



Representing Disability, D/deaf, and Mad Artists and Art in Journalism: Identifying Ableist Fault Lines and Promising Crip Practices of Representation

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ABSTRACT *This paper revisits the dynamic discussion about journalism's role in representing and amplifying disability arts at the 2019 Crippling the Arts Symposium. Chronicling the dialogue of the "Representation" panel which included artists, arts and culture critics, journalists, and scholars, it reveals how arts and culture coverage contributes to the cultivation of disability, D/deaf, and mad art. Given that the relationship between journalism and disability communities continues to be fractured in Canada, speakers were invited to reflect on journalism and disability arts in relation to their own engagement with media as subjects, authors, and critics of disability arts reviews. The methods for presentation were crippled in multiple ways to provide the fullest access possible. The panel concluded with examples of ableist fault lines in representation practices where the disabled figure is an absent "ghost" in journalistic representation, warnings against journalistic reliance on traditional and objective narratives, and a call for artists to claim and write their own stories. Ultimately, disabled, D/deaf, and mad artists need both control over artistic endeavours and output and influence over representation. This article reconnects journalism and disability communities, ultimately demonstrating that representation is a critical, co-constitutive process that can become more aesthetically and politically oriented toward social justice in its focus on disability, D/deaf, and mad arts.*

KEYWORDS disability arts; journalism; representation; crip; panel

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Figure 1. Members of the “Representation” Panel at *Crippling the Arts* (photo: Michelle Peek Photography courtesy of *Bodies in Translation: Activist Art, Technology & Access to Life*, Re•Vision: The Centre for Art & Social Justice at the University of Guelph).

Image description: Five members of the *Crippling the Arts* “Representation” panel sit on a stage. In the foreground of the image a blurred audience faces the panellists, who each have a microphone near their seats. In the background is a colourful, abstract illustration projected onto a screen. From left to right, the panellists in the image are Michael Orsini, Leah Sandals, Shay Erlich, Peter Owusu-Ansah, and Nadine Changfoot.

Introduction

In this panel exchange from the 2019 *Crippling the Arts Symposium* in Toronto, Canada, six speakers and one moderator reveal how journalistic arts and culture coverage contributes to current shapings of disability, D/deaf, and mad art. The speakers, introduced individually below, come from a range of backgrounds with often overlapping roles – they are artists, arts and culture critics, journalists, and scholars. The purpose of this panel was to increase the rigour and cultural competency of critical disability, D/deaf, and mad arts in journalism by critically responding to journalistic coverage of disability arts.

The launching point for this panel was a well-established understanding in disability communities that media representations have the potential to shape the attitudes of audiences toward disability (Haller, 1999; Longmore, 2003). Journalism has historically coded disability coverage through negative tropes (Clogston, 1991; Haller, 1993). Although the medical model forms a persistent storyline in much news media (Bendukurthi & Raman, 2016, p.

143), alternative themes such as social inclusion, solidarity in the disability community, and the treatment of disabled people have emerged in news reporting, such as in that of the 2015 New York disability pride parade (Mellifont, 2017). Notably, though, much of the literature on disability and representation in news media focuses on Canada, the United States, Australia, and other English-speaking contexts, leaving significant gaps in our knowledge about disability and representation elsewhere (Bendukurthi & Raman, 2016; Parent, 2020).

Further, media representations also offer chances for us to think through the normative assumptions that ground these representations (Titchkosky, 2020, p. 13). Journalism – as both an industry and an individual practice by journalists – plays an important and complex role in educating audiences about social justice, including the rich, creative energies of crip arts, its effects, including aesthetic exploration, accessibility, presentation, and the growth of the disability, D/deaf, and mad arts sector.

Following the editors of this special journal issue, we use the term “crip” as a descriptor drawn from current discourse around disability arts in Canada, including appeals to crip the arts through events such as the *2019 Crippling the Arts Symposium*, a university course taught by Eliza Chandler, and a special issue of *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies* (2019) each covering the topic of crippling the arts. For the purpose of this writing, we simply follow Christina Myers’ (2019) explanation in *Canadian Art* of what it means to crip the arts: “to ‘crip’ the arts is to embrace the ways that disability can disrupt the status quo and lead with difference” (para. 7). Aiming to bridge a gap between disability arts and media representation, we also note the adoption of crip in disability media discourses. Consider, for example, the U.S.-based hashtag #CripTheVote on Twitter, which sought to raise awareness of disability issues during the 2016 presidential election. Disabled folk producing their own media are beginning to insist that they are crippling representation – a sentiment that was ultimately urged onward by the panelists in the “Representation” session.¹ For example, mobile filmmaker Laurence Parent (2020) uncovers compulsory able-bodiedness in media representation by making her wheelchair an integral part of her filmmaking, and describes her work as crip and crippling (p. 202). Following Jonathan Bartholomy (2020), we can think of crippling in a media context as “the act of revealing the overarching norms within a society that reinforce the dominance of the non-disabled perspective and its exclusionary practices (p. 59). Layering together artistic and media crip ontologies that aim to disrupt and reveal oppression allows us to think through the fractured relationship between disability, D/deaf, and mad arts and media in ways that demonstrate that there is common ground among the fields. Although “crip” does not yet

¹ We use the term “folk” to be inclusive of Black, Indigenous, people of colour, non-binary, and trans persons.

grace the pages of traditional media style guides, to crip representation is a creative, critical, co-constitutive process that can become more aesthetically and politically oriented toward social justice through its engagement in disability, D/deaf, and mad arts.

Introduction to Panellists

To open the panel, each speaker sat on stage overlooking the audience, and was asked to introduce themselves to the audience by describing themselves. To avoid generalizations and to forefront the words of the panellists, we will introduce them individually, pulling on transcription excerpts of their own words (which, at times, were playful and met with laughter from the audience), in the order they sat on stage from right to left:

Peter Owusu-Ansah is a D/deaf visual artist working in Toronto: “I am a Black Ghanaian. I am wearing a dark grey t-shirt, I’m wearing light grey pants, and my shoes are sort of a blueish-green with a brown stripe around the bottom. I’m a visual artist.”

Shay Erlich is a wheelchair dancer, a performance art critic, and an accessibility consultant: “I am a white, queer, genderqueer, multiply disabled person. I am a wheelchair user, my wheelchair has lots of colours on it, it has purple highlights, green spokes, and yellow wheels. Currently, I am wearing grey socks, skipped the shoes because they were bothering me, black pants with black polka dots, a blazer that is beige with red plaid on it, and a bright green shirt that says, ‘My other disability is a bad attitude.’ Today I’ll be mostly speaking from my experiences as a disability arts critic, but [I wear] lots of hats.”

