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Intimacies between Crip and Queer World-Makings in the Arts and Academia: A Roundtable

Abstract

This roundtable brings together scholars, activists, and artists to explore how crip and queer theories, and activist and artistic practices interweave, intersect, and interact in probing, negotiating, expanding, and highlighting limits of how we think, desire, and embrace intimacies. We come together in three posts to—first—situate the intersections of crip and queer in different global locations and contexts; second, to interrogate the ableist, familial, and ideological underpinnings of intimacies and romanticization that conceal underlying hierarchies and conflicts, and—finally—to expand the imaginaries of intimacies beyond the human.

Keywords: cripqueer, d/Deaf, intellectual disability, suicidism, access intimacy, personal assistance, transness, Mad, neurodivergence, more-than-human.

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We started imagining this roundtable already when writing the call for papers; we envisioned creating a space for a longer multilogue that would host different positionalities, experiences, and ways of imagining, living, and making crip and queer intimacies in various locations and across different spaces and times. The intersection of queer and crip theorizing, and cripqueer cultural and advocacy work has already been explored in the anglophone world. More recently, increased attention has been paid to what this critical juncture could bring about and how it could manifest in other global/transnational locations. What troubles us is how critical work, developed within specific historical and cultural contexts—mainly in North America—is circulated globally. And, due to global power imbalances that significantly affect epistemologies and knowledge production, this circulation causes it to lose some of its original concreteness and become reinscribed within the East/West, South/North, center/(semi)periphery dominance play.

We (Katarzyna and Kateřina), the editors, have both engaged in transnationalizing disability studies and have observed a persistent trend that has upheld anglophone, primarily US-based voices, and, thus, also the very specific articulations of crip theorizing, thinking about (and forging) political alliances and advocacy work, as well as strategies of identity building, resistance, and world-making. As much as we need to draw on each other and as helpful as the (North-American/Western) articulations of crip theory are, we need other voices to be heard and engaged in ongoing conversations; let us dream—with equal strength and resonance. Thus, we imagined this roundtable as a form of doing cripqueer intimacy by sharing experiences and ideas drawn from various intellectual, creative, and political labor, as well as experiences coming from across the East/West divide (we use this as a placeholder, fully aware of its insufficiency to speak to all global injustices and colonial/imperial dynamics at play). We believe that the knowledge articulated from specific historically and culturally situated places will contribute to the critical imaginaries of cripqueer world-making and intimacy work against the global divides.

The roundtable we offer here is still incomplete and unrepresentative; some invited contributors could not participate in all three prompts due to various health crip issues, or, as Merri Lisa Johnson says, "it's always something" (qtd. in Johnson and McRuer 127): some could not contribute at all because they had to give preference to gainful engagement; some we could not reach despite our multiple attempts and our desire to include their voices, and some are disillusioned with the current developments in disability studies and have decided to invest their energies elsewhere. Thus, the silences here carry weight and significance, too; some will reveal our editorial omissions and shortcomings; other silences will speak to barriers

faced by non-white disabled people living in Central and Eastern Europe in accessing academic work, as well as to disability identity, and, thus, to the limits of identity-driven projects, and will also illustrate the difficulties of sustaining radical activist collectives over longer periods.

Despite these silences, which are always part of cripqueer horizons, our collaborators offer an incredible breadth of experience; they speak from arts and cultural work; some are (also) academics, and many combine academic work with activism or public outreach. Most of us speak from parts of the world "known" as Eastern Europe, and our experiences have often been shaped by the aggressive transition to neoliberal capitalism, which, together with the earlier decades of state socialism, heavily influenced the decades that followed; others speak from diverse Western perspectives, and their work resonates in very important ways. The roundtable is organized around prompts that we—Kateřina and Katarzyna—offered as conversation starters. Often, they were not much more than that, serving as openers that the authors reimagined and rephrased in their responses, which determined the multilogue dynamic of the roundtable. After we collected all the responses, the authors had a chance to add to their responses in reaction to the conversation flow.

Let us briefly introduce our contributors:

Hanna Zaremba-Kosovych is a Ukrainian sociologist and disability scholar whose recent academic work has centered on people with disabilities in Ukraine, particularly after the 2022 Russian full-scale invasion;

Natalia Pamuła is a feminist and disability scholar based in Warsaw, Poland. She focuses on the intersections of disability with sex, gender, and nationality under state socialism and in post-socialism;

Filip Pawlak is a Polish queer disabled performance artist whose work explores bodily difference, social prejudice, and artists' precarity on stage and beyond;

Alexandre Baril is a disability scholar based in Ottawa, Canada. He engages with the intersection of gender, queer, trans, and disability/crip/Mad studies;

Justyna Lipko-Konieczna is active in Theatre 21, Poland's first award-winning professional theatre for actors with intellectual disability, and in the Theatre 21 Foundation;

Agnieszka Kołodziejczak is a d/Deaf scholar specializing in d/Deaf art and one of the curators of the groundbreaking 2022 exhibition *Głusza/Deafland* at the Silesian Museum in Katowice, Poland;

Ewelina Jarosz is a scholar and artivist based in Poland, a member of the hydrosexual duo cyber_nymphs, and a keen promoter of the blue humanities;

Magda Szarota is a disability and human rights activist (a board member of Humanity in Action Poland), scholar, and photographer based in the UK and Poland;

Daniela Komanická is a Slovak PhD student and long-term activist based in Prague, Czech Republic, advocating for the rights of extensively physically disadvantaged/disabled people and other discriminated minorities;

Eli Clare is a US-based disability justice and trans liberation grassroots thinker, activist, and storyteller;

Perel is a queer, disabled interdisciplinary artist whose work centers on these identities and ways of being in the world. Originally from the US, they have recently been dividing their time between Berlin, Germany, and New York.

PROMPT 1: QUEERING THE CRIP, CRIPPING THE QUEER: QUIP POTENTIALITIES AND DISCONTENTS

In recent decades, the connection between queerness and cripness has been explored by a number of scholars. Most notably, the link between "the system of compulsory able-bodiedness, which in a sense produces disability," and "the system of compulsory heterosexuality that produces queerness" (McRuer, *Crip Theory* 2) provided the foundation for Robert McRuer's formulation of crip theory, which hopefully "will exacerbate, in more productive ways, the crisis of authority that currently besets heterosexual/able-bodied norms" ("Compulsory Ablebodiedness" 375). Key to this approach are resistance, subversion, and dissent. In her seminal article, Carrie Sandahl mentions the shared history of oppression, medical pathologization, demonization in religious discourse, stereotypical representations, social discrimination, and alienation of queer people and people with disabilities. At the same time, she emphasizes that crip and queer people have created "their own enclaves and vibrant subcultural practices," which challenge hegemonic normativity (26).

These intersections and convergences between queer and crip have also been addressed by many other scholars (see e.g., Kafer, *Feminist*; Puar; Chen et al.; Kolářová; Pamuła, Król, and Wołowicz), as well as artists and artivists. In the first prompt, along with such compounds as queercrip, cripqueer, crip-queer, queer-crip, queer/crip, crip/queer, disabled-queer, queer-disabled, which we see as expressions of diverse individual and local identities, we evoke the witty, playfully ambiguous blending of the words queer and crip—*quip*. It is a neologism which was coined by Quiplash, a Sheffield-based queer-crip

couple Amelia and Al Lander-Cavallo. Some of their work was displayed at the 2022–23 exhibition (curated by Kate Brehme, Birgit Bosold, and Kenny Fries) at the Schwules Museum in Berlin, tellingly entitled *Queering the Crip, Cripping the Queer*. Advertised as "the first international exhibit exploring the multiple historical, cultural, and political intersections of queerness and disability," it brought together both archival and contemporary works of crip, queer, and cripqueer artists and artivists, forging a pathway toward future alliances and kinships—a *quip* positionality.

Against this backdrop, we would like to ask you about productive *quip* and other intersections of queer and crip in your life and work (as scholars, artists, activists, and curators). We playfully offer *quip* to underscore how, through the intersection of queer and crip, new materialities, new positions, and new perspectives (might) arise. What new potentialities and opportunities emerge from the convergence of these two perspectives—and what different forms, voices, and shapes do these intersections take at various historical, geopolitical locations, cultural backgrounds, disciplinary orientations, lived experiences, and when approached from other different vantage points? At the same time, such a merging may involve certain challenges, tensions, points of friction, or even specific forms of ignorance. Thus, we would like you to address potential traps and complications that may arise from blending queer and crip perspectives. We invite all of you to complicate the ways in which queer/crip theories and positions are translated/translatable outside of Western/Northern Anglophone contexts.

HANNA ZAREMBA-KOSOVYCH: In 2023, while working on the book *History Is Not Without Us: The Formation of the Movement for the Rights of People with Disabilities in Ukraine*, my colleagues and I set out to examine how inclusive the disability rights movement in Ukraine truly is. In the course of this work, I came across a grassroots initiative created by queer people with disabilities, Queer&Disabled. It was started by Nina Kupenda, Oleksandr Kvak, and Vitalina Koval, who invited others to form a collective and join Pride in Kyiv. More than fifteen people marched under the Queer&Disabled banner for the first time ever. Building such a community, however, proved difficult because many queer people with disabilities have not come out publicly. This is especially true for those who rely on daily support from caregivers: the risk of rejection, neglect, or withdrawal of essential assistance makes the disclosure of their sexuality or gender identity fraught with danger.

Furthermore, the broader queer community struggled with recognizing its own diversity. A telling example occurred on 23 June 2019, during the Equality March in Kyiv (Fig. 1). Members of Queer&Disabled prepared a banner that read "LGBT—people with disabilities" (ЛГБТ—люди з

інвалідністю) (Sachuk, Tekuchova, and Zaremba-Kosovych 250). Other march participants approached them with indignation and accused them of provocation. Supposedly, their banner reinforced the long-standing stigma that pathologizes queerness by conflating disability with "abnormality." Under pressure, the wording on the banner was changed to: "LGBT+ people with disabilities" (ЛГБТ + люди з інвалідністю).

This tension is one of the consequences of the anti-homosexual and disability policies under the USSR, as well as of the trajectories of the LGBTQ movement in postsocialist Ukraine. Emerging initially as a predominantly gay movement (Martsenyuk 135), it carried with it elements of lookism and rejection of non-normative bodies. Disability, in turn, remained overshadowed by entrenched stereotypes; it was associated with bleakness, poverty, sadness, and despair—images that seemed incompatible with the aesthetics and vitality often linked to queerness.



Fig. 1. The Queer&Disabled column at the Kyiv Pride parade, 23 June 2019. The banner in Ukrainian reads: "We also love, but not freely. I want to love freely." Photo by Dmytro Bieliavin. Courtesy of Dmytro Bieliavin.

