of Blida 2 – Algeria

“A priest of eternal imagination.” – Gestalt Psychology and Significance of Myopia in James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

Inga Piotrowska, University of York, United Kingdom

Fetishizing Disability: Pain and Trauma in A Little Life by Hanya Yanagihara

Daniel Schmidt, Saarland University, Germany

13:45/14:30

Break 9

14:30/15:30 – Panel 9

At the Limits of Pleasure: (Un)desirability & Representation

Chair: Dr Sarah Meehan O'Callaghan, Dublin City University, Ireland

Disabling Desire and Reading Barthes' The Pleasure of the Text

Dr Geraldine Cuddihy, Independent Researcher, Ireland

The Sexual Model of Disability

Dr Anna Mollow, Independent Scholar, United States of America

15:30/16:00

Break 10

16:00/17:00 – Interview 2

Dr Mark Mossman, Western Illinois University, United States of America

With Dr Olga Springer, Dublin City University, Ireland

17:00/17:15

Farewell

Angelos Bollas, Dr Alicia Castillo Villanueva, Jean-Philippe Imbert & Dr Sarah Meehan O'Callaghan, Dublin City University, Ireland



Abstracts

(Alphabetical order)



Challenging Devaluation! – Cinematic Portrayals of Disability and Queerness

Dr Petra Anders

University of Bamberg, Germany

Day 2 – Friday March 12 – 14:00 / 15:15 – Panel 4 – Visual & Queer Deconstructions of Compulsory Able-bodiedness

Cinematic narratives tell us a lot about how we perceive disabilities and sexualities. They can be full of either overtly or ‘hidden’ problematic messages. But they can also brilliantly challenge what Robert McRuer calls ‘the cultural devaluation of both’ (McRuer 2003: 98).

This paper combines Disability Studies and Film Studies. It also draws on what Thomas Hoeksema and Christopher Smit call the ‘teaching and learning value’ (Hoeksema/Smit 2001: 42) of inadequate cinematic representations of disability and on Thomas G. Gerschick’s observation that ‘the bodies of people with disabilities make them vulnerable to being denied recognition as women and men. The type of disability, its visibility, its severity, and whether it is physical or mental in origin mediate the degree to which the body of a person with a disability is socially compromised (Gerschick 2008: 361).’ It needs to be added that there are, of course, genders beyond the binary concept of women and men.

By investigating, for example, editing and camera, this paper discusses why cinematic portrayals such as Michael Akers’s drama *Morgan* (USA 2012) and Daniel Ribeiro’s film *The Way He Looks* (BRA 2014) are indeed brilliantly challenging the devaluation of disability and queerness. This is the case even if some critics say they play it safe by portraying couples of cis-men or cis-boys. It also asks why dramas such as Shonali Bose’s *Margerita with a Straw* (IND 2014) eventually fail to do so although Bose, for example, tells the story of a disabled woman from India who falls in love with a disabled woman with a Pakistani family background. The bi-racial aspect in Akers’s drama seems to be less important. But his absent Hispanic father still exerts influence over Morgan and his mother.



Dr Petra Anders is a research assistant to the ‘Inklusives Expert*innen Netzwerk’ (iXNet) at the Institute for Empirical Sociology at the FAU and a Teaching Fellow at the University of Bamberg. Her research includes cinematic representations of disability, disability studies and gender, and teaching or dance practice. Recent publications include the chapter ‘*More than the “Other”?: On Four Tendencies Regarding the Representation of Disability in Contemporary German Film (2005-2010)*’ in Benjamin Fraser’s *Cultures of Representation: Disability in World Film Context*, ‘*Screening Gay Characters with Disabilities*’ as part of the blog NOTCHES: (re)marks on the history of sexuality and the chapter ‘*Mediale Zuschreibungen. Über die Rolle von Behinderung im Spielfilm*’, in *Kunst, Kultur und Inklusion. Menschen mit Behinderung in Presse, Film und Fernsehen: Darstellung und Berichterstattung* edited by Juliane Gerland, Susanne Keuchel and Irmgard Merkt.

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The Sexual Uncanny in J.G. Ballard's *Crash*

Nouha Aouine

University of Blida 2 – Algeria

Day 3 – Saturday March 3 – 12:30/13:45 – Panel 8 – Literary Perspectives: Liminal Spaces of the Traumatic Body

The uncanny is ever-present. It assumes the form of ghostly figures in supernatural fiction, the guise of the inanimate dolls, wallpapers, or objects, and it even looms behind the characterization of all mad fictional women in the attic. But the sexual uncanny is a curious sort of unfamiliarity. What is it that can render a familiar norm such as desire and sexual sentiments an unhomey conception? One might wonder. Certain authors present the erotic as a given. They embellish its composition and celebrate its normalized announcement. Others deconstruct its familiarity. Ballard's *Crash*, for one, introduces a protagonist with an uncanny sexuality. His novel explores the paraphilic fascination with car crashes in a manner that blurs the borders between the sexual and the horrifying. His novel transgresses familiar sexual grounds, by making the sexual act 'an other', and an uncanny which, in the words used by Schelling in describing the uncanny, 'ought to have remained . . . secret and hidden but has come to light'. The writer creates odd fantasies in a way that provocatively engages with the uncanny, while saddling his works with a normal feel to an unhomey fetishism that contradicts common reality. This paper aims at discussing the implications of the sexual *unheimlich* in the aforementioned novel, in its ability to make sexual desires and acts an uncharted, unfamiliar territory.



Nouha Aouine is a graduate student with a master's degree in English Literature and Civilization from the University of Ali Lounici (Blida 2). She has written dissertation that studies the ecocritical representation of the pandemic in the George R. Stewart's novel *Earth Abides*. Aouine has recently presented at the 2020 International Conference on Ecocriticism and Environmental Studies (a presentation on the pandemic's toxic discourse in Jack London's novel *The Scarlet Plague*). Her forthcoming publications include a chapter in an edited anthology on disease narratives. Apart from Ecocriticism and contemporary American literature, she is interested in postcolonial theory, diaspora studies and Foucauldian criticism.

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Disabilities, Subjectivities and Sexualities (Reclaiming and Celebrating)

Denise Beckwith

Western Sydney University, Australia

Day 2 – Friday March 12 – 12:00 / 13:15 – Panel 3 – Reclaiming & Imag(in)ing Subjectivities

As both a woman and social work researcher with physical disability, I explored women with physical disability's limited access to sexuality education, and the subsequent impact on their sexual identity formation. The research further considered how the lack of access to sexuality education increased women with physical disability's risk of experiencing violence.

