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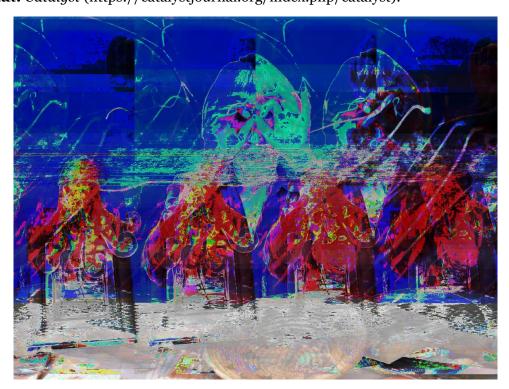
Employing Glitchspeak: Glitch Theories for a Crip Anthropocene

Abstract

This paper combines crip theory and glitch theory in a central aim to problematize a binary distinction between the broken and the whole, arguing against 'wholism' as a deep-rooted ideology that attaches value to the whole over the broken. Unpacking the broken/whole binary, I follow the anti-cure politics of Eli Clare (2017), crip technoscience, and the glitch theory of Rosa Menkman (2011) which establishes the glitch as a break from (expected) progresses and flows of information and (digital) communications systems. Central is the argument that the glitch is to technology, as disability is to embodiment. Discussing this comparison in the context of Donna Haraway's (2016) *Staying With the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene,* I argue that a focus on 'becoming' over 'being' (following Puar, 2017) can be a way to consider relationalities beyond individuals plus context. Valuing the critical potential of both the crip perspective and the glitch as a way to disrupt linear temporality, the Crip Anthropocene emerges as a necessary survival practice of imagining other futures.

Keywords: Glitch theory, Disability, Environmentalism, Crip Technoscience, Wholism.

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Data bended glitch image created by author using RAW file in Audacity. Original image: Courtesy Icarus Films. Image Alt Tekst: Glitched image of Donna Haraway looking through finger goggles, on the left side a plush octopus sitting on a picture frame.

Thinking about our (natural) environment requires us (among many things) to rethink interconnectedness beyond merely the category that we know as 'the human'. Donna Haraway (2016) has been deeply influential in her call to 'stay with the trouble', defined in *Staying With the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, as a way to 'be truly present' (p. 1). Being present entails neither a looking back at 'awful or edenic pasts', nor does it mean to already be thinking towards 'apocalyptic or salvific futures' (p. 1). To be truly present means

to be aware of our current situation, in all its messy complexities, and to work with that messiness rather than to attempt to negate it. Haraway does so by refusing to believe in what she calls 'easy technofixes' as well as a nihilistic kind of 'game over' attitude (p. 3). Her non-anthropocentric view of climate change requires us to recognize the limitations of our human abilities, and to recognize the importance of the mortal critters with which we are intertwined.

Haraway's approach can be considered as holistic, she writes: 'Nobody lives everywhere; everybody lives somewhere. Nothing is connected to everything; everything is connected to something' (p. 31). However, the contradictions in these sentences reveal that Haraway is critical of a specific brand of holist ecological philosophy. She cites Thom van Dooren (2016), who argues against a simplistic holistic understanding of connections, that sees everything as connected to everything. Instead, 'while we may all *ultimately* be connected to one another, the specificity and proximity of connections matters – *who we are bound up with and in what ways* [emphasis in original])' (p. 60). This specificity is central in the concept of 'sympoiesis' as Haraway develops it, which stresses the importance of analyzing relationalities: 'The partners do not precede the relatings; these relationalities *are* the objects of study [emphasis in original]' (p. 64).

While this indeed nuances holism, I argue that a further distinction should be made between holism and what I will call 'wholism'. By wholism I refer not to holist ideas of deep connectivity, but to a deep-rooted ideology that attaches value to the whole over the broken. I argue that 'staying with the trouble' then requires us to let go of wholism. Not only is wholism unhelpful, the desire for the whole also has a deeply conservative aspect. Wholism is indicative of a conservative desire to keep things the way they are, or even restoring past(s), by refusing to look at and accept the broken and 'be truly present' (Haraway, 2016, p. 1).