The Russian-Ukrainian war further complicated and reshaped these dynamics. When the military conflict started in 2014, and then intensified

after the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022, segments of the queer community joined the security and defense forces. The Ukrainian LGBT+ Military and Veterans for Equal Rights (NGO) was established, bringing together LGBT+ veterans, some of whom live with disabilities acquired in combat. This veteran community is markedly heterogeneous, and far more inclusive than the earlier groups.

NATALIA PAMUŁA: Engaging with crip in my work has been difficult. What I mean is that I have not encountered many articulations or performances of crip sensibility or aesthetics on the ground in Poland. Perhaps, crip means something else here and should be redefined, but this work has yet to be undertaken. More generally, academia and the disabled people's movement, like every social movement, operate on different timelines and schedules. Academia, due to its lengthy production process, does not always catch up with developments on the ground as they unfold. And, conversely, academia articulates and speculates horizons which have not yet been imagined on the ground. Thus, perhaps, Polish academia has not yet recognized the local iterations and evolutions of crip or quip and has not come up with frameworks and vocabularies that would adequately name the cripness/quipness of disability lived experience in Poland.

On a different note, I wonder to what extent crip theory, as a specific Anglophone approach and methodology, functions as a tool of the imperial knowledge-production process, even if it is invested in exploring what is marginal. From this perspective, thinking of and using crip or quip does not necessarily expand our horizon and does not point to new potentialities and positions, but might limit them. At the same time, the readiness of, and the availability of, a crip theory toolbox make it almost impossible not to use it. Employing tools which come with a rich archive and have been successfully deployed in other locations is economically justifiable.

For me, the question is what purpose research and knowledge on disability, crip, and quip serve. Crip is, to a great extent, still unknown in Polish academia and within disability rights movements. Does it make sense to translate it or offer an adapted translation? Yes, it does, but the thing is that translation, while opening new avenues of exploration, might stall others. In other words, translation—literal or figurative—might be both enabling and restricting. What I sometimes see is an (almost direct) application of Anglophone concepts and theories to the Polish context. Polish disability culture risks becoming a testing ground for the alleged transnational character or, simply, universality. But while the understanding of Polish culture and context changes when confronted by, for example, crip theory, crip theory, in reverse, could also be productively altered by Eastern European specificity.

FILIP PAWLAK: Queer and crip are an integral part of my everyday experience—I embrace both identities and groups as my own. Thus, I try to combine them in my artistic practice. However, they remain distant from each other, rather than united (as in quip). Both serve as points of reference, but they refer to slightly different areas. For me, queer is a social experience—a feeling that I will find a home everywhere, parties until dawn, and a carefree summer fling. I use crip more as a tool for deconstructing the world, a scalpel or magnifying glass that allows a closer look at the *origin of things*. Crip helps me question things, strip them of neutrality, and queer offers the tools and support needed to shout all this out to the world.

Queer is also like an older brother of crip, but although they share common ancestors, they are more like step-siblings. Sometimes queers look down on the crip community and focus on defending their own rights (which, we know, they had to fight hard to earn). They try to help, yet only by sharing kind words and books about queer history.

The crip I feel within myself transcends the physical dimension; it is a deeply emotional and intellectual experience which steers clear of the body around whose image it still circulates. On the other hand, queer cannot completely detach itself from the body—it excites, warms, and tempts with what often obscures questions about the validity of its premises.

PEREL: In 2022, I was fortunate to participate in the *Queering the Crip, Cripping the Queer* exhibition at the Schwules Museum Berlin with video excerpts from two performances, and with a live performance, *Desire Lines and Death Loops*. It was a thrill to be in a community with an interconnected international array of queer and crip artists. The video excerpts were from very different performances, *Pain Threshold* and *Life (Un)Worthy of Life: A Queer Dis/Crip Talkshow*, both created in 2019. It is hard for me to believe I produced two full-length performances within that one year and that they show such different sides of disabled and queer artistry. Clearly, I have been on a journey through crip and queer identities; the journey makes me want to pull apart the complexity of care, violence, access, and desire. In *Pain Threshold*, I invite a volunteer from the audience to follow my direction and massage the scar on my hip while I interview them about care. I proceed by asking the audience about their relationships to consent, and, after that, I reveal a personal story of survival. *Life (Un)Worthy of Life: A Queer Dis/Crip Talkshow* is more like a stand-up routine where I tell stories of antisemitism from my childhood and also the many narratives of Holocaust history that were part of my upbringing. I juxtapose these stories to the silence about disability history

during WWII and to the difficulties for research into it. In this piece, I ask the audience questions about social cohesion, silence, and belonging. We unpack instances of shame and the small and large ways we can betray ourselves in order to belong.

Through my research, I have found that what is incredible about living in a queer crip body is the history of other bodies that exist within us simultaneously. We carry often unacknowledged histories in the things about us that seem anomalous to normative society. With my limp, I carry generations of limping people, my scars echoing back through to theirs, or, in my experience of body dysmorphia; I shape-shift and rub up against the phantoms of previous generations who could never adhere to gendered confines. So, the pain that I carry, whether physical, emotional, or psychological, is actually the connection to my queer crip ancestors. In this sense, the pain is sacred, carries messages, holds wisdom, inhabits my body as a form of protest against normative cohesion. There is a moment from my performance, *Desire Lines and Death Loops*, where I rest my crotch on the handle of my cane (a move I call "tripoding"), and describe waiting for the bus home, standing this way with my hands full of grocery bags. People stare, I don't mind. But if I was doing the same thing in Germany in 1939, I might be swiped off the street for deviant behavior and brought to an Aktion T4 site. I say, "I'm just an average crip doing average crip things," but, of course, these things that are so mundane to me are the most threatening to a normative person's sense of control and power.

I have learned that it is fruitful to lead with the wound; the wound is the mirror, the portal, and it carries a force far greater than perceived strength, efficiency, and dominance.

ALEXANDRE BARIL: Theorizing the intersections of disability/madness and queerness/transness throughout the past decades has deeply impacted younger scholars/activists. When I started doing this work 15 years ago, using the case study of transabled people[1] to demonstrate how sex/gender transitions necessarily impact/involve abilities and how (dis)ability transitions are always already gendered and sexually marked, few scholars were conceptualizing the interlocking dimensions of sex/gender/(dis)ability. As more scholars/activists (some of whom are mentioned in the prompt) have made such links, we see that it is not only generative to theorize these intersections, but it is also impossible to conceptualize them in silos. When we look at statistics about the number of disabled/Mad/

[1] The term refers to individuals who were born without a physical impairment, but feel an intense desire to acquire one. In other words, they experience a dysphoric mismatch between their mental body image and their physical body [editors' note].

neurodivergent/autistic people identifying as trans, nonbinary, or queer, as well as the number of trans, nonbinary, or queer people who self-identify as disabled/Mad/neurodivergent/autistic, we cannot shy away from quipping our research. *Quipping is not a theoretical luxury mobilized by a few niche scholars; it is a necessity founded in empirical reality*. The fact that so many of us experience disability/madness and queerness/transness simultaneously, alongside the compounded effects of cisheterosexism and ableism/sanism, forces us to rethink not only our fundamental theoretical presumptions, but also the way we approach research and knowledge dissemination. As just one example, the strict word count imposed by journals is not conducive to the development of complex and nuanced discussions about intersecting identity categories and oppressions.[2] Queer and crip perspectives can help us reconceptualize the "objects" of our research projects, and their accompanying instruments, tools, and processes.

The disruptive and productive aspects of quipping can also be observed in language. As a French Canadian, I have theorized how anglonormativity[3] is intertwined with ableism/sanism and cisheteronormativity, and how it shapes differently the lives of queer/trans and disabled/Mad people for whom English is not their first language. Interestingly, in the case of the French language, concepts such as queer, crip, queering, or cripping have been kept in their original English, and have been integrated into the French language through my work and that of others who brought queer and crip perspectives into French communities. Twenty years ago, when publishing on queer issues in French, I was asked to italicize queer to signify its foreign origin; it has now become common to use queer without italics. The same is true for crip; while translations have been suggested for concepts such as disability, madness, and bodymind, none have been proposed for crip and cripping. Queer and crip are among the few words (*if not the only words*) that remain untranslated in my work and the work of others in French. Instead of seeing this vestige of English words in French texts as a form of anglonormativity and English dominance (which I strongly critique in my work), I like to believe that it speaks less about

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[2] As editors of this roundtable, we admit that the word limit we set for our contributors was very modest (300 words per prompt). At the same time, despite our best efforts, the roundtable significantly exceeded the length of a regular article. Being aware of the financial challenges faced by many university-funded journals, we are, thus, grateful to the journal's editors for granting us the space to include it in this issue in its present form [editors' note].

[3] For Baril, the term, "inspired by . . . 'heteronormativity,' 'homonormativity,' and 'cisnormativity,' is meant to signify that English and first-language English speakers represent the norm against which non-Anglophones are judged and discriminated" ("Doctor" 56, fn. 3) [editors' note].

the hegemony of English or the untranslatability of those terms, and more about the radical anti-assimilationist and disruptive nature of those concepts for our epistemological, methodological, theoretical, but also linguistic paradigms, in the spirit of the "mestiza consciousness" developed by Gloria E. Anzaldúa (80).

JUSTYNA LIPKO-KONIECZNA: I've been working in and with Theatre 21, the first Polish professional theatre company of actors with intellectual disability, since 2012. In 2023, I became the programme director. For many years, Theatre 21 did not have a permanent home in Warsaw. Finally, in 2022, we opened the Centre for Inclusive Arts: Theatre 21, a social and cultural institution whose core mission is to drive social change in how people with disabilities are perceived and represented. Our work focuses on the professionalization of artists with disabilities. Our practice is long-term and deeply rooted in the belief that theatre and the performing arts, understood as public spaces, are uniquely suited to expressing identity, fostering representation, and enabling changes, interventions, and redefinitions. Through our work, we challenge established perceptions of minority groups and confront entrenched stereotypes surrounding health, disability, and gender.

The moment Theatre 21 began co-producing performances with public theatres and collaborating with guest artists, the issues of representation and community on stage took on new significance. When a shared theatrical body is created not only by people with different impairments—those with physical disabilities, learning difficulties, people on the autism spectrum, with Down syndrome, and invisible disabilities—but also individuals of varied, sometimes multiple, identities, including queer and d/Deaf artists, as well as non-disabled performers, the stage becomes a living embodiment of the social fabric we all inhabit. At the same time, our performances present—often in striking, tangible ways—what conservative norms might label as "non-normative" or unsettling. For the duration of each performance, the stage becomes a safe place to reveal this inter-human, non-normative mosaic, which remains largely absent from Polish public space. And it also exposes the fragile, yet subversive, nature of the community that emerges on and beyond the stage—a community based on tenderness, attention to each other's needs, and mutual care. We cherish the fact that we have formed a diverse human ensemble whose members support one another and respect each other's boundaries and needs—including the right to self-representation. Our work quips the Polish cultural landscape by exploring non-normative intimacies, desires, and—more generally—ways of being in the world, which we see as essential in the process of developing new theatre aesthetics and creating more habitable worlds that welcome diversity.