One of the main data collection methods used to empower the women with physical disability, was photovoice. Photovoice uses photography to emphasise the women's autonomy and choice within the research process, rather than being subjects or objects being studied. Nineteen women with physical disability – both congenital and acquired – from across Australia, were interviewed and asked to take four photographs illustrating how they construct, experience or express their sexual identity. The accompanying interviews led to the women explaining the significance of the photographs as well as emphasising their intersecting identities. In turn, these photographs allow the wider community a glance into the sexual and everyday lives of women with physical disability.

While this research set out to explore the implications of sexuality education, exposure to and experience of violence and negative risk taking, the themes that permeated throughout the women's photographs were of resilience, celebration, reclamation and resistance. In line with crip theory, the images produced by the women challenge compulsory able-bodiedness and expand the understanding of diverse and non-(hetero)normative sexuality and sexual expression. An interesting observation of the photographs was while some images do overtly reflect and celebrate sexuality of the women, other participants portrayed everyday activities and objects to express their sexuality. This supports the idea that sexuality is subjective in nature, part of everyday life and includes love, intimacy and family.

This research further illustrated women with physical disability continue to be excluded from actively engaging in sexuality, sexual expression and everyday life due to ableist and (hetero)normative attitudes, policies and research. Wider society needs to recognise women with physical disability are sexual beings and sexuality education, policies and research need to be driven by women with disability for women with disability.



Denise Beckwith is a PhD candidate in the School of Social Sciences at Western Sydney University (WSU). Her PhD explores the sexual lives of women with physical disability, focussing on sexuality education, sexuality identity formation and the risk of exposure to or experiencing violence. The research is a multi-phased national research project, involving 19 women with both congenital and acquired physical disability. Since 2017, Denise has been a casual academic tutor within the School of Social Sciences at WSU and at the Australian College of Applied Psychology (ACAP), Social Work. Denise has also been a consultant and documentary photographer with the multimedia exhibition, *Silent Tears*, which explores the issue of violence against women with disability and violence against women causing disability.

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Rolling in the Gap: Desire and Sexuality in Performance Art as a Means of Processing and Formulating Crip Pasts, Presents and Futures in the Austerity Phase of the Swedish Welfare State

Christine Bylund

Umeå University, Sweden

Day 3 – Saturday March 13 - 11:15 / 12:15 – Panel 7 – Performance & Reformulation of Disabling Imaginaries

The Swedish welfare state prides itself in its exceptionalism in gender equality and disability rights. However, its reforms rest upon and reproduce violent biopolitics of desire and sexuality such as institutionalization, forced sterilisation and violations of personal integrity in order to receive support (Norberg, 2019).

Since 2009 austerity politics have resulted in a drastic decrease in support provided by the welfare state. In this process concepts of desire and sexuality are simultaneously overlooked and central as cuts of support render dis/abled people dependent on partners and limit their means to express gender identity and sexuality (Bylund, 2020). Contemporary lives of dis/abled Swedes are lived in a gap between hegemonic exceptionalism and the dire consequences of austerity, rendering their narratives contested and suppressed (Bylund, forthcoming). In comparison to an Anglo-American context, performance art has seldom been discussed as a tool for awareness, resistance or change in the Swedish disability rights movement. Hence, this paper aims to investigate the depiction and expression of desire and sexuality in performance art in a Swedish context, based on three excerpts from my own artistic work concerning my relationship with the welfare state as a dis/abled person. “Bars/Love letters to Vipeholm” concerning the Swedish welfare state's history of institutionalization through a queer and neurodiverse lens. “Frida, if they knew” considering the role of dis/ability and crip perspectives in the Swedish queer community and “Firebreathing” concerning the traumatic evaluation processes for welfare state support in the austerity phase of the Swedish welfare state. Through an intersectional use of crip and queer theory the paper investigates the role of desire and sexuality in performance art, the relationship between personal and collective narratives, its relationship to resistance and its ability to crip the hegemonic historiography of Swedish exceptionalism. Analyzing art as means to make sense of the past, deconstruct the present and imagining the future in crip-time (cf. McRuer 2017, Kafer, 2013, Samuels, 2017) I argue that it can be used to process and resist ableist biopolitics and that it has the possibility of leaving a crip legacy of resistance and survival in ableist society.



Christine Bylund is a PhD student in Ethnology at Umeå University, affiliated with the ERC-project DISLIFE and the Gender Research School at Umeå Center for Gender Studies. Bylund's research concerns im/possibilities for relationship formations over time for people with dis/abilities in need of support and services from the Swedish welfare. As a performance artist, Bylund works predominantly with questions of power, sexuality and dis/ability through stage based performance art, film and writing. Her work has been shown in the United Kingdom and throughout Europe, such as the Scottish Queer Film Festival, Glasgow and at Lesbisch Schwule Filmtage, Hamburg. Bylund has also frequently participated in discussions on dis/ability, performance and sexuality at events such as Un:Limited Glasgow, Scotland and at conferences such as Ex:Change Perspective and Dansens Hus [International scene of contemporary dance], Stockholm, Sweden and #Metoo moving forward, Reykjavik, Iceland.

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Disabling Desire and Reading Barthes's *The Pleasure of the Text*

Dr Geraldine Cuddihy

Independent Researcher, Ireland

Day 3 – Saturday March 13 – 14:30/15:30 – Panel 9 – At the Limits of Pleasure: (Un)desirability & Representation

"Desire: the force that can both enable and disable us" (Lindner Leporda, Claudia 2020). The aim of this paper is to approach disabilities and sexualities through the lens of *The Pleasure of the Text* by Roland Barthes, with desire as the central organizing principle. *The Pleasure of the Text* is generally perceived as the 'sexuality of language' or an eroticism of language in which Barthes distinguishes between pleasure and *jouissance* both as a reading experience and a state of being. The emphasis here will be on language and, in particular, the language of erotic experience which can be painful and pleasurable. The concept of *jouissance* will also be explored with reference to *Letters to a Young Poet* by Rilke and Kierkegaard's *Diaries*. Questions that will be addressed in this paper include: What are the key differences distinguishing the language of pleasure (readerly text) from the language of *jouissance* (writerly text)? To what extent, if any, can we read *The Pleasure of the Text* in terms of a language of erotic frustration? How does the concept of *jouissance* relate to pain and how does this pain, in turn, disable us? And finally, in what ways can *The Pleasure of the Text* contribute and give expression to a language that furthers our understanding of the experiences of disabilities and sexualities?



Dr Geraldine Cuddihy holds a BA in Women's Studies and Policy Studies from London Metropolitan University and a MA and PhD in Women's Studies from University College Dublin. Her thesis was based on four novels by Julia Kristeva. She was a member of the Dublin Lacan Study Group from 2014 to 2016.