Haraway argues that new conceptual frameworks are needed, which provide different ways of thinking about and feeling through our relationship with the earth and our environment. In this context I argue that much can be learned from a disabled/crip perspective, which *Staying With the Trouble* either overlooks or refuses to engage with. The disabled/crip community has many lessons to teach us when it comes to letting go of wholeness, as well as the practice of healing. Thinking from the point of disability allows us to include the broken, the collapsed, and the shattered. That does not mean, however, that disabled bodies are broken bodies and abled bodies are whole; rather it refers to the way that disabled bodyminds (a term I use after Margaret Price to acknowledge that 'mental and physical processes not only affect each other but also give rise to each other' [Price, 2015, p. 269]) complicate and challenge a binary understanding of the broken/whole. A disabled perspective, then, allows us to understand that the broken and the whole are not opposites,

but are productive sites of tension. It is this tension that can guide us in thinking through the messiness of our environment. Following the work of disability writer Eli Clare (2017) in *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling With Cure,* I ask: 'What might happen if we were to accept, claim, embrace our brokenness?' (p. 160).

In thinking through the relation between disability and the broken/whole, I bring in the concept of the 'glitch', as both a method and a metaphor. I argue that once we delve into the glitch and disability, the two share an interesting similarity in the way they relate to the idea of wholism, and therefore to the broken/whole binary. Though the glitch is not an uncontested topic, which is also the case for disability, in defining it I follow the definition of glitch artist and theorist Rosa Menkman whose work has been foundational to what has been called 'glitch studies'. Menkman (2011) defines the glitch as 'the occasion where there is an absence of (expected) functionality, whether understood in a technical or social sense' (p. 9). The critical potential of the glitch lies in it being a not-yet defined break from functionality.

I follow Menkman's call to 'Employ Glitchspeak' as she puts it in the ninth thesis of her 'Glitch Studies Manifesto':

> Employ Glitchspeak (as opposed to Newspeak) and study what is outside of knowledge. Glitch theory is what you can just get away with! Flow cannot be understood without interruption, nor function without glitching. This is why glitch studies is necessary (p. 11).

Menkman coined the term 'Glitchspeak' in opposition to George Orwell's 'Newspeak', to challenge the limitation of language 'created by proprietary technology, to capture the constant transformation and growing wealth of glitch artifacts and their meanings' (p. 43). Though Menkman herself does not refer to it as such, Glitchspeak can be considered to be a form of nomadic methodology, defined by Rosi Braidotti and Griet Roets (2011) (inspired by the work of Gilles Deleuze) as 'retelling, reconfiguring, and revisiting a concept, phenomenon, event, or location from different angles' (p. 168). Following Deleuze and Guattari's theory of the subject, Braidotti and Roets argue that 'bodies and subjects are socially created in the affirmative actualization of the encounter between subjects, entities and forces which mutually affect and exchange parts of each other' (p. 166). Such a methodology then allows us to open up the way that categories like 'disability' and 'the glitch' are constantly becoming. Revisiting disability through the glitch, and the glitch through disability then, provides the kind of 'intensive form of interdisciplinarity and boundary-crossings' (Braidotti and Roets, p. 168) needed to respect the 'visible and hidden complexities and uncertainties of the real-life world in which we are living' (Braidotti and Roets, 2011, p. 168). This means not to shy away from complexity but to 'stay with the trouble' (Haraway, 2016).

This then relates to a broader context of crip technoscience, in which crip becomes a verb (somewhat similar to queering in queer theory), that centers disability as a desirable

site of resistance and non-compliance (such as in Robert McRuer's *Crip Theory*, 2006). Technoscience here refers to the 'co-production of science, technology, and political life' (Hamraie and Fritsch, 2019, p. 2). A theory of crip technoscience has been proposed in the 'Crip Technoscience Manifesto' by Aimi Hamraie and Kelly Fritsch (2019), which argues that 'technoscience can be a transformative tool for disability justice' (p. 3). Crip technoscience builds on feminist technoscience, which challenges normative narratives of technology, in order to imagine transformative possibilities. *Staying With the Trouble* here functions as the backdrop to my insistence on the radical potential of disabled/crip perspectives in a time of climate change and ecological disasters, and my call for a Crip Anthropocene. The glitch as method/metaphor allows me to uncover these perspectives. The main focus throughout this paper is the relational comparison between glitch and disability, by which I argue that the glitch is to technology as disability is to embodiment. Both highlight how the broken and whole are constructed categories, that begin to unravel when we start to take them apart. Both the glitch and disability hold transformative power, which allows us to rethink our loyalty to the idea of wholeness in light of failure.