AGNIESZKA KOŁODZIEJCZAK: The ironic and subversive cripping of the word "deaf" or "Deaf" seems to be possible for me as a deaf artist and the curator of the 2022 exhibition *Głusza/Deafland* for the Silesian Museum in Katowice, Poland. To me, cripping the word "deaf" means speaking loudly and proudly: "I am d/Deaf." For many Polish hearing people, the word "deaf"/"Deaf" generally signifies intellectual disability.

The Polish d/Deaf community is very diverse and differs across regions of Poland. The largest group of self-identified d/Deaf people lives and works in Warsaw. For most of them, the Polish disability rights movement does *not* represent or fully embrace deafness and d/Deaf activism as it emerged in Poland in the early 21st century. It gave rise to, for instance, deaf community online forums and a series of conferences titled *Głusi Mają Głos* [*The Deaf Have a Voice*], organized in Warsaw between 2008 and 2016, which inspired the movement to advocate for sign language rights. Polish audism is strongly connected with the lack of accessibility for d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing people, the lack of respect for Deaf culture and Polish Sign Language. There are also many d/Deaf people who see themselves as individuals with a hearing disability and/or users of Polish Sign Language rather than members of a distinct cultural group.

In the Deaf art movement, it seems very important to work towards collective resistance (cf. McRuer, *Crip Times* 98). Nirmala Erevelles locates such resistance "[a]t the intersection of race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability" (120). She also argues that "collective resistance is more fruitful than [its] individualized forms" (Erevelles ibid.; McRuer, *Crip Times* 98). Such collective resistance is a form of active opposition against social, cultural, and linguistic colonization. This active resistance can be found in the work of the Group of Deaf Artists in Poland who collaboratively created the first Polish encyclopedia of art in the Polish Sign Language, along with a lexicon of art. The Group of Deaf Artists increase the visibility of d/Deaf arts by exhibiting their own works in museums and galleries. Another example of such collective resistance can be found in the *Głusza/Deafland* exhibition; it is artistic opposition to discrimination, to treating deaf people as incomplete and to cultural disregard for sign language which is often seen as "strange gestures" rather than an autonomous sign system. Deaf Artists show that being d/Deaf does not mean failure; it does not necessitate assimilation.

In her article, Zofia Nierodzińska mentioned that *Głusza/Deafland* goes decisively and boldly beyond the realm of aesthetics and has an activist, even political, character. Indeed, the intended curatorial goal was to raise visibility of the d/Deaf community and increase public awareness of audism and its violent effects, as well as the needs of deaf and hard-of-hearing people.

As for the neologism "quip," I have reservations. With regard to the art of d/Deaf people in Poland, quipping may be a strategy for the future. I believe that the most important thing for the Polish d/Deaf artists' community now is freedom of d/Deaf expression and having their works recognized as art in its own right. This year, the Deaf artist Daniel Kotowski, who also identifies as gay and sometimes incorporates queer elements into his performances, became a rising star in contemporary Polish art after participating in a project shown at Biennale Venezia 2026. However, in general, there is still a lot of discrimination against d/Deaf artists in Poland. Many contests, grants, and open calls are not fully accessible to deaf and hard-of-hearing artists—to respond to them, one needs to be proficient in written Polish and experienced in writing project applications. Polish Sign Language is not recognized as an official language.

To challenge the negative perception of deafness and Polish Sign Language, the re-evaluation of the words "deaf" and "Deaf" also needs to take place inside the d/Deaf community itself. For many d/Deaf people in Poland, becoming aware of what deafness is and becoming proud of one's d/Deaf identity require time and education. Redefining d/Deaf identity and fostering respect for sign language are now our main mission.



Fig. 2. Magda Szarota. *Crip From Within: Structures of Self and Society*, 2026. A photo triptych. Courtesy of Magda Szarota.

MAGDA SZAROTA: The photo on the left (Fig. 2) depicts my black shadow on grey pavement, outlined from above by a triangular shadow cast by an unidentified structure. The white inscription on the pavement, "Welcome to the House of F..k," suggests an occlusive ("f....d-up") space with no way out; yet the source and nature of the occlusion seem difficult to identify. The photo on the opposite side of the triptych does not feature any overarching shadow. My shadow rests beside that of a church—a deeply entrenched, powerful patriarchal institution in Poland, where crosses are seen not only on the rooftops of churches, but also on the walls of schoolrooms, inside public buildings, and along the roadsides. . . The Polish Catholic Church is one of the institutions that have long cast

their shadow on the lives of not only women, but also various other groups, including people with disabilities and queer individuals. As disability advocates stress, the so-called *charity model of disability* disempowers disabled people as agents of change and as fully fledged members of society. Strongly propagated and practiced by the Catholic Church, such an approach also contributes to strengthening detrimental and unequal power dynamics between "helpers" and those who are "in need of help," such as disabled people. Furthermore, the Church's perspective tends to further individualize the source of disablement, framing disability as a personal tragedy or a form of victimhood rather than recognizing systemic exclusion and structural impoverishment. Given the complicated relationship between the Polish state and the Church, it often seems that the latter is not truly on the side of people with disabilities.

The intensely yellow middle photo sharply contrasts with the greyish images on either side. Its placement suggests that intimacy can emerge within cracks and gaps—within the spaces between occlusion and oppression. The photo depicts a reflection of half of my face, including my eye looking toward the viewer and my wayward curly hair. The layered, blurry image engages with ways of inhabiting the world shaped by visual impairment. Rather than presenting a singular viewpoint, it draws on accounts shared with me during my research, in which people with sight impairments describe how visual space can at times be experienced and interpreted through shifting intensities of light, shadow, and partial visibility. The image attempts to register points of resonance across these accounts, searching for commonalities among different embodied perspectives (including my own). Within this field of yellow light, my face becomes a point through which the surrounding visual field is mediated, disrupting the shadowed visual logic that frames the images on the left and right.

EWELINA JAROSZ: Thinking about the intersections of queer and crip in my work and life, I feel both shy and honored—perhaps because, in Polish society, I can easily pass as able-bodied. Indeed, I benefit from many privileges described in disability studies. I can walk unaided. My gestures, gaze, and timing in social interactions align with expectations. I rarely need to wonder whether I will fit into a chair, reach a shelf, or use a bathroom—most infrastructure is, by default, tailored to my body. Yet the picture is more nuanced when it comes to sensory experiences. For some time now, my tolerance for light, noise, and crowds has been decreasing, which progressively restricts my access to public and professional spaces. In this sense, I have begun to encounter more and more dissonances while living within a normative society shaped by an ableist, human-centered history and culture, increasingly marked by technological overstimulation. Let me

begin with what I call my *human identity crisis*, which leads to my first response to your call.

Ever since I dipped my toes into blue humanities and critical ocean studies, my long-standing identification as a queer lesbian living and working in semi-peripheral Poland has been seriously—and positively—unsettled by posthuman understandings of embodiment. Hydrofeminism, especially Astrida Neimanis's concepts of bodies of water (*Bodies of Water*) and posthuman gestationality,[4] together with queer ecologies, has helped me to see how terrestrial and landed conceptions of human identity—autonomy, bounded individuality, bodily integrity—intersect with the oppressiveness of ableism. This perspective invites us to sense suffocating rivers and dying seas as kin, to recognize crip not as a metaphor, but as a shared condition of vulnerability across bodies of water and human bodies, beyond species boundaries and beyond compulsory able-bodiedness. Sunaura Taylor's *Disabled Ecologies: Lessons from a Wounded Desert* (2024) offers crucial insights for thinking about such crip ecologies, or, in the Baltic context, through *more-than-wet cripistemology*, a term recently introduced by Katarzyna Ojrzyńska ("Whales, Water, and Disability" and "More-Than-Wet Cripistemology") to describe the sea and its ableist imaginaries.

Hence, the intersection I want to bring forward is my practice as a scholar and artist who, together with Justyna Górowska, launched the hydrosexual movement in the arts—an effort to reframe human understandings of love, sexual pleasures, and our relation to the "Blue Planet." Hydrosexuality emerged out of ecosexuality (see Sprinkle and Stephens), hydrofeminism, and queer feminist posthumanism as a challenge to traditional, extractive ways of relating to water . . . and to our bodies. In this genealogy, hydrosexuality resonates with crip theory by reimagining disability not as lack, but as embodied knowledge: of pleasure, of sensuality in flux, of interdependence, vulnerability, and creative adaptation to challenges, including those shaped by environmental damage. Both crip and queer perspectives encourage us to perceive water not as a passive resource—so often romanticized and commodified—but as an active agent with its own rhythms, relationality, and resistances: a partner worthy of our love, care, and attention. Hydrosexuality, in this sense, makes a splash as it opens a space for emancipatory watery intimacies and imaginaries that affirm life across all different bodies and waters. It reminds us here and now that our evolutionary line remains entwined with the passage from ocean to land, yet, in truth, we have never abandoned the

[4] Astrida Neimanis defines posthuman gestationality as "the facilitative logic of our bodily water for gestating new lives and new forms of life, never fully knowable" (*Bodies of Water* 4). She, thus, reconceptualizes gestation (traditionally seen as a human, female, and biological function) as a capacity shared, through water, across different species and ecosystems [editors' note].

sea. The greatest advantage of this sexuality is that it is accessible to everyone. I believe that crip individuals have enormously much to offer when it comes to developing this identity and sensitivity.

DANIELA KOMANICKÁ: In the Central European post-socialist context, I focus on the intersections of queer and crip that unfold primarily through everyday practices of care, dependency, and their negotiations. Personal assistance (PA) represents an important and valued tool of independence for disabled people; yet it is continuously jeopardized by political decisions. Rather than contributing to a more stable and structurally grounded PA system, these political actions expose PA users to the persistent threat of institutionalization.

The practice of providing and receiving PA reveals a dense network of hidden labor (organizational, affective, and emotional) performed largely—and this is often overlooked—by the PA users themselves. Searching for assistants, training and managing them, coordinating their shifts, navigating bureaucracies, and mediating affective relations constitute an invisible workload that remains unacknowledged as *labor*. This is despite the fact that it sustains the very possibility of living independently—and would be recognized as labor in other contexts.

Slovak legislation further deepens this paradox. While it allows PA users to hire personal assistants, it does not permit a formal labor-law employment relationship between them. Consequently, PA users shoulder managerial responsibilities without possessing the rights, security, or stability of an employer. This legal framework produces significant precarity—high turnover of assistants, emotional strain of PA users, and fragile continuity of care. Against this backdrop, quip offers a conceptual and affective lens through which to read these entanglements—the intersections of legal frameworks, precarious labor, and intimate relations that define PA. While queer theory challenges norms of sexuality and gender, crip theory challenges norms of embodiment, ability, and productivity. Thus, quip is a method of living, creating, and feeling these challenges together, often within systems shaped by material constraints—bodily, legal, or institutional. In the field of PA, quipping becomes both a survival strategy and a mode of critique. It transforms dependence from a site of lack into a space of relational creativity, empathy, and solidarity. Through these queercrip negotiations, PA users and assistants co-produce new forms of intimacy and coagency that unsettle neoliberal understandings of productivity and reimagine interdependence as a political and affective resource.