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Tactile Art-Based Teaching and Sexual Behaviours in Young Adults with Dual Sensory Impairment: Perspectives of Professionals Working with Them

Supriya Das & Dr Atul Jaiswal

Perkins India, India & Université de Montréal, Canada

Day 2 – 15:30 / 16:30 – Panel 5 – Interrogating Stigma & Marginalisation: Practicalities and Realities

All young children in their adolescent years undergo significant physical and sexual maturation. Sexual Exploration of one's own body is a natural and inevitable part of the development process, and children with Dual Sensory Impairment (DSI) are no exception. DSI, also termed deafblindness, is a specific disability that encompasses varying hearing and visual impairment degrees.

Due to the societal taboo associated with sexual expression and the limitations posed by the disability, adolescents with DSI get less opportunity to learn, understand and express the changes occurring within their bodies. There is a wide gap in terms of opportunities for sexual literacy for this population. Limited participation in activities of life and lack of social interaction leaves them with the option of turning to their own bodies to self-explore and discover.

Tactile arts-based approach, a touch-based teaching method, is a promising teaching method for sex education for individuals with DSI. In this presentation, we will discuss the different expressions of sexual explorative behaviours in adolescents with DSI and the use of tactile art-based teaching methods in imparting sexuality education to this population. A minimum of fifteen professionals working directly with adolescents with DSI from different nations will participate and be requested to share their experiences. The recorded experiences will be analyzed and presented in this paper. The presentation will underscore the importance of sexual literacy using art-based teaching methods for the DSI population and suggest recommendations for policy and practice.



Supriya Das works as a project coordinator for Perkins India. She has 11 years of experience of working with children with Visual Impairment including Deafblindness. she connects with educators, parents and other professionals across India, providing them with the latest research and educational strategies for children with Visual Impairment along with multiple disabilities and Deafblindness. Her work involves evaluation of programs and conduct trainings. She also serves as a consultant with other organizations in India working for the welfare of children with disabilities to achieve inclusion for children with visual Impairment in mainstream schools. Previously she has worked as a research associate and program coordinator with a diverse team of technologists, designers and rehabilitation professionals and contributed in developing affordable assistive technology devices for people with visual impairment and deafblindness.

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Dr Atul Jaiswal is a CIHR post-doctoral fellow in vision science in the Wittich Vision Impairment Research Laboratory at the School of Optometry, Université de Montréal, Canada. The goal of his scholarship is to advance the knowledge in the field of combined vision and hearing impairment [referred to as dual sensory impairment (DSI) or deafblindness] and generate evidence to inform global health and rehabilitation care practice.

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Dance, Disability and Dissidence in *Lectura fácil* by Cristina Morales

Patricia García & Aina Pérez Fontdevila

Universidad de Alcalá, Spain

Day 3 – Saturday March 13 - 11:15/12:15 – Panel 7 – Performance and Reformulation of Disabling Imaginaries

In 2019, the most important Spanish literary prize – the Premio Nacional de Narrativa – was conferred to the novel *Lectura fácil* (Easy reading) by Cristina Morales (1985-). This award, which stirred up the most conservative cultural circles, was described by the jury as “a radical and radically original proposal”. With an atypical character construction and development, Morales challenged with her novel the white, middle-upper class, heterosexual male character who has a perfectly functional body and no intellectual disabilities.

This polyphonic text presents four female characters diagnosed with different degrees of functional and cognitive disabilities living together in Barcelona. They are confronted with multiple mechanisms and discourses of biopolitical disciplinary control, including judicial interventions and various institutionalized practices embodied by “social integration” services. Alternating their first-person accounts, Morales articulates a radical critique of the different modes of policing physical and psychological difference in an abnormal-phobic society that identifies the wellbeing of disabled individuals with the deactivation of any form of dissent or dissonance.

Among the many normalizing mechanisms narrated in the novel, in this paper we will focus on the practice of integrative dance. This practice is recurrently parodied in key scenes of the novel. We will approach these scenes from the point of view of the intersection between sexuality and disability to explore the boundaries of art, method and disciplinary action. We will also discuss the different forms of resistance that the characters oppose through the vindication of their pleasure and of corporeal, sex-affective dissent.



Dr Patricia García is a *Ramón y Cajal* researcher in Literary Theory and Comparative Literature at the Universidad de Alcalá (Spain). She has previously served as an Associate Professor in Hispanic and Comparative Literature at the University of Nottingham. Her research focuses on narrative spaces and their intersection with urban studies, feminisms and with representations of the supernatural. She has directed the project Gender and the Hispanic Fantastic (funded by the British Academy) and has been a fellow of the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies (2018-2019) with a EURIAS fellowship. She is a member of Executive Committee of the European Society of Comparative Literature, of ALUS: Association for Literary Urban Studies, of the Spanish Research Group on the Fantastic (GEF, Grupo de Estudios de lo Fantástico) and of the editorial board of BRUMAL: Research Journal on the Fantastic. Her most notable publications include the monograph *Space and the Postmodern Fantastic in Contemporary Literature* (Routledge, 2015).

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Aina Pérez Fontdevila is a *Juan de la Cierva* researcher at the Universidad de Alcalá. She is a member of the research group GILCO, *Grupo de Investigación en Literatura Contemporánea*. Her research is dedicated to study the contemporary authorial figure and to gender studies. She has published the following companions *Los papeles del autor/a. Marcos teóricos sobre la autoría literaria* (Arco Libros, 2016) and *¿Qué es una autora? Encrucijadas entre género y autoría* (Icaria, 2019), as well as different special issues in academic journals, such as “*La autoría a debate*” (Tropelías. Revista de Teoría de la Literatura y Literatura Comparada, 2015), “*Autoría y género*” (Mundo Nuevo. Revista de Estudios Latinoamericanos, 2016), “*Gendered Authorial Corpographies*” (Interférences Littéraires, 2017) and “*Ser autora latinoamericana. Estrategias de autor-representación*” (Revista Iberoamericana,



2019). She has also co-edited the following volumes *El cuerpo en mente. Versiones del ser desde el pensamiento contemporáneo* and *A flor de text. Representacions de la corporeïtat als llenguatges artístics* (EdiUOC, 2011).