Glitch is to technology …

The glitch breaks with expectations, it challenges our expectations of information and communication technology. The glitch emerges both in glitch theory, in which the glitch is broadly defined as a disruption, but also in glitch art which is a specific artistic genre (though differently interpreted by various artists). Menkman's *The Glitch Moment(Um)* (2011) provides both a broad theory of the glitch, as well as a reflection on her own practice of glitch art, and the glitch art of other artists. The glitches discussed by Menkman are mainly visual glitches, rather other forms of glitch (such as musical glitches). Menkman places the glitch in the context of the work of Claude Shannon, the foundational developer of a basic common mathematical theory of communication. She discusses the glitch as 'a (actual and/or simulated) break from an expected or conventional flow of information or meaning within (digital) communications systems that results in a perceived accident or error' (p. 9). This break is not the same as a simple technical malfunction. The glitch is not a failure, but a 'noise artifact' within a relatively predictable system of linear communication (p. 15). As a 'noise artifact', the glitch appears in Sean Cubitt's "Glitch" (2017) as 'the ghost in the machine, the inhuman in our communications' (p. 20). Cubitt then relates the glitch to the unconscious, arguing that it serves as a reminder of 'the prehuman, inhuman universe against which we drag our messages into existence' (p. 22). In both Menkman's and Cubitt's work, the glitch represents a liminal event, a state of in-between.

Focusing on the technical aspect of the glitch, Menkman uncovers the processes of encoding/decoding and compression algorithms. She argues that the glitch is what emerges
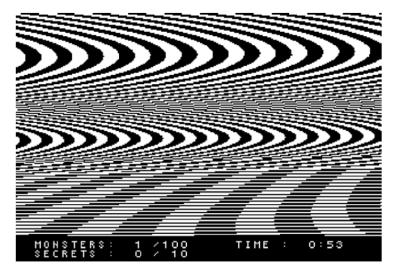
when an error corrupts the image information, or the encoding/decoding process malfunctions. It is essential that this error cannot be singularly codified; otherwise Menkman would categorize it as a failure: 'Failure is a phenomenon to overcome, while a glitch is incorporated further into technological or interpretive processes' (p. 27). By being incorporated into these processes, the glitch is also part of a productive process, with varying degrees of intentionality (in the case of glitch art). This understanding of the relation between the glitch and failure is not uncontested, a different perspective is provided by Michael Betancourt (2019) in *Glitch Art in Theory and Practice*. Betancourt places the glitch in the context of the shift to digital capitalism. He argues that the glitch is indeed a form of failure, however, this failure does equally hold the possibility for a critique of digital capitalism by producing a critical media practice.

Similarly Carolyn Kane (2019) maps the glitch in *High-Tech Trash* as part of an 'archeology of aesthetic failure, apropos of a culture ill-equipped to deal with it' (p. 3). The glitch is defined here as another 'aesthetic paradigm rooted in failure' (p. 4), analyzed from a media archeology perspective. Rather than a 'free-floating form of personal expression or agency of individual desire', it is 'as a necessary and often unconscious mode of structuring existence in a digital age' (p. 9). Unlike Menkman and Betancourt, Kane is less hopeful when it comes to the glitch's critical potential. As Kane writes, 'Glitches may disrupt convention and cultural fantasies about technology, but it is more likely most of them will become a passing fashion or fad' (pp. 18-19). For Kane glitch art is already neutralized of criticality.