ELI CLARE: As a community-based writer and activist, I think so much about the material and social conditions and lived experiences of disabled,

Mad, d/Deaf, chronically ill, and neurodivergent queer/trans/non-binary peoples in the settler colonial state of the US during this time of rising fascism. Disabled queer folks are shaped by the ways we're medicalized and deemed disposable. The ways we practice interdependence and survive isolation. The ways we're desexualized and hypersexualized, infantilized, and demonized by the knotted lies of racism, misogyny, capitalism, ableism, transphobia, xenophobia, homophobia, and on and on. Shaped by the ways we resist and the ways we comply. The ways death and joy keep showing up.

We live right now with the real threat of losing health care, housing, the remaining shreds of a government-funded social safety net. We navigate prisons, psych wards, detention centers. Navigate group homes and nursing homes. Navigate special ed, sheltered employment, homelessness. We experience such a lack of access in queer spaces and such homophobia/transphobia in disability spaces. And at the same time, we teach each other how to strut and flirt. We have sex against all the odds. We find each other.

*

My long-time partner S. and I walk down the street. He appears non-disabled; and I, very shaky. Together we look unmistakably queer, except we don't. Mostly strangers read us as caretaker and cripple, not lovers. Repeatedly they gawk at me and tell S. that he's doing a good deed by taking me out. Waitstaff at restaurants ask him what I want to eat. Cashiers hand him my change. This minor bullshit is endless and exhausting.

In places where public displays of affection might not otherwise be safe, we hold hands or walk arm-in-arm, knowing passersby will see a strong non-disabled white man helping a slow disabled white guy. They won't harass us. Their ableism protects us from their homophobia. We call this dynamic "crip privilege."

*

I love queer disabled humor—snarky, loud, insistent. It eases our exhaustion and rage in the face of all the material and social conditions.

PROMPT 2: INTIMACIES

"Intimacy is more than sex or romantic
love. Intimacy is an ever-expanding universe

composed of a myriad of heavenly bodies.
Intimacy is about relationships within
a person's self, with others,
with communities, with nature,
and beyond" (10–11).
Alice Wong (1974–2025), R.I.P.

Often imaginaries of intimacy swerve to partnership, sex/uality, and/or safety. Several contributions of this special issue focus on how sexuality and disability intersect uneasily and in messy, complicated ways in the world structured through and around material, symbolic, and ideological barriers. The short porn film made by Canadian cripqueer scholar Loree Erickson, *Want* (2006), provocatively weaves desire for sex, intimacy, queer community work, and assistance with the desire for access in the public sphere. Mia Mingus's theorizing of intimate access and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's discussion of intimacy embedded in doing grassroots activist solidarity access work seem to resonate meaningfully here. Daniela Komanická and Lucie Hradecká critique the plans for sexual assistance in the Czech Republic for their heteronormative settings, and, even more importantly, point to the ways the self-pay systems for sexual assistance reveal the inadequacies of social welfare in many countries of Eastern Europe where people with disabilities are hit by poverty and extreme economic and social precarity. How can we build on a queercrip redefinition of kinship, family, and friendship to draw out different forms of intimacies that keep crip/disabled/Mad/d(D)eaf people living? How to expand our cripqueer/quip yearnings of intimacies outside or beyond the limited scopes of relationships that are allowed to be recognized as "intimate"? How to broaden spaces that are associated with intimacy and safety, and nurture intimacies that cross lines of normative separation (such as human/nonhuman, animate/inanimate; see, e.g., Ojrzyńska, "Ecorelational Aesthetics")?

As much as we want to gesture to cripqueer/quip intimacies as a form of desiring "crip horizons" (Kolářová), it is essential to acknowledge that many forms and modalities of cripqueer intimacies are not completely devoid of hierarchies and inequalities, but possibly even cannot—structurally—move past them or exist outside of these hierarchies. Conflicts and their negotiations, as Alison Kafer argues, are central for building intersectional collaborations, shared spaces, and solidarity (*Feminist* 150–51). Might embracing conflict and seemingly conflictual positions be a way to reimagine ways of doing intimacies?

Furthermore, given that the state-imposed violence and "right to maim" (Puar; see also Kazemi) have undeniably developed into a genocidal scale

across many global locations (see, e.g., Pamuła, Król, and Hajdarowicz), what are the possibilities of reimagining cripqueer intimacies in spaces of state violence and war? What are these possibilities within and across increasingly polarized and divided communities where fear serves as a powerful weapon that helps justify the state of exception, which easily deprives groups of their civil and human rights, and, indeed, humanness when they do not fit normative and discriminatory models of citizenship? To modify and expand on Sins Invalid's turn of phrase, can crip, queer, and cripqueer/quip expertise and practices help us find and sustain intimacy "in the midst of [multiple: ecological, communal, institutional, political. . .] collapse"?

ELI CLARE: Queer disabled peoples yearn for, dream, practice intimacies so plentiful I wouldn't dare try to name them all.

1. Our bones, hearts, skins ache for touch.

1976, a moment in the schoolyard: I—12 years old, watching my classmates play, no one inviting me to join tetherball or jump rope—become aware of my aloneness. The year before these same kids had hurled *retard* and *lezzie* (long before I knew what that word meant) at me; pummeled me daily with rocks, rubber erasers, wads of gum. The adults at the school had given up trying to protect me. But now, all of us on the cusp of puberty, the bullies ignore me. I realize suddenly how much more I prefer their disdain, their pretending that I do not exist, than their taunting.

I lost myself into books and trees; didn't return to humans for a long time. And still my bones, my heart, my skin ached for touch even as I flinched, twitched, turned away.

2. We dream ways of porousness with wheelchairs, boulders, stardust, crows (Belser et al.), best friends, trusted caregivers. Sometimes interdependence means our bodyminds don't begin or end with the surface of our skins, the warm slick curves of our hearts. I write:

I'd gladly
forgo
opposable thumbs, entice
fingers into feathers,

if only
to dart
on ruby-throated wings. . . .

river of dreams
cold and clear

cast language aside,

if only

to accept
beaver's invitation, she
leading me deep
inside her lodge,

teaching me
to grow
a paddle-shaped tail,

river of sunlight
undammed

surrender
my tender human heart. . . . (Clare, *Unfurl* 79)

3. We practice loving ourselves. And if not love, then acceptance. And if not acceptance, then something different than shame.

Practice access intimacy. Practice negotiating access friction. Practice navigating access failure.

Practice embracing imperfection, ugliness, brokenness, brilliance.

Practice loving clear-cuts, Superfund sites,[5] poisoned and collapsing aquifers, even as we rage against the racist-capitalist-settler colonial environmental violence.[6]

Practice flamboyance and flirtation.[7]

Practice intimacy as one small way of refusing disposability.

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[5] Superfund sites are heavily contaminated areas in the United States that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has designated for long-term cleanup of hazardous waste [editors' note].

[6] For a powerful history of, and thinking about, loving damaged/disabled ecosystems, particularly aquifers, see Taylor's *Disabled Ecologies*.

[7] For a specific queer/trans disabled flamboyance, see Cubacub.

EWELINA JAROSZ: I want to respond to the intimacy question by continuing my commitment to making blue humanities more diverse and inclusive. Recently, I have been thinking extensively about the Baltic Sea, where I come from, and about contributing my research to bodies of water that remain undeservedly overlooked within the blue humanities. Together with other authors—Karolina Kolenda and Tomasz Sikora—we coined the term *brackish humanities* to provide a framework for thinking about semi-peripheral, liminal seas with an ambivalent ontological status. I will use this opportunity to extend this framework by elaborating on the intimate relationships that humans—whether they perceive themselves as crip, disabled, or not—may form with the Baltic Sea. I ask whether the Baltic Sea itself might be perceived as a more-than-human crip entity.

In our "Cyber Nymphs: Manifesto for the Hydrosexual Movement in Art," Justyna Górowska and I reimagine intimacy as a relational, embodied, and planetary sense of belonging that calls to response-ability: "We are the aquaphiliacs, deeply contaminated bodies of water. We are babies in love with a non-binary, transitional, life-giving substance connecting every sparkle of existence on the 'Blue planet' at risk as never before." Referring these words to the Baltic Sea, I would like to share my intimate relationship with this brackish body of water, that for some has not even been considered a "real" sea (Jarosz, Kolenda, and Sikora). I hope that this response will contribute to thinking about disability as a shared condition (Kafer, "After Crip") and to expanding posthuman discussions on *crip* epistemologies.

As a child growing up during Poland's turbulent period of postsocialist transformation, I used to spend most of my vacations by the sea in Sopot, where I lived with my family. Swimming—and especially going underwater—made me feel organically full, joyful, and happy. The Baltic Sea bathed me in the blurred vision of its greenish-grey-navy blue-brown materiality. Only later did I learn that the sea's "anti-capitalist" color is the result of nutrient overload, which, under both socialism and capitalism, has caused eutrophication and "dead zones," making the Baltic what Alison Kafer would call a "crip kin" ("After Crip"). This is compounded by pollution originating after the Second World War, by a seabed repeatedly ploughed up by fishing trawlers, as well as by ongoing militarization and other factors that continue to threaten its health (Jarosz, Kolenda, and Sikora). The Baltic Sea is full of non/human cripples.

From an early childhood bond through coming of age at forty, I have kept returning to the Baltic Sea as often as I could. I passionately treat this body of water, subjected to multiple scales of violence, as my lover, seeing its wetness and complex ecological condition functioning as a locus of more-than-human home, intimacy, and embodied pleasure. As a queer person, I must add that the Baltic has never refused me access to intimacy,

and that I perceive each and every year when I have been able to feel its water on my skin as a privilege, freeing me from harmful disciplinary regimes of work under capitalism.

Expanding intimacy beyond the human also requires challenging ableist, anthropocentric, and heteronormative norms of relating. Disability and queer theorists at our table highlight how true intimacy flourishes through interdependence, access, and vulnerability. Mia Mingus, a disability justice activist, introduces *access intimacy* as "that elusive, hard to describe feeling when someone else 'gets' your access needs"—an "eerie comfort" where a disabled person's body "relaxes and opens up" because their needs are met on a fundamental level. This unique closeness is, as Mingus puts it, "interdependence in action." How might we act with the Baltic Sea in ways that enhance its well-being and reduce anthropogenic stress?