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Disabled Sexualities and Neoliberal Values in *Orange is the New Black*

Irena Jurković

University of Zadar, Croatia

Day 2 – Friday March 12 – 14:00 / 15:15 – Panel 4 – Visual & Queer Deconstructions of Compulsory Able-bodiedness

Until recently, portrayals of disabled people in popular culture were largely limited to white, asexual men who were represented as either intellectually or morally exceptional. Today, however, we can notice a significant rise in varying representations of disabled characters in film and television as well as a media shift towards the view of disabled bodies as sexually desiring. In this presentation, we will focus on a complex representation of disabled bodies and the intersection of disability, sexuality, and “race” in the critically acclaimed television series *Orange Is the New Black* (OITNB). Following Garland-Thomson’s reading of the “bodily peculiarities in the context of social power relations”, we will analyse the show’s discursive and visual construction of the disabled body in correlation to hegemonic themes of gender, race, class, and sexuality. Bringing together queer theory and disability studies, we will examine how diversity and neoliberalism are being negotiated in the show. Particular attention will be given to two characters with disabilities on the show: Suzanne “Crazy Eyes” Warren, a black woman, lesbian with an unknown mental disability, and John Bennett, a correctional officer at Litchfield prison who has a prosthetic leg. Both of the characters can be seen exploring their sexuality on various occasions and engaging in romantic relationships with other, able-bodied characters on the show. The analysis will revolve around similarities and differences in the representation of the two disabled bodies, as well as the social implications that such representations may have.



Irena Jurković is a Ph.D. student at the University of Zadar. She previously earned her B.A. and M.A. in English Language and Literature and Sociology at the University of Zadar (Croatia). Her research interests focus on contemporary cultural studies, gender and sexuality, popular culture and 21st century American literature. In particular, her dissertation research considers the role of the sexed body in American popular culture by focusing on different ways of (re)presenting the male and female heterosexual body and the homosexual and transsexual body as the non-normative body.

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Schizo* is Sexy: The Eroticism and Exoticism of the "Mysterious Madness"

Ren Koloni

George Washington University, United States

Day 1 – Thursday March 11 – 14:00/15:15 – Panel 1 – Erotics & Transformations: Queer/ Crip Epistemologies

Although schizophrenia and conditions on the schizophrenia spectrum are likely to be seriously disabling and often come with unpleasant (and decidedly unsexy) consequences, a cultural discourse of schizo* as representative of power dynamics has created the capacity for schizo* discourse to generate desire. I use the word schizo*, taking inspiration from other critical terminologies like queer and crip, to distinguish the cultural phenomenon of schizophrenic concepts from medical and psychiatric discourse of schizophrenia diagnoses. Examining the historical and contemporary discourse of schizophrenia, I argue that a subject is discursively marked as schizo* when they inhabit both sides of a power dynamic - both powerful and powerless - simultaneously; this dual power dynamic generates a desire that is often intensely violent and sexual. This desire shapes the way that schizo* is represented in fictional media, and because ableist isolation determines that fictional media is the primary exposure to any kind of schizophrenia for most of the neurotypical public, these representations have real and dangerous implications for real people on the schizophrenia spectrum.

Schizo* characters in media are frighteningly magnetic, unsettling yet also intensely attractive. They are frenetic yet withdrawn, obsessed yet apathetic, difficult to understand yet impossibly fascinating. They are childish and often cannot take care of themselves, but even in their worst moments, they seem to have access to forbidden knowledge and power that the viewer cannot hope to understand. And, of course, they are sexy, even, or perhaps especially, when they are morally abhorrent, dangerous, or violent. Situated in both power and powerlessness, the schizo* subject straddles both sides of a power dynamic, something that itself has deep ties to the erotic, from BDSM to cisheteronormative sexual dynamics. The dual power dynamic is channelled through schizo* characters to intensify or generate attraction, to spawn fascination or intrigue, to mark the site of an appropriate dumping-ground for the audience's libidinal energy, and to legitimize intense and violent reactions.

Among the characters that exemplify a schizo* subject are The Joker and Harley Quinn from Marvel's 'Batman' media, River Tam from the television show 'Firefly,' and Sans from the video game 'Undertale.' Each is characterized by unpredictability, danger, and power coupled with childishness, disability, and the capacity for exploitation. Each character is sexualized heavily either within their respective media, by fan response, or both. And each character is charismatic and intensely desirable, generating cult followings for their media, even when they are not central characters. In analyzing these case studies, I use my own theory of the dual power dynamic inherent to the schizo* subject alongside Anna Mollow's sexual model of disability, which expands upon Freud's notion of the death drive to explain why humans are inexplicably drawn to disability.”



Ren Koloni (they/them) is a cultural theorist and graduate student in George Washington University's English program. With a background in feminist sociology, sociolinguistics, and gender studies, they use queer and crip theory lenses to think through questions of marginalized epistemologies and discourses about/within marginalized communities, in both real-life and fictional settings.

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Disability and Sexuality in the movie *Sanctuary*

Dr Paul McNamara

Mary Immaculate College, Ireland

Day 2 – Friday March 12 – 14:00 / 15:15 – Panel 4 – Visual & Queer Deconstructions of Compulsory Able-bodiedness

This paper will examine the representation of love in relation to characters with disabilities while largely focusing on the Irish film *Sanctuary* (2016). Relationships and disabilities are often something that are considered a taboo pairing in western culture. Oftentimes this is due to feelings of protection from those without disabilities and ideas of preserving innocence in people with disabilities. In his work on the history of intellectual disability Whitaker (2013) has also noted some of this fear may be due to the eugenics movement and the popularity of Darwin's writing on survival of the fittest. Disability can be perceived as lesser and therefore not something that should be carried on genetically. Many countries legally forbid people with intellectual disabilities from having sex or getting married without the consent of their parents if at all.

Many of these issues are directly challenged in the film *Sanctuary*. This chapter aims to discuss these issues in relation to the film. It will use the work of Whitaker to add a historical context. It will also incorporate the work of Rosemarie Garland-Thompson and her work on *Feminist Disability Studies* (2005). Themes such as consent, protection vs freedom, and ableist notions of what love is will be discussed. Overall, it will present a discussion on how love and disability are represented in the film while also offering other examples in popular media, exploring societies difficulties with these relationships.



Dr Paul McNamara recently graduated with his Doctorate from Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick, Ireland. His research interests include Disability Studies, Postcolonialism, Performance Poetry, Performance Studies, Gender Studies, and Modern Irish Poetry and Theatre. He is also an award-winning playwright and performance poet.