Leah Sandals is an editor at *Canadian Art* magazine: “I am a white settler, cisgender woman, and I have greying brown hair. I am wearing black pants, black cardigan, black shirt with white polka dots because that’s so whimsical of me [laughter], and I have black boots and black glasses.”

Michael Orsini is a former journalist and a professor in the School of Political Studies at the University of Ottawa: “I am a white, cisgender, able-bodied male. I am wearing a purplish sweater, grey pinstripe pants, and new shoes that were on sale [laughter].”

Sarah Jama is a community organizer based in Hamilton, Ontario, and co-founder of the Disability Justice Network of Ontario (DJNO): “I am a Somali Canadian, Black woman, cisgender, um, I have Cerebral Palsy, which means I use my walker sometimes, but today I am in my electric chair. I’m from Hamilton, Ontario, which is territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe people, and is governed by the Dish with One Spoon wampum agreement. My hair is in braids, I am wearing a dress with a really ugly red-and-white pattern which I wasn’t a fan of, but I’m running out of options [laughter].”

Kirsty Johnston described herself as a white, settler, cis-gender woman dressed mostly in black. “I have freckles and red hair that is going grey. Let’s not dwell on that.”

The panel moderator was Nadine Changfoot. She described herself as having “silver hair” that her salon is encouraging her to colour. The panel organizer was Chelsea Temple Jones, who sat in the audience in order to communicate time signals to Changfoot. Jones is a white settler with shoulder-length blond hair.

Methods

There is a backstory to this panel that involved Jones and Changfoot’s attempt to crip a panel format, and to move outside of traditional panel presentations. The work began with direct recruitment strategies, wherein Jones worked in collaboration with event organizers to reach out to speakers, with the intention to ensure that disabled people of colour were represented. In effort not to overrepresent whiteness, Jones ultimately stepped away from the panel, taking a backstage role. Both Jones and the moderator, Changfoot, conceptualized their roles as connecting and supporting panelists through the entire process. Therefore, between November 2018 and January 2019, Jones and Changfoot hosted two online meetings via Zoom, which included an American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreter. The purpose of these meetings was to create time and space for panelists to meet one another and share ideas. In the meantime, Jones checked in with the group regularly via email.

During these group check-ins, the group’s desire to disrupt, or crip, traditional panel formats became clear. We were offered 60 minutes to speak. In a traditional panel this might amount to an equal division of time for each speaker – around five to seven minutes each. Instead, we collectively decided that because people express themselves in varying modes and at varying paces, we would divide time based on the amount of time each speaker felt they might need to complete their thoughts. In other words, some speakers got more or less time than others. And, in effort not to privilege orality, panelists were invited to make a video or sound recording, bring an object, or offer some other form of creative expression to share with the audience. Jones took notes on these preparatory conversations and shared these notes with the group using Google Docs so that panelists could add their thoughts and questions, facilitating dialogue between each other in between meetings and prior to the presentation day.

During the Symposium, Changfoot deliberately sought out and spoke with each panelist prior to the panel. When the panel began, Changfoot invited each panelist to introduce themselves by offering a visual description for access. Jones sat in the audience, within view of Changfoot. Because this was a large-scale event with stage direction coming from venue staff, this

direction was streamlined to Jones who communicated with Changfoot through simple hand signals, indicating, most importantly, when it was time to wrap up the conversation. Our decisions to this end were informed by a critical understanding of the risks involved in the chosen panel format of storytelling, the importance of recasting a panel presentation through crip time, and a concerted effort to develop arts-based panel questions, described below.

Avoiding “Share Your Story” Requests

Notably, in an initial online meeting via Zoom in November 2018, three months prior to the *Crippling the Arts* event, panellists gathered and deliberated together online about the ways they wished to share their thoughts. The decision to focus on the relationship between journalistic representation and disability, D/deaf, and mad arts intended to provide panellists and Symposium participants an opportunity to consider representational concerns from a range of perspectives shared by artists, scholars, and activists – that is, perspectives from the “lots of hats” panellists wear, to borrow Erlich’s later words. These perspectives, uniquely shared by people who engage in both artistic production and media representation in a myriad of ways, mark the co-constitutive process of representation: both the creation and engagement with disability, D/deaf, and mad arts and journalism are factors in achieving social reform (Burns & Haller, 2015, p. 263).

As panel moderator and organizer, respectively, Changfoot and Jones were also aware of the rampant casting of disabled people as “experts” on disability, and the tokenization risks, which are described here and in later sections of the writing. Anticipating that the task of speaking on this panel would include speaking to the disability arts community’s fatigue around journalistic and other requests to “share stories,” the group opted not to focus on expertise or story-sharing entirely. The often-repeated request for experts to share stories has been described by Jijian Voronka (2015), who recalls being approached to speak – or perform – her consumer narrative at conferences and other events in paid and unpaid capacities. She explains that mad people’s lived experiences have “generated a commodity of plenary presentations” (p. 255). And, in her book *Care Work* (2018), Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha describes the risk of making public commentary on disability culture and disability justice:

I have thought a lot about what I wanted to do to intervene in the very likely reality that, as I am a light-skinned, non-Black, ambulatory, often verbally communicative person, mainstream media would want to cast me as “the face of disability justice” and thrust me into the spotlight as the one “expert” on this wacky new movement – erasing all of my comrades and fellow artists, thinkers, and organizers, particularly those who face certain kinds of ableism that are more overt and killing than some that I face. (p. 25)

Certainly, part of being an artist and an activist involves speaking publicly about the work. However, drawing on Piepzna-Samarasinha's point, offering stories of disability art to mainstream audiences is a complicated process that privileges some narratives over others and can put speakers' stories in compromised positions. And, once disabled folx' stories are released into the world, they are at risk of being co-opted by long-held mainstream tropes, such as recovery or success stories that bolster neoliberal notions of resilience (Voronka, 2015) and supercrip stories that represent disabled characters as "superhuman" for overcoming adversity or simply living a normal life (Clogston, 1991). The panel organizers anticipated that panelists had been asked, elsewhere, to rehearse the suspect, inclusionist narrative of disabled people gaining entry into a mainstream art world as the marker of their success – and we tried to avoid it.