In hydrosexual terms, we might imagine access intimacy not only between people but between human and watery environments: the gentle relief when a body finds buoyancy in water, or when adaptive technology enables a disabled swimmer to commune with the waves. Such moments move intimacy "out of the realm of only logistics and into the realm of relationships," valuing disabled people and our ecosystems as partners in solidarity rather than burdens or resources. Kafer's work *Feminist, Queer, Crip* further insists on coalition and connection across movements. This challenges any future that leaves disability or ecological care behind, instead promoting a coalitional intimacy that no longer separates crips, queers, feminists, trans people, environmentalists, environmental justice activists, and reproductive justice activists. All should work in alliance. How about inviting the Baltic to participate in this solidarity coalition?

From this queer/crip standpoint, intimacy is about kinship through difference—much as water brings diverse bodies into contact. Indeed, Astrida Neimanis describes water as a medium that "brings all kinds of bodies into intimate contact, despite and because of our differences. It respects membranes and containers, but it knows that eventually every dam breaks, every bag leaks. It takes a lot of abuse but still keeps going around—for billions of years so far!" ("Bodies of Water").

Within the framework of the *brackish humanities* and through the agenda of the hydrosexual movement in the arts, I invite all humans to sense the Baltic Sea as a sea that embraces interdependency, resilience, and difference, and that helps us imagine forms of intimacy grounded in mutual access, joy, and transformation.

ALEXANDRE BARIL: As Ewelina has already mentioned, in her theorization of *access intimacy*, Mia Mingus notes that this kind of intimacy can occur with strangers who, almost instinctively, understand

your experience and your access needs. From this perspective, intimacy is axiological and political, not just personal. I experience this sort of intimacy with suicidal people, which I would call suicidal intimacy. As a chronically suicidal person who has been theorizing for the past decade the oppression experienced by suicidal people, or what I call suicidism (such as forms of discrimination, stigmatization, exclusion, pathologization, criminalization, and incarceration), I have received hundreds of emails and phone calls from other suicidal individuals reaching out to share their experiences of suicidist violence. This is particularly the case since the publication of my book *Undoing Suicidism*, in which I discuss my personal relationship to suicidism and compulsory aliveness, intertwined with other oppressive systems such as ableism/sanism and compulsory able-bodiedness/able-mindedness, and in which I propose a queercrip (or quip) suicide-affirmative model of suicide.

Suicidal people have told me that they feel comfortable sharing their intimate suicidal feelings and ideations with me because they feel I truly "get it." Suicidal intimacy means that they don't need to provide lengthy explanations about the complexity of their relationship to life and death or to reassure me that they won't complete their suicide. Suicidal intimacy means that they don't fear that I will call emergency services without their consent. Suicidal intimacy means they can simply be and share what they often feel is unsafe to share with others, including their loved ones or their therapists, dreading that their suicidal revelations would lead to non-consensual hospitalization, involuntary treatments, the loss of child custody, or employment, to name only a few impacts of suicidism. Suicidal people who contact me feel an intimacy with me (and vice versa), and this suicidal intimacy often deepens and builds over time, when they continue to contact me about their future suicide plans, their latest suicide attempts, their newest experiences with suicidism, or initiatives to build the antisuicidist movement I call for in my work. Suicidal intimacy is sometimes what keeps us alive as suicidal selves, as we feel supported by others with similar experiences and goals to transform this world to make it a better place to live (and die) for suicidal people.

PEREL: On the subject of intimacy, I want to relate my story about Alice Wong. On Valentine's Day last year, 14 February 2025, I came to her home in San Francisco. It was a visit that had been pending for about a year. It took a lot of careful planning with room for crip capacity and spontaneity—would she be up for it and what would the weather be like? When we had finally found a date in 2024, my mother died, so I could not meet. But the following year, I found myself back in San Francisco, delivering a special red candle and love potion to Alice at her loft. We spent the day together

and our conversation spanned from the personal to the political. She was very present for me in my grief, and while talking with her, I opened up about a desire to write about the history of touch in my own life, starting with my mother, then other carers, nurses, access workers, friends, and lovers. She told me that when I was ready to write that piece, she would publish it on her *Disability Visibility* site. I still have not brought myself to write this the way I imagine it. When Alice passed, it felt like a failure that I never got to send it to her. I don't quite feel the same way now; I feel she will come and help me write it when it's time.

During our visit, we talked about chronic pain and the liberatory effects of palliative care. Alice napped a couple of times, and I watched the light come through her windows, onto her cats lounging on the couch. Then she would wake up and again be on fire, asking questions, theorizing about the state of the world. We talked about the resurgence of eugenicist paradigms in the United States and witnessing the ongoing genocides. While we were sitting together, I started to feel how our bodies were not only holding our own traumas, but the traumas of the world, and not only of our lifetimes, but presciently, for future lifetimes. In the previous prompt, I touched on the scar as a portal to previous lifetimes of disabled people, but it also works as a seam or an opening into seeing the future.

As I think of this future piece I want to write about my body's own archive of touch, I consider including violence in it, too—all of the kinds of touch to which I was subjected without consent, either with intent of harm, exploitation, or correction. I don't think we can talk about intimacy without talking about violence. There is no intimacy that is devoid of harm, but how we show up for each other makes the difference between replicating dynamics in relationships that will continue the cycle of violence or creating change. Violence itself is also intimate: the ways it is learned, ways it shapes one's psyche, is internalized, desired, and (re)enacted. It brings me to the Transformational Justice work of which Mia Mingus is part and has written on her blog, *Leaving Evidence*. When it comes to being in a crip community, I would love for us to be thinking about accountability in this way and be able to undo what has been given to us or enacted on us.

DANIELA KOMANICKÁ: Intimacy is often imagined at the extremes of a spectrum: as something deeply desired and chosen, or, conversely, as something violated or abusive. Yet many forms of intimacy fall between these poles. They are neither longed for nor traumatic, but simply lived.

A scene from my field diary (Komanická 55–56) illustrates this mundane, ambivalent intimacy. On a day of my heavy menstrual bleeding, two personal assistants, both Muslim men, help me to the toilet. One assists

me with changing a tampon—a task neither has done before. I choose Habib over Asad. Sitting face to face in a bathroom—me on the toilet, him on a low plastic stool—I guide him through the process, performing most of the task myself. At one point, I ask him to complete a small but crucial movement I cannot execute due to limited finger strength. We continue talking, including his reflections on the stigma surrounding menstruation in Bangladeshi culture.

What unfolds here is an intimate act that does not fit normative scripts. It is not erotic, nor abusive. It is not voluntarily desired, yet neither is it fully imposed. It is tolerated, negotiated, and pragmatically managed. Such intimacy is part of daily routine for many disabled people relying on personal assistance: bodily exposure, proximity, and trust enacted through necessity rather than desire. Avoiding it might be more comfortable, but being unable to access necessary assistance would be far more distressing.

This complicates "access intimacy" (Mingus): functional but not comfortable, necessary but not desired, negotiated in real time without prior understanding. It also raises conflict as part of intimacy (Kafer, *Feminist* 15, 150). While not dramatic, tension can arise between gendered, cultural, and religious norms and practical necessity, alongside boundary negotiation and possible misalignment between cultural norms and the demands of assistance. Rather than seamless, such intimacies are shaped through small, everyday negotiations of difference, discomfort, and potential conflict.

Even this relatively "good" scenario is structured by constraints. The possibility to express a preference—for instance, choosing one assistant over another—is a limited yet meaningful form of agency, often more restricted in institutional settings. In such contexts, intimacy becomes not only unchosen but also determined by others rather than by the person whose body is exposed.

Rather than locating intimacy solely in desire or violation, we might understand it as a spectrum of embodied interactions shaped by systems of dependency and power—where everyday, tolerated, and necessary forms deserve the same analytical attention as those recognized as intimate in mainstream imaginaries.

AGNIESZKA KOŁODZIEJCZAK: The key aspect of intimacy shared by Deaf people (both deaf and their hearing allies) is their use of sign language. Sign language is not just a communication tool, but also an intimate medium—conveying nuances, emotions, and affection through the entire body. Sign language offers a strong foundation for community building for Deaf people (Solvang and Haualand 3). Deaf intimacy relies on visual cues, presence, and embodied communication, emphasizing

touch, gaze, movement, and spatial awareness to foster closeness. Sign language, which does not have formal titles like Mr./Mrs., is a language of local communities whose members know each other well. Intimacy in Deaf culture often develops through heightened attentiveness to visual cues, facial expressions, and physical proximity. Eye contact communicates trust, touch offers reassurance, and shared silence creates mutual understanding. Emotional bonds are strengthened through expressive storytelling, shared experiences of marginalization, common culture, and a strong sense of community.

Deaf people, as part of society, function in a sensorium shaped by hearing people (Stanosz 10). Deaf intimacy challenges hearing-centric norms by redefining closeness beyond sound. It emphasizes connecting—through visibility, empathy, and embodied presence—and shows intimacy as something lived, seen, and felt, rather than heard.

Central to Deaf intimacy are the concepts of Deaf space and Deaf gain. Most spaces and the ways they function are shaped by hearing individuals, reflecting their hearing- and sound-centric norms, customs, and values. Hearing is often assumed, and this default assumption is reinforced by current practices. Deaf space provides an answer to the question: "how?," highlighting how Deafness influences physical environments.

In 2005, architect Hansel Bauman conducted a study titled *DeafSpace* for Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., to develop a series of guidelines for designing for Deaf individuals. He established that Deaf architecture should be grounded in Deaf culture's visual-tactile qualities, expression, and acoustics. Bauman's guidelines were implemented at Gallaudet University (Charters 21). They, for instance, included the use of light signals, tactile elements, open spaces, and circular rooms where one can see other people's faces.

By accentuating Deaf perspectives and values, Deaf gain offers an answer to the question: "why?" The term, popularized by researchers H-Dirksen L. Bauman and Joseph J. Murray (*Deaf Gain* and "Deaf Studies"), has gained popularity in academic circles and among Deaf activists. Deaf gain shifts focus from a medical understanding of deafness as a deficit to appreciating it as a cultural, cognitive, and social asset. It enriches human experience by offering alternative communication, perception, and thought. Sign languages, as fully developed, richly structured languages, can generate different ways of thinking and perceiving the space around us, serve as a foundation for a distinct cultural identity, and support technological and social innovations.

Deaf intimacy can flourish in broadly and unconditionally accepted safe and friendly d/Deaf spaces that recognize the value of Deaf gain. It can thrive among d/Deaf individuals and in mixed (hearing-d/Deaf) marriages, partnerships, sexual relationships, friendships, and collegial ties.

HANNA ZAREMBA-KOSOVYCH: No LGBT+ person with a disability in Ukraine has grown up in a truly friendly society. This shapes intimacy not as easy or spontaneous, but as a fragile practice of becoming oneself—with oneself, with others, and in the world. Drawing on an interview with a Ukrainian lesbian woman with a physical disability, I explore intimacy across three interconnected levels: the communal (belonging), the personal (acceptance of intersecting self-identities), and the societal (citizenship).