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Blind Fingering, Hurt/Comfort, and other Tropes: How Disability is Used in Explicit Fanfiction

Lindsay Mixer

Widener University, United States of America

Day 1 – Thursday March 11 - 15:30/16:30 – Panel 2 – Disabled Be-Cummings: Porn and Fanfiction

Fanfiction is used as a way for fans to explore the worlds and settings of their favorite pieces of media. As a way of subverting patriarchal, heteronormative narratives, fans of marginalized identities use fanfiction to transform mainstream media into something that represents them. Nowhere is this truer than in explicit fanfiction. Often referred to as porn for women, by women, explicit fanfiction has been studied for its use in queering the heteronormative and challenging dominant narratives of how women and men perform sexuality. Research shows that in bringing characters together regardless of their identities in the source material, explicit fanfiction blurs boundaries of gender identity, sexual orientation, and what it means to be sexual. This research has fallen short in the realm of disability, however. Despite there being thousands of works that bring disabled characters into explicit scenes, there is a dearth of research on how disability is written, by whom, and why. This study aims to fill some of this gap by analyzing sex scenes in a variety of explicit works found in the disability tag of *Archive of Our Own*. In looking at how these scenes are written, tagged, and discussed in author's notes and comments, this study will assess the use of explicit fanfiction to subvert and challenge mainstream disability narratives by looking at how a character's disability is brought up within the sex scene—from foreplay to after care—how the authors and readers relate—or don't—to the character's disability, and if the character is given the disability for the piece or has it in the source material. In looking at the content of these works, this study aims to shed light on how explicit fanfiction challenges dominant disability narratives, and the potential uses of fanfiction in helping people with disabilities explore their own sexuality.



Lindsay Mixer is a PhD student at Widener University's Center for Human Sexuality Studies in Chester, PA, USA. With a background in Sociology and English, she studies how people use language and writing to develop their sexual selves, particularly within fanfiction. As someone with multiple disabilities, Lindsay intimately understands the struggles that people with disabilities can encounter in being sexual, and aims to change the mainstream context of sex and disabilities through research and education. Currently, Lindsay works as the Operations Coordinator for the Crisis and Emotional Care Team at Vibrant Emotional Health in New York, NY, USA. In her free time, she enjoys playing roller derby and writing fiction.

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The Sexual Model of Disability

Dr Anna Mollow

Independent scholar, United States of America

Day 3 – Saturday March 13 – 14:30/15:30 – Panel 9 – At the Limits of Pleasure: (Un)desirability & Representation

In this talk, I delineate a new analytic frame, which I call “the sexual model of disability.” The sexual model locates the roots of ableism in a widespread refusal to contend with the sexiness of disability. This may seem a surprising assertion. After all, disabled people are often assumed to be quintessentially unsexy; and although many disability scholars, activists, and artists celebrate the sexiness of disabled people, my argument that disability itself is erotically compelling is likely to seem counterintuitive.

At the centre of the sexual model is a concept, “the disability drive,” that I coined in my earlier work to illuminate connections between sex and disability (see my chapter in *Sex and Disability*, ed. McRuer and Mollow). My concept of the disability drive expands upon and revises Freud’s theory of the “death drive.” While Freud distances the drive from sex and disability, I contend that disability and sexuality are what the drive is all about. I define the disability drive as a sexual pull toward states, such as failure, incapacity, loss, and suffering, that are closely related to disability—both as disability is represented in the culture and, sometimes, as it is experienced by disabled people ourselves. I argue that the disability drive forms an intrinsic part of most people’s psychological lives, and I contend that ableism arises when individuals and cultures attempt to overcome the disability drive, that is, when we deny the effects that disability’s sexiness has upon us. To illuminate these arguments, I perform readings of Interview magazine’s 2015 cover photo of Kylie Jenner posing in a wheelchair; Cheryl Marie Wade’s essay “It Ain’t Exactly Sexy,” and Darrin Bell’s comic strip “Candorville.”



Dr Anna Mollow’s research interests include disability studies, fat studies, critical race studies, feminism, and queer studies. She is the coeditor, with Robert McRuer, of *Sex and Disability* (Duke UP, 2012) and the coeditor, with Merri Lisa Johnson, of *DSM-CRIP* (Social Text Online, 2013). Her essays have appeared in *African American Review*, *Hypatia*, *The Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies*, *WSQ: Women’s Studies Quarterly*, *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States*, *Bitch magazine*, and *HuffPost*. Anna is currently completing a book manuscript titled *The Disability Drive*.

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Crippin' the Disabled Heroine: Queer and Enabling Futures in Shonali Bose's *Margarita with a Straw* (2014)

Shabnam Rathee

Murdoch University, Western Australia

Day 3 – Saturday March 13 - 10:00 / 11:00 – Panel 6 – Subverting the Heroine through Visual Modalities

Canonical representations of disability in Hindi cinema routinely constitute disability as a state of tragic dependence or instability (Pal 2013). Such cinematic representations often replicate structures of ableist cultures, which fail to adequately reflect a more informed and nuanced approach to disability, particularly, gendered experiences of disability. Hindi cinema's melodramatic representations of disabled women as dependent, subservient, and vulnerable characters routinely gloss over the particularity of their gendered and sexualized experiences. In this context, I suggest that Shonali Bose's "new Bollywood" film *Margarita with a Straw* (2014) can offer a corrective to the slanted genealogical record of disabled women on-screen by representing the everyday experiences, struggles, and romantic/erotic desires of its disabled and bisexual heroine. In doing so, I propose that the film reformulates cinematic optics of (dis)ability, sexuality, and heterosexist ableist cultures.

My reading of *Margarita with a Straw*'s treatment of disability and sexuality both draws upon and reworks McRuer and Kafer's work on crip identity. McRuer's notion of compulsory able-bodied heterosexuality reveals how queerness and disability are intimately connected (2003, 2006). I will argue that Bose's film critically parlays these ideas to formulate a different understanding of disability by examining how every institutional context depends upon queerness and disability to sustain the unequal distribution of power and access. In contravening the drive towards compulsory able-bodied heterosexuality, I contend that Bose's film exposes and ultimately questions how disability and queerness constitute the contours of regimes of normality. This in turn connects to the film's relentless critique of the medical model of disability privileged in melodramatic representations of disability in Hindi cinema and Bollywood. By destabilizing this narrative of abject dependence, I suggest that the film gestures towards a crip positionality in imagining enabling, mobile, and "accessible futures" (See Kafer 2013) for disabled individuals, especially disabled women. I further suggest that Bose consciously uses the language of Bollywood romantic comedies as a political strategy of 'disidentification' (Munoz 1999). In disidentifying with conventions of Bollywood rom-coms, *Margarita with a Straw* destabilizes the bourgeois impulse of heteronormative coming-of-age love stories by representing the erotic capacities of its queer and disabled heroine. Bose's film, I argue, should indeed be read as a counter-bildungsroman as it reformulates both the heteropatriarchal underpinnings of mainstream Bollywood rom-coms and melodramatic narratives of disability in Hindi cinema and Bollywood.