Organizing a Panel for Crip Time

Given the 60-minute timeframe for this panel, the group queried how aiming for even allotments of time among the panellists rested on ableist assumptions and ignored the principles of crip time. Crip time is a relational phenomenon that reflects the temporal variations needed to accomplish everyday activities that are often confined to normative timelines (Katzman et al., 2020). Alison Kafer (2013) describes crip time as a flexible way of thinking that challenges us to reimagine "our notions of what can and should happen in time... recognizing how expectations of 'how long things take' are based on very particular minds and bodies" (p. 27). We understood the irony of using crip time to highlight the inequitable distribution of temporal and other resources that go into participating on a tightly scheduled panel. Still, we tried to compose a panel discussion that would "[bend] the clock" and take a "flexible approach to normative time frames," even given the one-hour time limit (Kafer & Price in Samuels, 2017). With six panellists, the group decided to facilitate a collective ethos within the panel whereby a consensus was forged for each panellist to have varying timelines to share their thoughts/answers to two questions, recognizing that some may take less time and others a little more. In these ways, crip time was a key element of the panel's construction.

Arts-based Panel Questions

With the risks around disability-related storytelling in mind, and with the intention to move through the hour-long panel in ways that honour crip time, the group reached a mutual decision to focus less on the old tell-your-story-again request and instead to shape their responses around two arts-based questions:

Question 1: Given your practice, what word, image, feeling, sound, object, or colour comes to mind when you are faced with the word “journalism”?

Question 2: Share your responses to journalists’ reviews of either your or other’s work. What would you like to see done differently in journalistic coverage of disability, D/deaf, and mad art, to grow all the dimensions that artists want to grow, as well as the culture?

Following each person’s introduction, including a visual description, panellists spoke to each question for varying amounts of time. The themes that emerged from this conversation are analysed below.

Panel Discussion Analysis

Pet Peeves: Journalists are Getting it Wrong

With the disability rights movement in the 1980s in North America following and coinciding with the disability rights movement in the United Kingdom, disabled, D/deaf, and mad artists took to self-representation as a way of resisting and disrupting cultural misrepresentations that were premised upon able-bodied and ableist norms to create and “establish disability as a valued human condition, shift control to disabled people so they may shape their narratives and bring this disability controlled narrative to wider audiences” (Abbas et al., 2004, p. 1). The power of self-representation is inherently political in that disabled, D/deaf, and mad artists want to be seen on their own terms and this involves changing “the way society *sees* us” (Chandler et al., 2018, p. 252). D/deaf, disability and mad arts and culture have grown, recently becoming a priority area for the Canada Council for the Arts in 2008 and the Ontario Arts Council in 2014 (Ontario Arts Council, 2015).

Despite the over 40-year history of the disability movement, longstanding ableist representations of disability, D/deafness, and madness continue, evoking such descriptors of journalistic representations from panellists: “frustration” (Shay Erlich), “white fragility and mechanical monolith” (Sarah Jama), “crisis” (Leah Sandals), “history and ghosts” (Johnston), “story narrative” (Michael Orsini), and “blank canvas” (Peter Owusu-Ansah). Notably, Erlich’s frustration was expressed in their “Top Three Disability Arts Criticism Pet Peeves,” which relate to ableist perspectives and disabling arts and journalistic practices. The first pet peeve is critics’ ignorance of D/deaf, disability and mad language and culture.

When referring to sector artists, critics continue to use language that orients toward able-bodied norms instead of the conventions of disability, D/deaf, and mad culture. For example, in a review of D/deaf artist, D. J. Demers, the comic was described as having a “hearing disability” (Sumi, 2018), instead of the reviewer using the preferred cultural terms, from Erlich’s perspective, of either D/deaf or hard of hearing. Erlich shared this disability cultural practice,

identifying as hard of hearing and fluent in ASL. There is also a tendency toward “diagnoses-dropping,” an ableist practice whereby an artist’s biomedical diagnosis becomes a focal point, instead of the artist and their work, thus revealing both a hegemonic biomedical view of disability and an ableist compulsion to disclose disability (Roman, 2009), both of which are irrelevant when it comes to the work.

Erlich’s second peeve is the focus by journalists on accommodation as the performance by describing it in detail and providing commentary on the accommodation, instead of concentrating on the artist and artistic practice itself. This is not to say that accommodation for accessibility purposes is not important. Accommodation in arts venues through Relaxed Performance (RP) has been growing. Originating in the United Kingdom to provide access elements to theatre presentations for persons living with autism and Tourette’s syndrome, RP has grown and continues to develop to make arts presentations more accessible for a wider range of disability and audience experiences (see Kempe, 2015, Lamarre et al., 2019). Access elements of RP can include ASL interpretation, live audio description, a visual and described guide to the theatre space (e.g., accessible washrooms, parking) and the presentation (e.g., allowing for soft talking about the presentation in process, cues for loud or startling noises, changes in presentation such as lights and noises for the RP itself), and guidance to patrons to be scent-free. The intention of RP is to create access to the art, not for the RP access elements to become an ableist focal point especially by a non-disabled audience or journalist. In the case of D. J. Demers, the review (Sumi, 2018) made the ASL interpreter a focal point for non-D/deaf audience instead of focusing on the artist, content of the comedy, or the experience of D/deaf, disabled and non-disabled audience members attentive to the accessibility of the performance. In these instances, there is, for Erlich, a “fetishization of accommodation” where the accommodation itself becomes the audience object, remaining within a biomedical understanding of disability.

Erlich’s third pet peeve is the acceptance by journalists, as well as audiences, of “disability mimicry” or “cripping up,” which refers to the problematic Western tradition of non-disabled actors playing disabled characters and draws a parallel between this kind of entrenched ableist practice and the racism of blackface minstrel performance traditions (from O’Reilly in Sandahl, 2019; Komporály, 2007). Sometimes, these storylines follow a disabled character who becomes spontaneously able-bodied at different points of a performance, including at the end where, in one play given as an example, there is a huge celebration at which the wheelchair user, who is arthritic, gets up with the entire cast to dance. The reviews for this play were silent on the ableist perspective of an arthritic wheelchair user who is miraculously cured at apparent will. This kind of plot and character where disability becomes, as panellist Michael Orsini put it, “the punchline or the inspiration and uplift” of a story narrative, are also made and reported on for a primarily non-disabled audience. Disabled characters become

“melodramatic devices” (Longmore, 2003, p. 133) to relieve primarily nondisabled audiences of their anxieties around issues of loss of bodily autonomy. Plots that end in cure and overcoming but also can feature death, saving the disabled character, or reevaluation are, for Mitchell and Snyder (2000, p. 10), “narrative prostheses” because they signal “something out of place” serving as metaphorical problem from the able-bodied gaze to be solved and disappearing disabled persons as subjects. Refusing disappearance and being sidelined, disability, D/deaf, and mad artists create their own art and crip aesthetic.