At the communal level, she experiences intimacy as fragmented belonging. In disability communities, she feels safe to ask for a chair or expressing bodily needs yet often silences her queerness. In LGBT+ spaces, she feels freer to express her sexuality, but must carefully manage the visibility of her disability—fearing that a simple request to be able to sit down will turn into a public spectacle. Belonging, thus, becomes conditional and never fully realized. Intimacy here is not a shared vulnerability, but the struggle for "access intimacy" (Mingus)—access to safety, recognition, and care within communities that claim inclusion, yet reproduce ableist norms.

At a personal level, intimacy unfolds as an ongoing labor of self-acceptance. My interlocutor describes how coming out as lesbian felt easier than naming herself disabled; pride in queerness preceded pride in disability. Claiming both identities required what she calls "fighting for words"—reclaiming lesbianism and disability from stigma and moral panic. This resonates with Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's understanding of intimacy as survival work: a daily practice of staying alive in bodies and identities deemed excessive, inconvenient, or undesirable.

These intimate struggles are inseparable from citizenship. My interlocutor's encounters with a lesbian-friendly, yet ableist, gynecologist expose what Alison Kafer theorizes as the political nature of care: queer safety without disability justice reproduces harm (*Feminist* 161). Access to intimacy, thus, becomes a matter of strategic visibility—revealing one aspect of one's identity while concealing another, depending on what survival demands.

The war further complicates the situation. For some queer Ukrainians, especially soldiers and veterans, military service confirms citizenship and unexpectedly authorizes intimacy—public displays of love and vulnerability, and their recognition. For many people with disabilities, living in relations of dependence, however, intimacy remains risky: disclosure can compromise care, safety, and daily survival.

In this context, research interviews themselves emerge as rare spaces of intimacy—moments when fragmented identities can coexist without immediate sanctions. Cripqueer intimacy is, therefore, not a private realm

of feeling, but a deeply political practice shaped by citizenship, war, and the uneven distribution of whose bodies are allowed to belong, to desire, and to be seen.

JUSTYNA LIPKO-KONIECZNA: The 2019 performance of *PokaZ* [*The Show*] was a significant breakthrough for Theatre 21. Its final form was shaped by the development of a unique queer-crip intimacy during the process. Justyna Wielgus, a choreographer, actress, and director, brought together a diverse group of queer individuals and people with disabilities.[8] This variety of experiences and viewpoints fostered artistic risk-taking, mutual trust, and expanded the boundaries of stage presentation.

On stage stood side by side: Katarzyna Żeglicka, a queer activist with a disability; Helena Urbańska, a recent theatre school graduate, who came out as a lesbian in *PokaZ* (in *Cukry*, another production of the Center for Inclusive Arts, she also came out as a person with ADHD); Maciej Kasprzak, a queer person with a physical disability; Diana Niepce, a Portuguese dancer, feminist, activist, and wheelchair-user; Aleksandra Skotarek, an actress with Down syndrome (Theatre 21); and Michał Pęszyński, an actor with Down syndrome (Theatre 21).

In the process, a queer-disabled community emerged, asserting its right to speak, listen, and perform. Both the creative process and the performance itself were structured around a dramaturgy of conversation—among the performers and with the audience. The actors and the audience came together on equal footing in a non-hierarchical space. I feel that, in that moment, we crossed a Rubicon of freedom. It marked a significant turning point by fostering a sense of intimacy and mutual support among very diverse people. And this community validated itself, both internally and publicly before the audience.

FILIP PAWLAK: I struggle to find a way to respond to the question about intimacy in the context of global problems and conflicts; this task feels overwhelming. For me, intimacy is a fragile, hard-earned sense of freedom from shame, something I try to build on stage. It takes a great deal of effort to maintain it during a performance. Usually, it lasts only a brief moment—a kiss on the cheek from a better imagined world. I wish I could enjoy this moment of honesty with myself and the audience more often, without the fear of being judged afterwards. When

[8] Since then, queer desires and modes of self-expression have frequently appeared in Theatre 21's productions, such as *Libido romantico* (2022), which explores the actors' romantic, erotic, and sexual needs and desires, and *You Can Fail! Porażka Show* (2024), featuring the Polish drag queen Gąsiu [editors' note].

I place this image against the world's troubles, I end up destroying it—and realizing I don't have the strength or power to save it saps me even more.

PROMPT 3: CONFLICTS, DIS-SONANCES, DIS-JUNCTURES

Across the previous prompts, we have been collectively exploring how to build cripqueer intimacies as a platform for political and private solidarities and for world-making, and what such cripqueer—quip—intimacies look like across the different contexts and vantage points from which we speak and gesture. We have also raised the impossibility of detaching theorizing of intimacies from personal, political, and geopolitical conflicts and violence. In the final prompt, we would like to invite you to voice your skepticisms—or an outright critique—of the concept of intimacies itself. Perhaps, even after all this critical work, you are still uneasy about the extent of romanticization, the cruel imperative of happiness attached to it, or the prescriptiveness with which most cultural imaginations of intimacies continue to be infused—so much so that it becomes difficult or even impossible to reorient or reimagine intimacies away from the normative pull? Is the concept of intimacies salvageable for cripqueer world-making?

To counter potential unease, we also wish to gesture toward legacies of posthumanism, new materialism(s), and work on queercrip ecologies and cripqueer kinships. We could invoke Greta Gaard's foundational reflection on queer ecofeminism; Catriona Sandilands's conceptualization of a queer ecology; Alison Kafer's notion of crip kinship ("Crip Kin"); Sunaura Taylor's academic and artistic investigations at the intersection of animal and disability studies (*Beasts of Burden*) and her reflection on disabled ecologies (*Disabled Ecologies*); Eli Clare's discussion of ecological restoration, along with the notion of cure and gender transition (*Brilliant Imperfection*); Katarzyna's work on crip ecorelational aesthetics (Ojrzyńska, "Ecorelational Aesthetics"); the eco- and hydrosexual explorations of queer pleasure and environmental ethics (Sprinkle and Stephens; cyber_nymphs—Jarosz and Górowska); Tabita Rezaire's artistic work centered on disability and healing, linking ecology, biodiversity, and ancestral knowledge (e.g., "Premium Connect" and *Conscience u.terre. ine*); Khairani Barokka's reimagining of human/nonhuman relationality (*Indigenous Species* and *Rope*). . .

Faced with the collapse of ecological systems and networks, and speaking from the Eastern Europes that—like other structurally produced

(semi)peripheries to the imagined Center—have been carrying the ecological costs of late capitalist "transformations" and of the growth drive, we feel the urgency to explore the question of whether and how queer and crip perspectives and practices help build new forms of environmental relationality. How can various entanglements and kinships with the more-than-human help us rethink our being in the world and envision cripqueer futurities? Following Mel Y. Chen's recognition of animacy in what is often considered "insensate, immobile, deathly" (2), we attend to what Julia Watts Belser calls "queer animacies," understood as "practice[s] of living and loving across the human/nonhuman divide" (9). Yet, building queercrip, postanthropocentric, ecorelational allyships may be fraught. For instance, as Taylor notes, "identifying as or claiming animal is just far too dangerous for some people—people who historically have been animalized as a way of justifying their exploitation or murder" ("Disability" 151). We thus also ask about tensions and contexts that make such cripqueer intimacies, identifications, and acts of solidarity risky, difficult, or impossible.

EWELINA JAROSZ: Extending intimacy beyond human relationships can be generative, but it also creates important tensions. Imagining intimate relations with environments such as seas or rivers risks romanticizing wild spaces that are not only deeply shaped by violence, extraction, and ecological damage, but also markedly different from human worlds and modes of relating. Think, for example, of the story of Timothy Treadwell, who believed he had befriended wild bears and treated them like family members.[9] Any attempt to imagine intimacy with such nonhuman entities must acknowledge and respect ontological difference and forms of sociality that are distinct from human intimacy.

Thus, Mia Mingus's concept of "access intimacy," when applied to damaged environments and vulnerable ecosystems, must be critically reworked through the tensions generated by openness and respectful negotiation with them. Working with this concept reminds us that intimacy does not emerge automatically—it requires knowledge, awareness, and labor. But shouldn't this be the case with every type of bond? The question of how humans can respond to the needs of damaged waters in ways that reduce harm, rather than reproducing extractive relationships, should be at the core of hydrosexual awareness.

Intimacy itself may reproduce intersectional dynamics as well as inequalities. As Daniela has already noted, Alison Kafer argues that conflicts, debates, and tensions are central to building coalitions and shared

[9] In 2003, Treadwell and his partner were killed by bears [editors' note].

spaces (*Feminist* 15, 151). Expanding this thinking to environmental relations confirms that intimacy is not always a harmonious connection, but may also involve negotiation, disagreement, and accountability. For me, exploring intimacy in this direction involves learning to carefully inhabit spaces within a world where connection, conflict, vulnerability, and responsibility remain inseparable.

ALEXANDRE BARIL: When I think about forms of intimacy that stretch beyond our normative understandings (e.g., human/nonhuman, animate/inanimate), I think—in the spirit of some of my colleagues on this roundtable who theorized, following Achille Mbembe, the necropolitical forces targeting marginalized groups—about people who experience forms of social death while still alive. Death is often seen as the ultimate end of intimacy. However, despite the fact that many people in our trans-queer-crip communities (among other marginalized groups) are deemed socially dead, less human, or treated as if they are less worthy of living according to current violent laws on assisted death (e.g., physician-assisted suicide, euthanasia, medical aid in dying), many, nonetheless, successfully build alternative networks of support, care, and intimacies. Their socially dead status, rather than preventing them from entering forms of intimacies, orients them toward the creation of new affiliations with others who live similar experiences. In that sense, *social death can deepen certain intimacies*.

When I think about non-normative conceptualizations of intimacy, I also think about the intimacy we can have with dead entities, such as people or pets we loved and now mourn. Some authors discuss the social, political, and cultural life of dead entities, as the living maintain relationships with them through discussion, prayer, etc. In this sense, our intimate relationships can be complexified, even deepened, post-death. I consider that queercrip approaches to death and mourning that envision the social existence of dead entities can help us rethink death beyond its dominant interpretation as the ultimate end of relationships and intimacies. In other words, *social or biological death transforms and reconfigures intimacy instead of annihilating it*. Queercrip death studies has the potential to help us conceptualize death less as the antithesis of relationships and intimacies, but as a different modality to connect with those who are gone or who wish to go. Such queercrip perspectives also help us reimagine what departure and death really mean to us, and how we might want to build intimate connections, both during and after someone's life.

In my work on suicidality, I propose a shift from a preventionist, carceral, and curative logic to a logic of accompaniment for suicidal people, one based on deep relational connection that supports people in making

the best decisions regarding their lives and deaths, while simultaneously working tirelessly to end the necropolitical forces that fuel suicidality. This suicide-affirmative approach, which envisions assisted suicide as one option among many for suicidal people, could be both life-affirming and death-affirming. Often wrongly confused with current ableist, sanist, ageist, and capitalist laws on assisted death, my position sometimes elicits criticisms from disability/Mad communities. But I think those conflicts represent a form of connection in which conflictual parties can share their feelings, thoughts, and arguments, and expose their vulnerability by engaging with each other's ideas. While ignoring, distancing, silencing, and estranging our intellectual/activist peers when disagreements occur kills intimacy, I believe that respectful and non-violent conflict can create meaningful forms of intimacies in our communities.