Shabnam Rathee is a PhD candidate in the College of Arts, Business, Law and Social Sciences at Murdoch University, Western Australia. Her doctoral research maps cinematic representations of queer female desire and subjectivity to potentially disrupt hegemonic and authoritative modes of conceptualising Indian cinema as an archive of new Indian modernity. Her research interests include queer of color studies, intersectionality, Indian cinema studies, South Asian feminism, and cultural studies. Before joining Murdoch, she tutored a range of in-class and online undergraduate courses at Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee (IITR). She holds an MPhil and MA degree in English from University of Hyderabad and University of Delhi, respectively.
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A Room with a Lesbian, Autistic View: A Queer, Transdisciplinary Perspective of Great Art

Dr Suzanne van Rossenberg

Independent Researcher, United Kingdom

Day 2 – Friday March 12 – 12:00 / 13:15 – Panel 3 – Reclaiming & Imag(in)ing Subjectivities

Drawing on feminist and queer art histories and transdisciplinarity theory, I will revisit my 20+ years' practice of art, research, policy-making and activism through the lens of my (recently discovered) autism. In my paper, I will apply a model I developed for my doctorate (Faculty of Arts and Creative Industries, Middlesex University, UK, completed in 2018) for achieving social equality within and beyond the arts, setting out practical steps of how to counter the exclusionary mechanisms (and economies) of Great Art that favour white, male, straight and able-bodied artists. This model draws on theories of differencing the art canon, intersectional policy-making, feminist epistemology, transdisciplinarity and art-based research, and (art) economics. Criteria for (good) art are - in theory - inherently contextual and ever-evolving. I argue that equality in the arts (and institutional recognition of art that contributes to equality) requires new sets of art criteria that go beyond the interdisciplinary tradition of feminist art histories of the past forty years, and incorporate socio-political and economic analyses alongside art theoretical/historical ones. Only multi-faceted, transdisciplinary research positions can “correctly” interpret, represent and/or historicise artworks that (measurably) contribute to positive social change - and by doing so, further diversify art canons and the notion of Great Art. My presentation will include drawings and paintings from my series *A Room with a Lesbian View* (2004-2013), exhibited and published in among others *Rebelle Art & Feminism 1969-2009* (Museum Arnhem, curator M. Westen) and *The Art of Feminism* (2019, ed. H. Reckitt), as well as my comics and cartoons as published in *Feminism and Art History Now: Radical Critiques of Theory and Practice* (2017, eds. L. Perry and V. Horne) and *Between Discipline and a Hard Place: The Value of Contemporary Art* (2020, A. Jelinek). In my paper, I will also talk about my own transdisciplinary practice in art and equalities, as exemplified by roles as director of Transgender Network Netherlands, author of the first LGBTI children's rights report of its kind in the world, and government policy adviser. Since 2018, I am an equalities, diversity and inclusion adviser in the British Civil Service, where I successfully contribute to intersectional practice, but where there are (still) very few ways to incorporate art or transdisciplinarity in equalities strategies. Behind my “success”, there is a story of “autistic” resilience, burnout, trauma, creativity, exclusion, continuous learning, privilege, luck, and unstoppable desire for social justice. I am driven by a deep longing for queer, disabled, anti-racist artists and activists to be seen, recognised, equally valued and paid - to occupy the metaphorical “room of one's own” (Virginia Woolf) from which we restructure systems, tackle repetition of social inequality, and tell new stories that replace older ones.





About Dr Suzanne van Rossenberg: Over the past 20+ years, I have developed a transdisciplinary practice of art, research, policy-making and activism. I hold a research doctorate from the Faculty of Arts and Creative Industries at Middlesex University (UK), MA Fine Art (University of Plymouth), Postgraduate Diploma in Fine Art (Hons) from the Piet Zwart Institute (Rotterdam), and a BA Fine Art (Royal Academy of Art, The Hague). I am currently Senior Diversity and Inclusion Adviser at the Department for Transport (UK), and my previous roles include LGBT Policy Adviser at the Government Equalities Office, director of Transgender Network Netherlands, author of an LGBTI children's rights report discussed in the Dutch Parliament and submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, and university tutor and supervisor (Middlesex University). I have presented at academic conferences in Leiden, Hamburg, Nijmegen, London, Edinburgh, Lancaster, Brighton, Guildford, and Durham. As a project manager, I delivered many arts projects in collaboration with educational and third sector organisations (e.g., Leiden University, European Feminist Forum, Middlesex University). My art was exhibited in museums and galleries including Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal (Leiden), Museum Arnhem, LUMC Gallery (Leiden), VBKÖ Vienna, Casa da Esquina (Coimbra), Tent. (Rotterdam), and Pulchri Studio (The Hague). I have also published my work in among others *Between Discipline and a Hard Place: The Value of Contemporary Art* (2020, Jelinek), *The Art of Feminism* (2019, Reckitt, Robinson et al.), *Feminism and Art History Now: Radical Critiques of Theory and Practice* (2017, Perry and Horne, ed.), *Rebelle: Art & Feminism 1969-2009* (2010, Westen et al.). I was shortlisted for and awarded several grants and prizes, including a one-year grant from The Netherlands Foundation for Visual Arts, Design and Architecture, and a Dutch national prize for young art critics (de Prijs voor de Jonge Kunstcritiek).

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“They Were Shaving My Head and It Was Even More Upsetting than the SCI Itself”: Liminality and De/sexualization of the Disabled Body

Laura Sanmiquel-Molinero & Dr Andrea García-Santesmases Fernández

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain & Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spain

Day 2 – Friday March 12 – 15:30 / 16:30 – Panel 5 – Interrogating Stigma & Marginalisation: Practicalities and Realities

For more than forty years, several authors have linked the advent of an impairment -and, particularly, a spinal cord injury (SCI)- with the entry into a rite of passage frozen in its liminal phase. According to Murphy (1987), although liminality is maintained once people leave the rehabilitation center, this setting epitomizes liminality. There, gender and race hierarchies are diluted because liminality entails "anti-structure" (Turner, 1969) and thus, the formation of "*communitas*" among liminal beings. Scholars in Disability Studies have criticized the liminality framework for being politically "pessimistic" with regard to the possibilities for social change. Although we agree with this criticism, we consider that the concept of liminality provides us with a privileged lens to complicate the inclusion/exclusion dichotomy the disabled body usually grapples with. Thus, we advocate complementing it with Critical Disability Studies (which include Crip Theory). In this conference, we use this combined theoretical framework to discuss the results concerning the hospitalization stage from two qualitative investigations based on interviews and participant observation conducted with people who have an SCI. Both studies show that, in the hospital, a *communitas* is generated among those who have acquired an SCI, and there is a hierarchical power relationship with health professionals in which the disabled body becomes a degenderized and desexualized object. However, our studies also show that *communitas* is not absolute: subjects deploy strategies and practices that resist desubjectivizing homogenization by gendering and sexualizing their bodies. These instances of resistance sometimes take the form of a voluntary action on the part of the subject but, at other times, they are passive, in the sense that the gendering practice is uncontrollable by the subjects themselves. Ultimately, this leads us to reflect on how we should interpret the submission/subversion dichotomy with regard to the link between ableism, heterosexism and the (de)sexualization of the disabled body.