Making Crip Aesthetic

As disability, D/deaf, and mad arts and culture flourish, so does crip aesthetic – an aesthetic that emerges from disabled, D/deaf, and mad lived experiences that are valid in and of themselves (Chandler & Rice, 2013, Chandler et al., 2018), bringing into cultural consciousness new and multiple spaces and narratives, orienting audiences to new perspectives and artistic presentations. Erin Ball’s performance at “Crip Shorts,” a performance event that took place at *Crippling the Arts*, is an example of a promising crip aesthetic for the plural ways she presented her acrobatic art form with and without different prostheses, with and without a wheelchair. She provided beautiful renderings of sculptural form, using both fluid and strong body movement with technical precision – for example, through many handstands up and down her wheelchair, including her body positioned in the splits with stilts, leg-length prostheses, shorter-leg prostheses, and without prostheses. To the audience’s delight, she fired confetti from her prosthetic legs upward into the air and toward the audience as the finale. Ball made her body, her prostheses, and her wheelchair sites of unique aesthetic creation in ways that contained surprise elements. Through combining multiple visual perspectives of her body and the technologies that were also entwined with it, a new kind of crip aesthetic emerged that included, but was not limited to, connective tension – beauty, delight, joy, and suspense – between Ball herself and the audience. Ball’s performance also invited the audience into the creation of new vocabulary specific to and experienced co-constitutively with her body, movement, and technologies as a disability circus artist, evoking Haraway’s cyborg (2006), and reaching into crip futurities (Rice et al., 2017) in a disability-prideful way.



Figure 2. Erin Ball performs in “Crip Shorts” (photo: Michelle Peek Photography courtesy of *Bodies in Translation: Activist Art, Technology & Access to Life*, Re•Vision: The Centre for Art & Social Justice at the University of Guelph).

Image description: Shown in profile, Erin Ball is sitting sideways in her wheelchair facing the audience. Her wheelchair faces stage left and she holds her right prosthesis upward toward the ceiling while she leans back and looks up. Red, purple, and pink confetti is shooting skyward out

of her right prothesis. The stage lighting is orange, purple, and pink and it bathes her face and dangling ponytail as she gazes up.

Accessibility creation (Rice et al., 2019), which refers to technologies such as written descriptions, access guides, live audio description, and recorded audio description that provide access for those living with disabilities to art and art events, has its own aesthetic specific to each event. Through the work of artists, artistic producers, and curators, access documents themselves, such as the “Crippling the Arts Access Guide” (2019), become aesthetic outputs. When artists co-create access, a new aesthetic emerges that defies traditional aesthetic expectations. The live audio description, provided by Kat Germain, became an integral part of Erin Ball’s performance. Germain’s descriptions and voice accompanying the performance created a warm and intimate soundscape, enhanced by the darkened venue, and brought the viewer into closer proximity to the intricate balances and manoeuvres executed by Ball. As stimulating as Ball’s work is in its live, immediate, sensual, and highly impactful constitutive elements, it is also clearly connected to longer histories of circus arts performance, disability performance (in and outside of circus contexts) (Carter, 2018), as well as her own particular performance history and artistic oeuvre. One critically important way that journalists can engage with disabled, D/deaf, and mad artists is by locating them in these rich and important histories.

When a disabled, D/deaf, and/or mad artist, such as Erin Ball, is centred, their artistry and *crip aesthetic* emerge as agential and prideful, liberated from biomedical markers that impose ableist norms and conventions, bringing the audience into an aesthetic realm of experience and sensation that requires new vocabulary and also inquiry into disability, D/deaf, and mad arts and culture. Just as *crip aesthetic* is created by and emerges through disabled, D/deaf, and mad artists, it is also a thoughtful labour on the part of the audience to centre the artist(s) and disability, D/deaf, and mad arts and culture in the interpretive process and representation of the art. This description is also an example of representation called for by panellists to situate disability, D/deaf, and mad artists and their work within their own contexts. Further, it exemplifies the panellists’ call for widening the interpretive possibilities. In one direction this widening should attend to the artists’ specific practices as they embody a range of technologies for the performance, including accessibility elements of *Relaxed Performance* (i.e., in this instance live audio description). In another key direction, however, the panellists also seek critical appreciation for and interpretive competence in the new aesthetic experiences as they arise from the totality of these diverse visual, and aural elements. This expansive labour is also historical, as will be discussed next.

Isolating Artists from History

In connection with their curation of the touring exhibit “Out from Under: Disability History & Things to Remember,” leading disability scholars and curators Catherine Frazee, Kathryn Church and Melanie Panitch (2008) have argued for the importance of situating “disabled actors and activists as the protagonists of their own history” by asserting that,

There was – and is – much at stake in this enterprise. The claim to history is a declaration of self, place and solidarity at the same time as it is an articulation of new ground for debate. It is the brazen insurgency of outliers taking centre, refusing periphery. It is an announcement that we know, along with an affirmation that our knowledge matters. To make a claim to history is to count as author and social actor, to reach the tipping point from which entitlements to dignity, respect and the protection of human rights will be unstoppable. (p. 5)

Panellists at this *Crippling the Arts* panel also emphasized how journalists have both rich opportunities and responsibilities to locate disabled, D/deaf, and mad artistic work in relation to these histories. Building cultural competency in these histories, languages, and cultures is an important step in avoiding Erlich’s first pet peeve (that critics ignore disability language and culture). However, because non-disabled journalists covering disability, D/deaf, and mad arts are sometimes wholly new to the field of practice, there has often been an overemphasis on the work’s novelty, its origins in the individual artist’s biography, and the mistaken sense of disability, D/deaf and mad art as only very recently emergent. While some of these factors may well be relevant to understanding a specific exhibit or performance, overemphasizing them risks occluding critical dimensions of crip aesthetics as they relate to a specific artist’s choices in a particular historical moment. Indeed, Erlich’s arguments and those of other panellists resonate with those shared by U.S. disability performance scholar Carrie Sandahl in her 2018 article “Using Our Words: Exploring Representational Conundrums in Disability Drama and Performance”:

In a 2010 National Endowment for the Arts study, my colleague, Dr. Carol Gill, and I found that artists are frustrated by critics who write in limiting ways about their work, often focusing on biographical information about the artist’s impairment, reducing complex works to a discussion of stereotypes, or using the unfamiliarity of being in the presence of disabled people performing as an occasion to work out their own anxieties about the nature of disability and thereby the nature of art itself. (p. 129)

Knowledge of and engagement with the histories of disability, D/deaf and mad cultures is one way to avoid such journalistic pitfalls.