PEREL: In my previous response, I spoke of desire to create an archive of touch; what I did not say was that it is also implicitly an archive of heartbreak. I am speaking of the heartbreak of loss, either from death, separation, or undesired ending. My mother and I were not physically close at the end of her life, but after her death, memories of her touch, of her body, and the intimacy we shared surfaced from where they had been buried inside my disabled, queer survivor's body. As a child, I did not know that she would be the first in a long line of people who would care for me and whom I would lose. So, to talk about intimacy is to talk about grief. To create a space of intimacy, however intentional or liminal, is to create a space that also holds loss.

I think this is something we don't allow for ourselves within activist spaces, and we don't know how to make space for grief in our attempts toward solidarity and allyship. Before making space for conflict, I would open and hold space for grief. I would ask, "Is there space for grief here?," before or alongside talking about harm. Behind every conflict is an unacknowledged grief, and in crip spaces, we might often also be hiding this from ourselves in our striving, in our desire to make up for what we suffer from in the world. Often in crip spaces, I feel simultaneously acute sensitivity and vulnerability of my own bodymind, and those of my peers, and the ways in which our access needs clash, and where our ideologies might also clash. However, we do not have room for this fissure, and this also is a form of heartbreak. I want to know how we can speak to one another's heartbreak[s?], and I also want to know what new forms of heartbreak we anticipate.

I want us to be able to coexist and grieve together; I want us to be able to grieve for what we cannot give to each other, for what we could not receive for ourselves, for future losses that we cannot prevent, and for

ways in which harm had happened, is happening, will happen, no matter the care. This, too, is an act of solidarity. This, too, is part of our collective bodymind.

NATALIA PAMUŁA: In the early 1950s, Irena Kowalczyk, a polio patient, wrote about a fleeting moment in a Polish rehabilitative institution: during a film screening, "Marian often rests his hand on the armrest of my chair. After a while, pretending that I am unaware of his hand, I lean back against the chair. He then removes his hand. For a moment, I regret that his hand is no longer there, but at the same time I am grateful to him for his sensitivity" (75, translation mine). Her memoir, *Poza granicą skargi* [*Beyond the Possibility of Grievance*], depicts an array of these kinds of situations: vulnerable small gestures—overlooked or ignored by the staff. These are rarely grand gestures leading to bigger things, such as kissing; these are instances of microintimacy, micromoments, which might easily remain unrecognized. They might go unnoticed in literature; they often were overlooked in the institution where Kowalczyk stayed at the time. I am not trying to romanticize these moments of microintimacy, especially since Kowalczyk did yearn for bigger emotions and bigger gestures. Yet I want to emphasize the importance of paying attention to intimacies that take place in spaces which are not conventionally associated with safety and pleasure, and which go beyond normative understandings of intimacy.

The quote above describes this kind of "small" gesture—a short moment Kowalczyk shared with another patient, but she also writes about the intimacy she experienced with rehabilitative workers, for example, a massage therapist whose touch was a source of pleasure and who kissed her. The memoir shows that rehabilitation has a potential to generate intimacy. How do we approach this kind of intimacy? As a byproduct of cultural and medical pressure? In Kowalczyk's text, such intimacy is entangled with discourses of normative beauty (people thought she was very beautiful) and heterosexuality; in that sense, it does not escape normative trappings, or, rather, it is enabled by them. However, I am hesitant to state that these entanglements undermine the significance, or the need, to discuss intimacies generated at complicated junctures. Rather, such microintimacies are shaped by normative ideas, and, at the same time, reflect structural inequalities and vulnerability Kowalczyk experienced inside the institution.

JUSTYNA LIPKO-KONIECZNA: Most of the Theatre 21 ensemble are people with Down syndrome, and two actresses are on the autism spectrum. People with Down syndrome are still often treated like *eternal children*. In Poland, few people with Down syndrome undergo training

for independence in assisted-living flats, yet very rarely are they given a genuine opportunity to live autonomously. Particularly strong taboos persist around sexuality. When immediate family, school, and society at large perceive you solely *as a child*, you are deprived of the right to intimacy, relationships, and desire.

Our explorations of corporeality at Theatre 21, driven by the actors' needs, caused unease among their parents. In 2018, in the performance *Rewolucja, której nie było* [*The Revolution That Never Was*], one actress felt a strong need to express her internal conflict and her sole responsibility for her body. She did so in a scene performed in both Polish and English, in dialogue with Polish-English banners from protests by people with disabilities and their carers inside the Polish parliament earlier that year. "This is my body," she said. The gesture revealed a stark asymmetry: women with Down syndrome have far fewer rights to sexual expression and bodily freedom than men with Down syndrome. In this scene, the actress exposed her chest, as her male colleagues had done in a previous scene. This gesture—an assertion of the right to bodily autonomy—was blocked by the parents. The experience left a profound mark on the artist's psyche and affected her sense of personal and artistic freedom.

The immediate response to that situation was an artistic intervention by another ensemble member, Aleksandra Skotarek. In the performance *PokaZ* [*The Show*], which explored the experience of otherness and the phenomenon of "staring" from the perspective of people with visible disabilities, Aleksandra, during improvisation, exposed her chest, alluding to the previously mentioned, controversial gesture of female nudity. She then provided an analytical commentary, deconstructing "nudity" as a performance viewed through the lens of a normative, able-bodied society. "My body has upper nudity and lower nudity . . . both are illegal," she declared, highlighting the arbitrariness of the boundaries that define what can be seen and what is restricted by social norms. She treated *PokaZ* as a lecture space and the audience as an auditorium: a society that needed to be made aware of how people with disabilities experience imposed limitations. It was necessary to clearly outline the mechanisms of the normative gaze—the violence enacted through the disciplining and control of disabled bodies.

The relationships between the actors and their parents are often close and intimate, also because they both share the experience of social stigma related to disability. However, this shared stigma does not erase the hierarchical nature of the relationship. The parent retains structural authority, which can shape how the child's disability is understood, managed, and represented. In this context, (over)protection may emerge

as both a response to stigma and a mechanism of control. While intended as care, excessive protection can limit the child's autonomy and inhibit the development of their subjectivity and identity.

AGNIESZKA KOŁODZIEJCZAK: In my view, conflict is always intertwined with rebellion, which supports and amplifies it. In the context of Deaf culture, conflict (both with the dominant hearing culture and within the Deaf community itself) can be understood as an intense form of relationality that simultaneously fosters intimacy and resists phonocentric social norms. In Poland, a notable form of artistic rebellion was the founding of the Deaf Artists Group in 2012, which highlighted the distinctiveness of Deaf perspectives through collective exhibitions of their artwork. For d/Deaf artists, the strategy of forging their own paths as d/Deaf individuals has been a response to the frustration caused by their existing *in-between* worlds and not fully conforming to the social expectations of the hearing majority.

The axiological aspect of perceiving a Deaf person as the Other is related to comparing their ability to hear and speak with that of an average hearing person. Hearing and speech are closely linked and highly valued. The less deaf people hear and the less fluently they speak, the lower their status in the hearing community (Dunaj 16).

Audism stems from the belief that hearing culture is superior to Deaf culture, which is consequently perceived as inferior. Moreover, audism fosters paternalistic attitudes toward d/Deaf individuals. d/Deaf people are then viewed as constantly requiring assistance and support in managing their own lives (Pieniążek and Dankiewicz 435). Audism has also led to the emergence of another, rarely discussed social and cultural phenomenon called deafism, positioned in opposition to audism. Deafism refers to a situation where Deaf individuals consider their culture superior, and, as a result, discriminate against the hearing culture (Tomaszewski and Moroń 291). They may expect hearing individuals to possess a very high level of sign language proficiency, which implies that if a hearing person wishes to enter Deaf culture, they need to fully adapt to it. In the context of strategies of intimacy within culture and the arts, deafism can be understood as a form of rebellion against discriminatory practices of hearing individuals—including accessibility coordinators, exhibition curators, directors of cultural institutions, and employees in the cultural sector.

What fuels rebellion is d/Deaf ability to read emotional cues emanating from the hearing—the cues that indicate the pervasive oppression of Deaf culture and the pressure to conform to the majority. As a result, an individual may either surrender and *disappear*, or resist existing norms and

stereotypes, which are typically not subjected to social critique precisely because they function as convenient strategies that do not challenge dominant axiological dogmas.

HANNA ZAREMBA-KOSOVYCH: In contemporary Ukraine, intimacy cannot be separated from citizenship. Ongoing debates around the draft of the new Civil Code (*Draft Civil*) reveal how partnership, marriage, guardianship, and legal capacity are not merely private matters, but core terrains of political struggle. Drawing on Engin Isin's concept of enacted citizenship, these controversies can be read as acts through which marginalized communities claim recognition and reshape the boundaries of belonging. At stake is what Alan Santinele Martino and Margaret Campbell describe (after Kenneth Plummer) as "intimate citizenship": the right to make decisions about one's body, relationships, and sexuality (98–99).

Amid Russia's full-scale invasion and Ukraine's accelerated EU integration, legal reform is framed as a step toward European modernity. Yet the draft of the Civil Code has been publicly criticized from different directions. LGBTQ+ communities point to the continued absence of full partnership recognition and the precarity of queer families (Insight NGO; boss_moonshine). Organizations of people with disabilities, including Fight For Right, raise concerns about provisions on legal capacity and guardianship, warning that paternalistic control over disabled people's autonomy remains insufficiently dismantled (Fight For Right).

Both critiques target state regulation of intimate life. However, they largely unfold in parallel rather than through an explicitly intersectional framework. Queer activism focuses on relational recognition; disability activism centers on decision-making autonomy and protection from substituted judgment. The interdependence of these claims—the fact that partnership rights and legal capacity are structurally intertwined—remains underarticulated.

War further intensifies this dynamic. The defense of the nation and the trajectory toward the European Union open new channels for civic participation, encouraging communities to engage the state in shaping legal reform. At the same time, the state continues to determine whose intimacy is recognized as legitimate—or more legitimate—and whose autonomy remains conditional. Intimacy, thus, emerges as a contested arena of enacted citizenship, shaped by militarization, Europeanization, and ongoing struggles over who is authorized to love (whom and how), to decide, and to belong.

ELI CLARE: What might we learn about queer/trans disabled intimacies if, for a moment, we pull the notion of intimacy away from desire, pleasure,

romance, sex, even love? Allow intimacy to simply mean connection and closeness. Intimacies as irrevocable as gravity. Those of us who fall and fall and fall and those of us who crawl, scoot, slide as ways of moving through the world know such closeness with the ground. We experience both the unyielding danger of a hard stumble and the steady comfort of the floorboards and concrete beneath our wheels and crutches, feet and beds.