Laura Sanmiquel-Molinero got a BA in Psychology from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) in 2017, after completing the dissertation "Sujeción, des-sujeción y subjetivación del cuerpo discapacitado. Entre el orgullo, la vergüenza y la superación". Afterwards, she approached Critical Disability Studies while taking the Master's Degree in Psychosocial Research and Intervention (UAB; 2017-2018). In July of 2018, she defended her Master's Thesis entitled "Putting Emotions to Work: The Role of Affective Disablism and Ableism in the Constitution of the Dis/abled Subject", published in *Disability & Society* in 2019. This emphasises the importance of affects in the constitution of the "disabled subject". In September 2018, she started a PhD in Social Psychology at the UAB, and obtained a FPU grant from the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport. Her current research focuses on problematizing the "transitions" that happen during the advent of an impairment and, especially, the so-called "adjustment to disability".

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Dr Andrea García-Santesmases Fernández is graduated in Sociology by the Charles III University of Madrid and in Social and Cultural Anthropology by the Complutense University of Madrid. She holds a Master's Degree in Sociological Research by the University of Barcelona. She holds a PhD with a distinction "cum laude" in Sociology. Her thesis is titled: "Impertinent Bodies: a Queer-Crip Analysis of Possibilities of Subversion from Functional Diversity". Her main lines of research are the intersections between gender studies and disability studies. She's also been visiting scholar at the Disability and Human Rights Observatory (ODDH) of the University of Lisbon (ISCSP) and at the Núcleo de Estudos de Gênero- PAGU of the Universidade Estadual de Campinas (São Paulo, Brasil). Currently, she is working at Open University of Catalonia (UOC), involved in different projects about independent living activism and as part of the research group Care & Preparedness in the Network Society (CareNet).

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Fetishizing Disability: Pain and Trauma in *A Little Life* by Hanya Yanagihara

Daniel Schmidt

Saarland University, Germany

Day 3 – Saturday March 3 – 12:30/13:45 – Panel 8 – Literary Perspectives: Liminal Spaces of the Traumatic Body

In recent years, Disability Studies have gotten more and more attention across all disciplines in the Humanities, tracing forms of disability throughout centuries and in different media (Nolte et al., 2017). The task remains to contextualize and setting the frame within the academic field of Disability Studies.

This paper aims to analyze the phenomenon which focuses on fetishizing different aspects of disability. To be more precise, the text analyzes forms of relationships between relationships with able and disabled people and a possible co-dependency and helping syndrome. The literary example for this analysis is “A little Life” by Hanya Yanagihara (2015). Furthermore, one aspect will be visualizing one’s disability through the form of art which plays an important role in the book. The book’s subject is set in the frame within the performance of the body, Queer Studies and the History of Art.



Daniel Schmidt obtained a Bachelor’s degree in German literature and in the Study of Religion from the University of Bremen. He received a scholarship to attend Dickinson College, USA, where he gained experience in Gender Studies, Black Studies, and History of Art. Publications include subjects about a Queer Turn in medieval literature and the construct of Homeland and Identity (both forthcoming). Currently enrolled in the Master program at Saarland University for Comparative Literature and European Cultural Studies, his research interests focus on Gender Studies, Postmodern and Postmemory Studies and Transnational Literature

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Perverting Liberation

Dr Johnathan Smilges

Texas Woman's University, United States of America

Day 1 – Thursday March 11 –14:00/15:15 – Panel 1 – Erotics & Transformations: Queer/ Crip Epistemologies

Queer is that which makes others think you're mentally ill. Or so I argue. Much of the existing work at the nexus of queer studies and disability studies builds on the idea that disabled sexualities are antithetical to heteronormativity. This work affirms that our bodyminds thrive on other kinds of touch and that we desire alternate universes of ecstatic pleasure. But too often does the coming together of queer and disability elide the promises of each term: that queer can mean more than sex and that disability is not located strictly within the body. I step into this lacuna to ask how neuroqueer excesses—forms of enminded deviance considered both too queer and too disabled—might be mobilized to expand the discursive limits of what queer and disability could become. Specifically, this paper attends to the rhetorical potentialities of pathological desire, of those perverse erotics that are medicalized because they remain repulsive or unthinkable to the heteronormative imagination. These erotics, such as bestiality, incest, and child love, are routinely castigated by LGBTQ and disability/mad pride organizations as a way to shore up their own respectability against taboo Others. I argue, however, that the perceived threat posed by pathological desire is a residual effect of our collective failure to embrace the rhetorical possibilities enabled by queer and disability's interanimation. What would happen, I ask, if we understood pathological desire not as the detritus against which queer and disability define themselves but as the ideal to which each aspires? What if pathological desire were not neuroqueer's excess but rather its ultimate fulfillment?



Dr Johnathan Smilges is an Assistant Professor of English and Multicultural Women's and Gender Studies at Texas Woman's University, where they study the interanimation of sexuality, disability, and gender. Their work as an educator is driven by a commitment to transfeminism, and their broader ethical commitments are firmly rooted in disability justice and queer of color liberation. Their current research, which attends to the activism of multiply marginalized queer people, has been recognized by the American Studies Association and the National Council of Teachers of English. Recent publications can be found in *Disability Studies Quarterly*, *Rhetoric Review*, and the *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*.