Many contemporary disability, D/deaf, and mad artists recognize that their current work builds upon the profoundly difficult work of the field’s early activists and artists. Over the past decades, these predecessors in a range of

different artistic fields have laboured to form and grow Canadian capacity for the development of disability, D/deaf, and mad arts and culture. Indeed, current identification of the need to support this vibrant arts sector and the creation of a disability arts officer position at the Canada Council of the Arts, came only after decades of disability, D/deaf and mad arts practice, activism, and successful demands for change. For example, the past two decades of regular disability arts festivals in major cities across the country and the concomitant generation of formal reports from within the community concerning the disability arts sector's Canadian and international development were critical capacity-builders. Journalistic coverage that seems unaware of the difficult and sustained work of cultural activists over time to address the profound systemic barriers facing disabled, D/deaf, and mad performers risks erasing this profoundly generative work. It also typically promotes retrograde exceptionalist, individualizing disabled superhero narratives over narratives that are critically engaged with the core tenets and debates of disability, D/deaf, and mad arts and cultures. In short, extending Erlich's argument above, it can be tremendously frustrating and disenfranchising if journalistic coverage isolates a single disability, D/deaf, and mad artist or audience from these histories, communities, aesthetics, and oeuvres. Instead, as Owusu-Ansah argued, there is tremendous value in listening closely to the precise and nuanced insights proffered by disability, D/deaf, and mad artists and audiences. Further, as Jama has argued, there is authority and experience in such voices that should not be elided. Akin to Church, Frazee and Panitch above, Jama and Owusu-Ansah underline how disability, D/deaf, and mad artists and audiences' particular knowledges matter and are essential ingredients in the claim to history from which "entitlements to dignity, respect and the protection of human rights will be unstoppable" (Frazee et al., 2008, p. 5).

"Ghosting" of Crip Aesthetics in Theatre

With regard to disability, D/deaf, and mad theatre, for example, building awareness of how any specific performance is haunted by these histories is a key means for generating more nuanced, detailed, and grounded journalistic engagement. In his influential book *The Haunted Stage: Theatre as Memory Machine* (2003), theorist Marvin Carlson builds from the insights of many past theatre theorists to emphasize the role of ghosts in theatre production and reception. Marking theatre as a site wherein audiences and performers routinely come into material contact with the very bodies, seats, sets, lights, costumes, properties, words, and narratives that they have encountered before, he emphasizes the profound power of "ghosting" in theatre. For any theatre journalist, then, awareness of such ghosts is critical.

For example, if this is the third time a lead performer has been seen on a city's stages in a particular play, either always playing the same character or

this time playing the parent when decades earlier they played the child, a journalist will likely remark upon such ghosting and the way it shapes the performance. If the moon in the set and the wheelchair on stage in this production are the same as those that have been used in all of a theatre-going community's productions that season, audiences and journalists will notice this and make connections across productions. Similarly, concurrent or successive productions of the same play are regularly compared by journalists for how they "ghost" one another in performance. Theatre critics typically become aware (and are often expected to be aware) of these hauntings through regular and attentive theatregoing as well as reading related contemporary press, historical research, and interviews. Equally importantly, theatre artists of all kinds can foster stronger engagement from disability, D/deaf, and mad journalists by ensuring all of these means for "ghost-gathering" are accessible.

For journalists, Carlson's concept of theatrical ghosting might also help clarify some of the challenges contemporary D/deaf, disability and mad theatre performers confront. On the one hand, the profound inaccessibility of so much theatre practice over time has meant that most D/deaf, disabled and mad theatre performers have not yet been featured on stages in ways that have allowed them to accrue ghosts at the same scale as non-disabled performers. As leading disability performance scholar Carrie Sandahl (2008) and others (Longmore, 2003; Mitchell & Snyder, 2000) have demonstrated, stereotypical and profoundly inaccessible and ableist training, casting and professionalization practices have limited the number and range of ways D/deaf, disabled and mad performers have been able to take the stage. To build from an earlier example, there are as yet few D/deaf, disabled and mad performers on professional theatre stages who might be cast as the parent in a play after their well-known turn many seasons ago as the child.

Moreover, the kinds of ghosts that disabled performers have had to contend with regularly are those generated by the legions of disabled mimics alluded to by Erlich in their third pet peeve above; among these, for example, are the many performances of D/deaf, disabled and mad characters by non-disabled people whose turns have garnered mainstream artistic awards or other kinds of popular acclaim (Oscar winners Eddie Redmayne for playing Stephen Hawking in *The Theory of Everything*, Daniel Day-Lewis for playing Christy Brown in *My Left Foot*, and Dustin Hoffman for playing a fictional character described as having autism, Raymond Babbitt, in *Rain Man*). To make sense of the social injustices inherent in this longstanding practice, disability artists, scholars and journalists have gained from drawing parallels with critical race and performance artists and theorists who have demonstrated the systems of white supremacy and exploitation behind the longstanding practice of "blacking up." For example, Sandahl's research cites blacking up to illustrate the fronts of two key kinds of ghosting battles facing D/deaf and disabled actors:

In the disability arts and activist communities, casting non-disabled actors as disabled characters is called pejoratively ‘cripping up,’ referencing the outdated practice of white actors ‘blacking up’ to play African American characters. In ‘cripping up,’ ... an actor is cast to play a character from a less dominant social position. Rarely is an actor of color, a woman, or a disabled person cast against type to play a character from a more dominant social position. Actors from marginalized groups must battle on two fronts, then: to be cast in roles that resemble their own identities and to be cast in roles that do not. (2008, p. 236)

Journalists who are aware of these battles will be more easily able to discern a D/deaf, disabled or mad performer’s specific aesthetic choices or interventions with ableist traditions and ghosts. For example, they will have a stronger context for reflecting on the political and artistic impact of the all-too-frequent theatre production moment noted in the panel when a non-disabled actor steps out of their character’s wheelchair to take a curtain call at the end of the performance.

As several panellists noted, however, it is important to explore productions from a Disability Justice framework interested in how the parallels between blacking up and criping up are merely one example of the myriad ways in which art and performance practices, traditions and ghosts have been shaped by intertwined systems of racism, classism, sexism, and heteronormativity. When she writes about Disability Justice in *Care Work*, Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha cites the term’s coinage by the “Black, brown, queer, and trans members of the original Disability Justice Collective, founded in 2005 by Patty Berne, Mia Mingus, Leroy Moore, Eli Clare, and Sebastian Margaret” (2018, p. 15). In her definition and history of the movement she cites extensively Sins Invalid co-founder and executive director Patty Berne (2015) who explains that,

Disability Justice activists, organizers, cultural workers understand that able-bodied supremacy has been formed in relation to other systems of domination and exploitation. The histories of white supremacy and ableism are inextricably entwined, both forged in the crucible of colonial conquest and capitalist domination.