Moving from a broad definition of the glitch to a more specific understanding then, means to acknowledge that the glitch not only has a technical dimension, but also connotates an aesthetic dimension in glitch art. Menkman problematizes this aesthetic dimension on the basis of discussions of commodification. She describes the aesthetic experience of the glitch as a feeling of shock 'with becoming lost and in awe' (p. 29). It is this feeling of shock that grants the glitch its power: 'The glitch is a powerful interruption that shifts an object away from its flow and ordinary discourse, towards the ruins of destructed meaning' (p. 29). The glitch is somewhat of an uncanny and overwhelming experience of incomprehension that is unforeseen, which goes beyond merely destruction: 'The glitch generates new understandings of techno-culture through the gestations of Glitchspeak, glitch's constantly growing vocabulary of new expressions' (p. 43). This affective impact also grants the glitch it's artistic qualities. However, difficulties emerge when trying to define glitch art due to the varied way in which artists approach it. While it is impossible to make a concise definition, Menkman does see value in making a distinction between the different dimensions of 'glitch' in 'glitch art'. Most important here is the distinction between works that are post-procedural, deconstructive, accidental, etc. and works that are focused on the creation of a certain end-product, aesthetic, or design. Menkman warns against the glitch becoming 'cool' and purely

aestheticized, through the use of pre-made filters that approximate the retro-nostalgic aesthetic of the glitch. For Menkman, this strips the glitch of its critical potential and makes it into a pure commodity form. It is essential that we focus not only on the end-product of the glitch, but on the trajectory of getting there.

An example of the first category (deconstructive glitch art) analyzed by Menkman is Jodi's (the Dutch/Belgium artist collective Joan Heemskerk and Dirk Paesmans) *Untitled Game* (1996 – 2001) (fig. 1), a series of eleven modifications of the first shooter game 'Quake 1'. For Menkman this is an example of subversive glitch art, 'that battles against the hegemonic flows of proprietary media systems' (p. 38). *Untitled Game* is an intentional glitch, yet it exploits errors within the source code of the original game and changes the game's dynamics by destabilizing and altering the normal laws of physics. This version of the game then, questions conventional and normative videogame goals' (Menkman, 2011, p. 39). Jodi's work is not so much driven by a certain aesthetic goal, but rather by a reconfiguring of the game's dynamics, affordances, and goals. The glitch in this form is the most relevant in relation to cripping, because it considers the glitch as a productive force beyond the aesthetic and is inherently political in its insistence of disrupting the system, shaking things up and valuing the potential of the mess.

JODI. UNTITLED GAME. 11 QUAKE MODIFICATIONS FOR PC MAC. 1999. MODS: E1M1AP AND CTRL-F6.

Figure 1: Jodi. Untitled Game. 11 Quake Modifications for PC MC. 1999. Screenshot from: Menkman, R. (2011). The Glitch moment(um). Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures. Image Alt Text: black and white wavy lines on a screenshot of a game, on the bottom border 'monsters: 1/100', 'secrets: 0/100' and 'time: 0:53'.

… as disability is to embodiment

Just as the glitch emerges here as a disruption to the machine's illusion of normalcy, so has a critique of normalcy been deeply central to the disability rights movement and to disability studies. Robert McRuer (2006)in *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* has come up with a way of thinking about disability in terms of 'compulsory able-

bodiedness', similar to the notion of 'compulsory heterosexuality'. Compulsory able-bodiedness (though I would argue this should also include compulsory able-mindedness, as disability is not only about the physical) denotes the way that the appearance of choice serves to hide a system 'in which there actually is no choice' (p. 8), and the reliance of the abled body on the disabled body. Similarly Sharon L. Snyder and David T. Mitchell (2001) have argued that 'the able body cannot solidify its own abilities in the absence of its binary Other' (p. 368). However, out of this system without choice also emerges crip theory as a way to study 'how bodies and disabilities have been conceived and materialized in multiple cultural locations, and how they might be understood and imagined as forms of resistance to cultural homogenization' (McRuer, 2006, p. 33). It is important to note here, that 'disability' does not describe a singular experience, and that neither 'disabled/crip people' form a heterogeneous group. There are many different experiences of disability, illness, and pain, that cannot be thought separately from other identity intersections such as gender, race, sexuality, and class.