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Visual Art as Visual Literacy: Interdicting the Delusion with Reference to ‘Sexualities, Desires, and Emotions’ of Disabled Humans

Dr Amodini Sreedharan

Independent Researcher, India

Day 3 – Saturday March 13 - 10:00 / 11:10 – Panel 6 – Subverting the Heroine through Visual Modalities

The term ‘Visual Literacy’ is multidisciplinary and scholars reiterate its impact beyond the classroom. It encompasses visual content, composition and communication by creating images. Similarly, ‘Visual Art’ includes painting, drawing, and film making too. Definitely it influences comprehension much easily. Films entertain and reflect the happenings of society. But this medium should also assist in creating awareness and uprooting social evils. Likewise, it should showcase the life and complexities of ‘disabled people’ too. As a matter of fact, Indian film industry’s trajectory only saves honour with few films on disability. The perfect images of ‘real’ to ‘reel’ will somehow help in eradicating many prejudices and false notions. The paper focuses on four movies. Firstly, Hindi movie *Black* (2005) is about a blind girl’s coming of age and her life coach. Second, *Margarita with a Straw* (2014) projects girl’s suffering from cerebral palsy which never hinders her to explore her desire and sexuality. Third, Malayalam movie *Bangalore Days* (2014) sheds light on an abled man’s love interest with disabled girl. Fourth, Malayalam movie *Kattu* (2017) wonderfully projects a young rural childish youth at epicentre and his relations with others. The visual content and projection of these movies create awareness and educate the audience. It also challenges the taboo, prejudice and social exclusion of disabled people. The paper explores contours of this film to study general emotions of love, hate, revenge, anger, joy, excitement which are similar to any able person and carry no gender biases. The second part of the paper focuses on the attitude and perception of ‘sexuality’ of abled towards disabled and vice versa. Furthering the trends of narrative content and visual images (films) to interdict that disability does not make them asexual on the contrary they too have sexual preferences and choices. Thus ‘visuals and literacy’ about ‘disability’ cross respective disciplines to broaden narrow comprehension regarding ‘disability’.



Dr Amodini Sreedharan received her B.A, M.A, M. Phil. in English from Vikram University and Ph.D in English Literature from Aligarh Muslim University (2006). She also received M.A in Women and Gender Studies. She has more than 12 years teaching experience at college and university level. Her research interests span across Postcolonial Literature, Ecofeminism, Feminism, Film Studies, Gender Studies and Women Studies. Much of her work is to study the varied socio-patterns, economic and political designs to understand exploitation expressed in and through literary forms. She has presented several papers in international and national conferences. She is author of over fifteen research papers and designed study materials for undergraduate courses. She has given invited lectures and tutorials contributing to the English language proficiency. She is well versed in English, Hindi, and Malayalam.

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‘Shade[s] of Queer’: Autism and the Inventiveness of Sexuality

Abby Stannard Ashley

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Day 1 – Thursday March 11 – 14:00/15:15 – Panel 1 – Erotics & Transformations: Queer/ Crip Epistemologies

In western society today, the sexual desire of autistic people is habitually figured as either absent or pathological. As Justine Egner writes, autistic individuals are ‘frequently de-gendered and desexualised in media, popular imagination and research’. Yet, simultaneously, any expression of gender identity or sexuality is disregarded as symptomatic of autism itself. Autistic activist and rhetorician, Melanie Yergeau, acknowledges that her pansexuality is ‘often bound with autistic behaviour in the imagination of my therapists’, whilst writer Adrienne Smith drily recognises that, ‘disability service professionals suggests that ‘treating my autism will de facto “treat” my asexual hetero marriage or dislike of penetration or my pan-gender romantic attractions’.

My paper challenges the stigmatising nature of these medical and cultural assumptions of neurological difference by exploring the varied, multitudinous and, at times, elusive ways in which autistic people understand, experience and express sexual desire. I consider autistic life-writing, fiction, and visual works to illustrate the value of neurodivergence as an intersection when considering sexuality and subjectivity. In line with Jordynn Jack’s claim that autistic accounts of gender and sexuality are often ‘heteroglossic’ in nature, Smith describes their particular ‘shade of queer’ as ‘Anne of Green Gables, but not Anne of Avonlea, and most definitely not Anne of Windy Poplars’. Self-described ‘queer, agender, Black femme’, Ashleigh J. Mills, emphasises the ritualistic value of kink in their experience of sexual desire as part of *Stim: An Autistic Anthology*. Moreover, the recurring presence of demisexuality alongside other sexual orientations appears to serve as a valuable signifier for many autistic people.

As such, my paper recognises that, far from having an absence or pathological sense of sexuality, neurodivergent subjectivities indicate an expansive, inventive and imaginative potential when considering sexuality and desire, which has wide-ranging implications for how sexual desire is understood in wider, largely nonautistic, society.



Abby Stannard Ashley (they/them/theirs) is a neurodivergent, AHRC-funded PhD researcher at the Universities of Bristol and Exeter, and is researching autism and gender in contemporary literature and culture. They hold an MA degree in modern and contemporary literature from the University of Bristol. More generally, Abby’s research interests lie in the intersection between literature and medicine, and crip-queer approaches to understanding disability.

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Reclaiming the Viral Body: Eroticism, HIV, and Danez Smith's Poetry

Alex Torres

University of Bristol, United Kingdom

Day 2 – Friday March 12 – 12:00 / 13:15 – Panel 3 – Reclaiming & Imag(in)ing Subjectivities

For the self-proclaimed Black, Queer, and Poz poet Danez Smith, the relationship between the eroticism and the limitations of the body is a central theme. In anthologies such as *Don't Call Us Dead* (2017) and *Homie* (2020), Smith offers an extraordinary lyrical account of what it means to be Black and HIV positive in the U.S. today.

Since the dawn of Antiretroviral Therapies (ART) and, more recently, treatments such as Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), HIV has become, for those with access to appropriate healthcare, a manageable disability with little impact on a person's daily life. Despite this, the stigma surrounding the virus has remained largely unaltered.

In this paper, I will consider the ways in which Smith's poetry addresses the body, marked by race and serostatus. I will be asking how by pushing the body's boundaries, Smith attempts to find a space in which to reconcile self, body, and viral status, while weaving a metaphorical net of lovers that ultimately expands beyond the restrictions of gender, race, and serostatus. Sexual imagery and eroticism are instrumental in Smith's journey of self-exploration, as they open up the gates to the uncharted territory of the viral body. In order to examine how Smith articulates and expresses their own sexuality and disability through the poetic form, I will consider poems such as '1 i 2' and 'a note on the phone app that tells me how far i am for other men's mouths'. I will argue that eroticism serves not only as a means to reconcile and celebrate the relationship of the self and the viral body, but as an exercise of rebellion in the light of society's expectations and prejudices surrounding queer, racialised, and/or viral bodies.



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Dr Sarah Meehan O'Callaghan is an independent scholar within the fields of Lacanian psychoanalysis, body/disability studies and drama studies. Her recent PhD is an interdisciplinary study of the 'trauma' of the body in the drama of Artaud, Beckett and Genet from a Lacanian psychoanalytic perspective. She is one of the organisers of the annual Irish Psychoanalytic Film Festival that takes place in Dublin, now in its 12th year. She has published several articles on psychoanalysis in *Lacunae* (The International Journal of Lacanian Psychoanalysis) on: disability, sexuality and Lacan's concept of the phallus. She is a member of EROSS@DCU (Expressions, Research, Orientations: Sexuality Studies).

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