Late performer, playwright and activist Lynn Manning has demonstrated how an awareness of intersectionality can help journalists understand and convey the many ways the show might connect with audiences. Speaking with Sandahl (2004) in reference to his acclaimed solo, autobiographical performance *Weights*, a show in which he connected his Black civil rights activism to his disability activism after becoming blind, Manning explained:

Generally speaking, African Americans respond most strongly to the stories and poems about my experiences growing up impoverished in South-Central Los Angeles; disabled audience members are most raucous when I recount the tribulations of seeking services from the State Department of Rehabilitation; and visually impaired audience members make their presence known when I describe

rediscovering the world as a blind man. The demographic population whose response to *Weights* has surprised me most is that of emancipated foster children. Even though I summarize my foster home years in just a couple of sentences, former foster children are often effusive in their thanks for my sharing that aspect of my life with the world and being a positive role model. (p. 31)

While Manning's account risked separating audience responses into siloes, his one-man autobiographical performance centered these narratives in his singular body and, akin to Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha and other Disability Justice activists, emphasized the interconnectedness of ableism, racism, and classism. Manning's awareness of the multi-directional resonances of his performance demonstrates the value for journalists in searching out and signalling for their own audiences the myriad ways disability art and performance can resonate with diverse audiences and help communities find one another. Near the end of *Care Work*, Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha notes that she is "haunted by the question of, will all our work and lives be remembered and by who and how?" (2018, p. 254). Journalists can play a profound role in helping artists and audiences to find, witness, appreciate, challenge, archive and remember.

Beyond supporting these critical acts of cultural connection and remembrance among people, journalists might also seek out the haunted histories of the particular sites in which they do so. For example, the *Crippling the Arts* "Representation" panel took place in the same space as the 2003 performance of "In the Room," a collaborative performance involving an international complement of artists who identified as having lived experience with mental illness. The show was produced as part of the first-ever *Madness and Arts World Theatre Festival* established and produced by Workman Arts, an over 40 year old company that has played and continues to play a complex role in the local and international development of disability, D/deaf, and mad arts and culture.² Considered by many to be the festival highlight, "In the Room" was the culmination of months of long-distance preparations and 10 days of intensive in-person work bringing together artists from Toronto's Workman Arts, Australia's RAG Theatre Troupe, and Denmark's Billedspor.

There were thus many ghosts "in the room" at Harbourfront Centre during *Crippling the Arts* in 2019 as we gathered in the same space which evoked many lingering questions: where would mad arts and culture fit in the 2019 moment? How were the contemporary discussions stretching, challenging, and bridging with debates and ideas of the past? What did it mean that these histories were available to some but not others now in the room? How might journalists play a role in making historical connections between such events

² The *Madness and ARTS World Theatre Festival* was a 10-day large-scale international performance event produced by Toronto's Workman Arts in partnership with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and the Harbourfront Centre that drew together and showcased the theatre of individual and company-based artists with lived experience of mental illness.

in order to strengthen the sense of disability history? Further, what are the histories of people, performance, and culture of Harbourfront Centre itself? Harbourfront Centre is located on a site covered by Treaty 13 between the Mississaugas of the Credit and the Canadian government. *Crippling the Arts* organizers acknowledged this land and its history and in doing so they invited thinking about the kinds of disability, D/deaf, and mad people, lives and performances that have existed on these territories over time. How have colonialism and de-colonizing efforts shaped experience, understanding, art production and reception for Disability, D/deaf, and mad people?

These questions seek to remind researchers, artists, and journalists alike that disability, D/deaf, and mad theatre art and performance are created in specific historical contexts haunted by past cultural production that has shaped and been shaped by ableism, racism, colonialism, sexism and heteronormativity. When engaging with contemporary crip aesthetics, it can be meaningful for both performers and audiences if journalists ask about and consider the kinds of ghosts that are present with performers and audiences. What are the histories of the performance sites, roles, costumes, and props? How have the performance materials been featured, recycled and reimagined over time? What related roles and performances precede this current one? Indeed, as it is a kind of performance, we could ask how the panel at the centre of this article might also be read for its ghosts of past discussions of crip aesthetics. What changes are evident in such panels over time? Are there echoes of innovations in the discussions? Journalists who invest their time in thinking about such questions and building their own capacity to answer them will be of tremendous value to disability, D/deaf, and mad artists, as well as the broader cultures they seek to engage, challenge, and shape.

Making Art Under a “Regime of Objectivity”

In Canada, there is a fractured relationship between disability communities and journalists (Boyer, 1988; Jones, 2014, 2017). These groups have struggled to communicate with one another, and debates about misrepresentation of disabled people characterize much of this relationship (Jones, 2020). Concerns about how disabled people ought to be represented by media emerged again during this panel, followed by warnings against traditional journalistic approaches to objectivity – including depoliticized angles that would frame disabled, D/deaf and mad people as tokenized experts, erasing collective movements and meaning-making. When asked to share responses to a journalist’s review of his work, Owusu-Ansah offered an example of his experience as the subject of a recent media article:

I met the author of the article and they seemed pretty excited to meet me, and I was excited to meet them and sit down with them as well. As we had our conversation, it seemed to go fairly well, and when I read the published piece ... I felt that it reflected the journalist’s perspective, not mine.

Owusu-Ansah's account points to ongoing questions about the nature of disability representation in mainstream media: how can journalists best represent disability, D/deaf and mad arts, and who should make these decisions? Should media reporting reflect the perspective of the journalist, or that of the story's subject(s), or that of a wider movement or community? Traditionally, journalism has responded to such questions by forefronting the value of objectivity. Working with objectivity in mind, it can follow that stories which remain true to artists' self-representations, contexts, and contextual histories while decentring journalists' own personal views have merits for democratic communication. For instance, objectivity can serve both publics and counterpublics, such as when journalists employ neutrality as they hold politicians accountable. In other contexts, objectivity has been connected to journalism for social justice (Hackett, 2010, p. 174). Panelist Jama reminded the room of news coverage of Kent Hehr, a disabled federal politician who, in 2018, was accused of sexual harassment. Jama spoke to the audience about the value of having, and maintaining, unwavering objectivity:

I'm thinking back to...when [Hehr] was being talked [about] and covered in the media about having a disability, and his harmful terminology and his harmful behaviour towards women. People from the disability community were lashing back saying, 'No, he didn't do those things; he's disabled. Like, you can't really attack him, that's ableist.' No! Where is our clear stance on being steadfast and hard front, taking stances against sexism ... no matter who is saying it?