Intimacies as constant as skin and bone, liver and kidney, however we relate to our bodyminds. As necessary as sun and water and food. As persistent as hunger when food disappears—SSI (Supplemental Security Income) and food stamps stretched thin at the end of every month, starvation in the middle of war or famine. As ordinary as pain and heating pads.

Intimacies as messy as interdependence. On every scale, all of us—disabled or not, queer or not—are interdependent with the planet, with the beings who inhale carbon dioxide and exhale oxygen, with the people we pay for care, with friends and family who keep showing up—sometimes in helpful ways, other times in controlling ways. Very few of these interdependencies are entirely easy. Some of them are sweet and nourishing. But many of them are laced with desperation, power imbalances, and burnout. In all these permutations, interdependence brings us close to each other—human and more-than-human, sentient and nonsentient.

Here in the US—the belly of the empire amid climate chaos and fascism—thinking about intimacy feels like a luxury. And yet, as ICE (US Immigration and Customs Enforcement) occupies city after city, targets schools and churches, farms and factories, terrorizing immigrant communities, our widespread resistance roots itself in connection and closeness. Disrupting ICE's brutality; documenting the state-sponsored abductions of Black and brown people; making the harassment, even murder, of protesters visible; singing outside courthouses; delivering food; driving neighborhood kids to school; fundraising to pay rent and legal fees are all acts of intimacy. If we dismiss intimacies as luxuries or relegate them solely to the province of sex and romance, we risk missing the many ways they keep us alive.

CONCLUDING THE ROUNDTABLE AND OPENING FUTURE DISCUSSIONS

As we have noted in the introduction, many perspectives remain missing from these multilogues. We desire future conversations that include voices representing the complicated interplay of racialization, ethnicization, and disablement—dynamics that need to be articulated from concrete

locations, as the theorization of racialization developed with respect to the specificity of US history and chattel slavery cannot be transposed to other times and spaces; similarly, the conversations gathered here do not reflect the vast array of religious and spiritual diversities.

In Europe, Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. The war is one of the most significant producers of disablement and debility there is. The violent attack has created forms of solidarity and intimacy locally as well as internationally/transnationally. It has led to cripqueer *microintimacies* that do not leave trace in the "large narratives" of the war and resistance, to gesture back to Natalia's words—*microintimacies* between soldiers, people helping each other by sharing both material and non-material resources, people helping refugees and people on the run. . . Very possibly, new forms of advocacy and emancipation movements of people disabled in the armed conflict will follow once the violent phases of the war are finally quenched. This remains to be seen and critically observed in order to identify whose voices and experiences are missing from such representations and which forms of disabilities, debilities, and hurt are, and are not, hailed as traces of past bravery and the fight for freedom.

Our attention and thoughts also turn to people on the move who have left their homes to escape persecution, discrimination, economic disadvantage, environmental pressures, natural disasters, political instability, limited educational and employment opportunities, and many other factors. This includes queer and disabled people who acquire impairments looking for a "habitable world: a world that wants [them] in it," to adopt Nancy Mairs's turn of phrase (63). As people from the Global South migrate towards the Global North, many Northern societies increasingly perceive themselves as besieged fortresses, seeking to defend their borders against perceived waves of those who are labelled as racial and cultural Others. The spread of the Fortress Europe mentality has given rise to political narratives that frame migration as a threat to economic stability, cultural cohesion, and national security. As a result, people on the move are not presented as individuals seeking security or opportunity, but as external pressures to be contained through walls, surveillance technologies, detention centers, and, increasingly, restrictive border regimes, as the example of Poland best shows, where in recent years the right to asylum has many times been suspended at the Belarus border, contributing to the ongoing humanitarian crisis in that region. Thus, the Polish-Belarusian border has become a place where the "right to maim" (Puar) has been exercised, "a place that produces disability" (Pamuła, Król, and Hajdarowicz).

We hope this text will encourage readers to keep asking questions such as: who is not at the (round) table? What other questions demand our

urgent attention? Which uncomfortable issues do we avoid? All of these are essential to forging intersectional coalitional politics, solidarity, and intimacies, as well as to crip and queer world-makings in the arts, academia, and far beyond, especially when the tools we have do not suffice, and we need to start articulating new tools and refashioning the ones we have to be able to speak to the changing landscape of violence, marginalization, and destruction, but also to hope, desire, and world-making.

And once again, we, Katarzyna and Kateřina, want to end by expressing our thanks to our colleagues in these multilogues. We know they have taken time away from other projects, from organizing assistance, resting, and planning. We are grateful for this space and time of sharing.

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White, disabled, and genderqueer, **Eli Clare** (he/they) lives near Lake Champlain in unceded Abenaki territory (also known as Vermont), in the United States, where he writes and proudly claims a penchant for rabble-rousing. He has written two books of essays, the award-winning *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure* and *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation*, and a collection of poetry, *The Marrow's Telling: Words in Motion*. His newest book, a mixed genre volume titled *Unfurl: Survivals, Sorrows, and Dreaming*, was released in September 2025. Additionally, he has been published in dozens of journals and anthologies. Eli works as a traveling poet, storyteller, and social justice educator, and currently serves on the Community Advisory Board for the Disability Project at the Transgender Law Center. Among other pursuits, he has walked across the United States for peace, coordinated a rape prevention program, and helped organize the first ever Queer Disability Conference.

Ewelina Jarosz (she/they) is a hydrosexual scholar working within the queer-feminist currents of the blue humanities. They are Assistant Professor in the Department of Media and Cultural Studies at the National Education Commission University in Kraków, Poland, where they also serve as the accessibility coordinator for the Institute of Polish Philology. Her research focuses on the intersections of environmental art, pleasure activism, and queer ecologies. She is a two-time recipient of the Kościuszko Foundation Scholarship. As an artist and researcher, she collaborates with the E.A.R.T.H. Lab at the University of California, Santa Cruz, USA, and the Posthumanities Hub at Linköping University, Sweden. She is a member of the artist-research duo cyber_nymphs and a co-founder of the hydrosexual movement in art, as well as the Blue Humanities Archive project. She is also a member of AICA Internationale.

Agnieszka Kołodziejczak is a deaf woman artist passionate about painting, comics, iconography, medieval miniature, text writing, graphic design, and collage. A graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts in Lodz and the University of Lodz, Poland, she holds a PhD in humanities in the field of culture and art, paying attention to accessibility in professional life; she is Research Assistant at the Department of the History of Painting and Sculpture at the University of Lodz; leader of a National Science Centre research grant, *The Art of the Deaf People in Poland—History and Analysis*. She is a project specialist at the FIDEES Social Ideas Foundation. She is also vice president of the Ucieleśnienie Foundation, co-founder of the Group of Deaf Artists in Poland, and a social activist who enjoys learning new things and writing

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Daniela Komanická is a Slovak PhD candidate in the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology at Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic. As an extensively physically disadvantaged/disabled electric wheelchair user, she developed her own personal assistance (PA) system at a time when such services did not officially exist in the post-socialist Central European context. Her autoethnographic research—situated at the intersection of Disability Studies, Gender Studies, and Social and Cultural Anthropology—focuses on PA from the perspective of the service user. She is the author of "Žijem život na hrane: autoetnografické záznamy" ["Living a Life on the Edge: Autoethnographic Records"], published in the anthology *Iné telá.txt* [*Other Bodies.txt*]. She has long been advocating for the rights of extensively physically disadvantaged/disabled people and other discriminated minorities. Currently, she is completing a research article examining the contrast between her own lived realities of assistance and the experiences of PA users in Sweden.

Justyna Lipko-Konieczna is a dramaturg, theatre scholar, and educator. She is the programme director, board member, and dramaturg at the Center of Inclusive Art/Theatre 21, in Warsaw, Poland, where she integrates disability studies into contemporary theatre practice. Lipko-Konieczna is the author of numerous theatre scripts and academic texts, a co-creator of inclusive educational programmes, and a specialist in critical dramaturgy, bridging theory and practice.

Natalia Pamuła works at the American Studies Center at the University of Warsaw, Poland. Her research focuses on disability discourses and representations in Polish socialist and postsocialist culture and literature. Her articles appeared, among other places, in *Aspasia*, *Teksty Drugie*, and *East European Politics Societies and Cultures*. Her book, *Disability Disruptions: Family, Gender, and Care in Post-1989 Poland*, was published by Illinois University Press in 2026. Currently, she is working on a project investigating the history and discourses of neurosis and mental health in socialist Poland.

Filip Pawlak is a theatre maker and self-advocate for artists with disabilities. A graduate of the Film School in Katowice, Poland, and Malmö Theatre Academy at Lund University, Sweden. Since 2025, he has been a PhD student in art at the Krzysztof Kieślowski Film School at the University of Silesia, Poland. He has been involved in the international project Europe

Beyond Access as an ambassador and expert. Together with Łukasz Ronduda, he is the author of the multidisciplinary project *Freak Show*, staged at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, among other places. In 2024, he was a recipient of a Minister of Culture and National Heritage scholarship in the Young Poland programme. In 2024, he was artist-in-residence at the European Art Centre Hellerau in Dresden, Germany, and Komuna Warsaw, and, in 2025, at Skanes Dansteater in Malmö, Sweden.

Perel (they/them) is an interdisciplinary artist whose work moves between dance, performance, and text, and explores themes of disability, care, sexuality, and historical trauma. Utilizing choreography to examine power exchange between the artist and audience, "Perel is a master at timing, of tension, relief, and intimacy while creating a space of learning and unlearning" (Victoria Dejaco, *Spike Magazine*). Perel tours and teaches internationally at organizations in New York and Berlin, Germany. Most recently, Perel has performed at Martin Gropius Bau in Berlin, and Lincoln Center in New York. In 2022, Perel created, and continues to lead, the mentorship program, DREAM: Dance, Radicality, Embodiment, and Access for Makers, at Brooklyn Arts Exchange in New York. They received the prestigious Disability Futures Fellowship from United States Artists and the Ford and Mellon foundations, as well as the Hauptstadtkulturfonds in Berlin for the premiere and tour of their new work, *Natural Acts*.

Dr **Magda(lena) Szarota** is a disability and human rights academic and advocate, photographer, and published poet. She co-founded the first association of women with disabilities in Poland in 2004, and has been involved in policy advocacy at the European Union and the United Nations. Her artistic works have been shown in curated exhibitions in Poland, the UK, Australia, and Brazil. As part of her graduate studies at the American Studies Center, University of Warsaw, Poland, and scholarships at the Library of Congress, USA, and the University of Washington, Seattle, USA, she conducted research on the photography of pioneering women photographers from the turn of the 20th century and their use of various photographic methods. She is also the author of texts on photography and women's engagement in the field, including the text for the Annie Leibovitz exhibition *Women*, presented in Poland.

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