Even so, objectivity also strives for a normative ideal; the utility of stories that meet normative news values and translate relatively easily to the public is up for debate (Hackett, 2010, p. 195). Assuming the journalists' perspective to be unbiased and apolitical and forefronting it aligns with journalism's long-held episteme of objectivity, or what Robert Hackett and Yeuzhi Zhao (1998) have called journalism's governing "regime of objectivity" (p. 20). Hackett (2010) posits that "what objectivity means in practice, however, and whether it is a desirable and achievable goal for reporting in a democratic society, are debatable questions" (p. 180). We might extend Hackett's thought to ask what purpose objectivity serves if, as Teodor Mladenov (2016) points out, social justice can only be achieved when disabled, D/deaf and mad people have a say in the local and global policies that affect them. As such, there are current calls to dismantle the regime of objectivity in favour of journalism practices which might position journalists as people within their communities, knowledgeable of their histories and politics rather than as objective onlookers. This sentiment emerged in Owusu-Ansah's thoughts later: "that individual who interviewed me, I wish they had been able to pick up more, to really hear more, to listen more to what was being said by the community." Though this was not Owusu-Ansah's experience, the notion of listening more to what is being said by a collective is one that journalism praxis has taken up elsewhere for decades. Journalism takes on different,

social justice-oriented forms that go by many names: citizen journalism, radical journalism, alternative journalism, participatory journalism, and community journalism, among others (Hackett, 2010, pp. 186-187). By contrast with mainstream notions of objectivity, in alternative forms of journalism the roles of journalist and source become less distinct: rather than sources as experts whose thoughts are safely filtered through the “objective journalist, people like Owusu-Ansah can become conduits for journalists digging deeper into the marginalization and concerns of their own communities (Robinson, 2017).

Yet, even when the media seeks to humanize marginalized groups it is possible for reporters to fall into stereotypical tropes. For example, in their analysis of disability representation in Indian news media, Nookaraju Bendukurthi and Usha Raman (2016) detect a theme of “goodwill building” among stories that bridge marginalized groups and society – and the market. “In this context,” they write, “journalists often bear the responsibility of creating demand for and acceptance of [disabled people]” by emphasizing disabled people’s capabilities and readiness for work (p. 140). Bendukurthi and Raman explain this phenomenon as journalists’ attempts to “negotiate with society” while also helping the corporate world within which they are embedded (p. 140). Indeed, the reality that news outlets are both sources of democratic information sharing and agents of the market economy demonstrates that journalistic representation is political, despite its attempts to be apolitical. This tension spills over into journalists’ praxis and speaks to the unresolved issue of how journalists can best represent disability, D/deaf, and mad arts.

Journalism in “Crisis”

Owusu-Ansah is not alone in his dissatisfaction with journalistic representation and the overall epistemology of objectivity. Yet, changing the traditional ways journalism is done relies on changing the economies in which journalism is practiced.

Fiscal uncertainty continues to stymie systemic change within the field of journalism. With this in mind, panellist Sandals explained that the word “crisis” struck her when she was asked to think about the word “journalism,” and that this word also has a particular way of impinging on the way disability art is covered:

Before and after the Internet there was a certain crisis in journalism, a crisis of exclusion and bias. That is, people who work in journalism, especially before the Internet but also after, did not realize how white, straight, abled, and cis the media industry is or was. ‘Was and is’ would be a better way to say it. And therefore ... one of the ways this impinged, I think, on disability arts coverage was, ‘well if it doesn’t matter to a white, abled, straight, cis, and primarily male audience, we’re not interested.’ It doesn’t exist for us. We don’t even perceive it.

Sandals described the working conditions for journalists both before and after the Internet emerged as a major industry intervention: quick deadlines, conventional narrative storytelling expectations, and protocols that relied on colonial approaches rather than collaborative consensual approaches. “This is often in the name of objectivity,” Sandals explained, suggesting that the regime of objectivity continues to hold a strong grip over storytelling traditions.

Yet, in her arguments against the journalistic, factory-like reliance on objective reporting, Sue Robinson explains that “today’s journalists must be trained to understand their complicities in what can be toxic struggles and they must be given the knowledge to help rebuild them” (2017, p. 303). Or, put another way by Anita Varma (2019), journalists can be positioned for solidarity. Positioning journalists in this way means making space for diversity awareness in journalism classrooms and curriculums, particularly through teaching disability studies (Burns, 2016). And for practising journalists, this positioning means imagining more “vibrant, expansive, and complex representations of disability” (Titchkosky, 2020, pp. 12-13) and a refusal to reduce social injustice to individual problems with a single source or story, for this approach can “stunt” social change (Varma, 2019, p. 117). Rather, Varma appeals, “journalism that seeks to humanize marginalized communities often begins by symbolically transforming faceless swarms into human beings” (p. 117). Humanization, as Varma describes it, happens when journalists resist traditional, dehumanizing representations of certain groups as deviant (i.e., homeless people) instead of recognizing larger, social injustices (i.e., income inequality). It is perhaps the humanization of social injustices experienced by disabled, D/deaf and mad people that Owusu-Ansah’s story is missing when what is published seems to reflect the journalists’ perspective rather than his own.

Still, Sandals cautioned that the crisis at hand goes beyond practices of inclusive representation and is deeply embedded in the economic trajectory of the field of journalism itself, which relies on a resolute business model:

The journalism industry goes, ‘Well now we understand we are faced with biases, but we are in a crisis with no resources’... Even if we care about it and even if we can pay for it, the coverage we do of disability arts can’t be collaborative, consensual, slow, nuanced, or take unconventional or alternative narrative approaches – and it can’t be untangled with the art itself.

Indeed, woven into this panel, beyond questions of how journalists can best represent disability, D/deaf, and mad arts and their story subjects, is a bleak reminder that the work of representation is deeply linked to political and economic conditions. As journalists become increasingly disempowered in their attempts to do social justice work, disabled artists and their communities are left with the task of representing themselves. Further and importantly, their means, energies and capacities to do this are, as both Jama and Manning

remind us, determined in relation to their intersecting experiences with race, class, gender, and sexuality.

Recommendations for Journalists and Disabled, D/deaf, Mad Artists

A clear message from this panel is that, frustratingly, the recognition of disability, D/deaf, and mad art as a wide-ranging and diverse movement and practice is long overdue. When this context is included in journalists' stories, understandings of art creation by disabled, D/deaf, and mad people broaden to include understandings and interpretations distinct from a non-disabled positioning.

Broadly speaking, panellists recommended to journalists that they aspire to become informed, and more importantly, enter into a critical disability politic (Gorman, 2011). This means not only recruiting disability, D/deaf and mad journalists to write reviews, but also learning of the multi-faceted and rich complexities and histories of critical disability arts and culture. This also means learning about the current debates or politics within disability arts and culture that comprise the diverse parts of the movement, and recognizing these movements not as what Jama referred to as a "mechanical monolith." Disabled, D/deaf and mad artists need to be asked for their preferred pronouns, identifiers, and terminology when being referenced. In so doing, opportunities for better understanding of the culture and the nuances, including productive tensions around self-representation and cultural norms of specific localities and communities, especially of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) communities, will emerge. Artists and journalists can agree for artists to read the copy prior to publication or even have the copy reviewed by the artist as part of the reporting process. This is already an informal practice experienced by the co-authors,³ and it builds trust and accuracy in reporting. Journalists and disabled, D/deaf, and mad artists can engage in reciprocal communication to ensure that questions, answers, and copy are satisfactory, especially for disabled, D/deaf, and mad artists.

For others working outside of the crisis-riddled industry of journalism, panellists ultimately explained that artists need both control over artistic endeavours and output and influence over representation. This can mean self-publishing, withdrawing writings that are "edited to oblivion" (in Sandal's words), and supporting disability, D/deaf and mad arts organizations in putting out their own stories. Jama expanded on these suggestions:

³ When interviewed by journalists, Changfoot often asks to see the copy prior to publication or have the copy read to her as part of the journalistic process. Her practice developed from being misquoted or having her meaning inaccurately presented in print, and realizing the importance of finding a process for building trust and understanding; she finds journalists have been obliging.

We live in an era where it's so much easier to build social capital online. Information is not such that people hold power now through the holding of information; it's very hard to hold onto it. So, reach out to people online who are wanting to write similar stuff that you are; don't succumb to people wanting to edit your crap. Keep it for yourself.

Jama's call is powerful, and we would be bereft to ignore the reality that disabled, D/deaf and mad folx belong to groups that are most likely to be digitally excluded (Sourbati, 2012). Gerard Goggin (2016) points out that the exploration of disability mobilities has much to do with where we live, and those in the urban "smart city" may live with "promises that the coming hyper-digital urbanity will bring major steps forward for accessibility, usability and denizens with disability" while those in rural areas remain left behind (p. 539). Yet, like race, gender, and sexuality among others, rurality is increasingly acknowledged as yet another intersectional marker concomitant to disability (Pini et al., 2017; Soldatic & Johnson, 2017). And, even though Internet access is an issue facing some communities, research into rural journalism suggests that local content stemming from small communities may be more resilient than that. For example, rural journalism in the United States has been shown to be quite participatory when local residents can share their stories with local media (Wenzel, 2019). What's more, as Daniela Stehlik (2017, p. 78) points out, place identity is significant, and is often marginalized by urban dominant culture and its assumptions about rural "isolation" as undesirable and absolute. That is to say that although digital exclusion exists, storytelling may be supported in different and rich ways outside of urban centers and, for some, maintaining place identity may trump the prospect of digital inclusion.

While Jama's specific recommendation to reach out and engage in online storytelling may not prove accessible to all, it is reflective of the panellists' general sentiment: a hope that disabled, d/Deaf and mad folx will take back some control in the co-constitutive process of representing themselves in ways that align with their communities.

Conclusion: Ableist Fault Lines and Promising Crip Practices

The methods for presentation during this panel on representation were crippled in multiple ways to provide fuller access. Notably, considerations around representation began with a collective curation of the panel itself, a curation that allowed folx to step outside of tokenized expert narratives and some semblance of crip time to take precedence. Together, all participants were clear to make clear and direct the panel against the ableist tropes of journalism they were all too familiar with, "the supercrip," or serving as "the definitive representative disabled, D/deaf, mad voice," or object of and for the journalist's ableist gaze, instead privileging panellists' interpretations of the relationship between journalism and disability, d/Deaf, and mad arts

through open-ended questions and co-constitutively creating intersecting disability, d/Deaf, and mad representational considerations. This public discussion reconnects journalism and disability communities, ultimately demonstrating that representation is a critical, co-constitutive process that can become more aesthetically and politically oriented toward disability, d/Deaf, and mad artists and art. We – the panel participants who authored this paper – also understand that providing fuller access is an iterative process and have learned the importance of connecting with each panelist individually prior to the presentation in a way that begins with a crip ethos within the specific panel itself. While the panel was held within a more conventional time limit of 60 minutes, panel organizers and panellists co-created it according to a calibrated crip time, making efforts towards enacting crip community within the panel.

Speakers on the “Representation” panel of the 2019 *Crippling the Arts Symposium* reflected on the lines between journalism and disability, D/deaf, and mad arts in relation to their own engagement with representation. These lines – drawn mainly through panelists’ frustrations over the current, fractured state of affairs as one wherein disabled, D/deaf, and mad artists need both control over artistic endeavours and output and influence over representation – speak to many faults, or fault lines that were felt in the discussion. Panelists expressed frustration with how disability, D/deaf, and mad arts are usually represented, as in Erlich’s “peeves.” They argued for less journalistic reliance on framing disabled, D/deaf, and mad artists as singular experts that results in tokenizing and erasing of their communities with the accompanying risk of apoliticization. Instead, they advocated for greater engagement with rich and meaningful disability, D/deaf, and mad histories and communities that shape their contemporary works. Panellists also found affinity in the metaphor of ghosts and the action of ghosting the disabled D/deaf, and mad figure and its histories, particularly in the realm of theatre. The panel also revealed an ongoing battle between storytelling that nurtures a crip aesthetic and disrupts the dominant and obligatory regime of objectivity within which journalists are systemically subject. Generally, panellists’ ideas rubbed up against dominant, traditional understandings of journalism that favour timely events, news hierarchies, detached reporting, a consumerist worldview, and the overarching paradigmatic value of objectivity (Hackett, 2010, p. 185).

However, comments from this panel also reveal representation to be a two-way street with disability, D/deaf, and mad artists struggling to be represented accurately, while journalism, and the people taking up this topic, work in what Sandals chillingly calls a crisis. Ultimately, panellists warned against journalistic reliance on traditional narratives and instead issued a call for artists to claim and write their own stories – to keep pushing forward the promise of crip practices. This call came with a hopeful closing comment from Orsini:

I think there's hope in understanding [what] moving away from a kind of identity politics necessarily, and thinking about what a focus on non-normative bodies and non-normative minds, brings to artistic practice. That gives me, I hate to use the word 'hope,' but that gives me hope.

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