My approach here is akin to theories of situated knowledge that adheres in embodiment. However, I use embodiment in the sense of 'complex embodiment' developed by Tobin Siebers (2016) as a way to be attentive to the positive, negative, and ambivalent experiences of disability, and also the relationships between these three. Complex embodiment, for Siebers, 'theorizes the body and its representations as mutually transformative' (p. 284). It allows one to include both disabilities caused by the body, and disabilities caused by the environmental destruction, violence, colonialism, etc. It is also crucial to note that the work of crip theory does not only happen within the academy but also in the streets, through the demands and disruptions of disability activists. In my comparison between disability and the glitch then, 'cripping' is an essential term to denote the resistance to normative forms of embodiment just as the glitch has the critical potential to disrupt processes that can be made visible in glitch art. Cripping treats disability as an ongoing process rather than a static or solid state of being. In its ability to disrupt, disability becomes a politically productive force. Crip politics, as Price (2015) puts it, entails 'a way of getting things done – moving minds, mountains, or maybe just moving in place (dancing) – by infusing the disruptive potential of disability into normative spaces and interactions' (p. 269). Cripping provides a way of thinking about embodiment beyond institutionalization and medicalization.

Essential to a disruption of normalcy for disability is a disruption of the politics of cure. As Clare (2017) reveals, the politics of cure is central to the politics of disability, or as McRuer would put it 'compulsory able-bodiedness': 'For now, doctors inside the medical-industrial complex are the reigning experts, framing disability as a medical problem lodged in individual body-minds, which need to be treated or cured' (p. 8). This medical view of

disability supposes that disabilities must be overcome, and reduces disability to the desire to become whole rather than broken. It is therefore a wholistic understanding of disability:

> First, cure requires damage, locating the harm entirely within individual human body-minds, operating as if each person were their own ecosystem. Second, it grounds itself in an original state of being, relying on a belief that what existed before is superior to what exists currently. And finally, it seeks to return what is damaged to that former state of being (p. 15).

I will return to this statement later, as it reveals a comparison that can be made between cure and the body, and cure and the earth. This statement also reveals why for Clare the idea of refusing cure is so important and necessary as a form of refusal and reclamation. Cure, as Clare argues, accompanies eradication and is ultimately a violent ideology. To refuse cure then is a way to refuse compulsory able-bodiedness and the medical-industrial complex that situates disability solely in the individual body. However, Clare also acknowledges the messiness of an anti-cure politics, which does not adequately address the problem of pain, for example, since chronic pain for many is still a reason to seek cure. Clare also discusses the connections between environmental destruction and illness, about which he notes, 'Cure also requires dismantling racism, poverty, and environmental injustice. I let health and cure take on multiple meanings' (p. 62). I argue that this reveals that a politics of refusing cure cannot stand on its own, but that it must be thought of as part of a larger assemblage of complex embodiment, which Clare also admits in his own work. An anti-cure approach must also consider that receiving cure in and of itself cannot be theorized without considering race, gender, sexuality, and class, since it has been well-established that marginalized groups are far less likely to receive cure and/or pain treatments (see Gkiouleka et. al., 2018). These systemics complications make it so we cannot think about the refusal of cure without considering that cure is easier to refuse, when it is actually a possibility.

That does not mean, however, that an anti-cure politics does not hold transformative potential. From the discussion of cure, emerges also an important discussion around disability and debility when thinking about disability on a global scale. Thinking about disability globally, Helen Meekosha (2011) argues that we must confront 'as a central issue the *production* of impairment in the global South [emphasis in original]' (p. 668). This, I argue, also includes to consider what kinds of brokenness even count within the narrative of cure, and whose 'brokenness' is deemed important enough, or even normalized as an unavoidable result of neocolonial exploitation. Disability scholars like Meekosha have rightly pointed out that colonialism, neo-colonialism, war, and environmental pollution have impaired large groups of people in the global South. This creates a tension between disability and debility/impairment, while they are not the same, they do form overlapping categories, and bring into question the variables of temporality and spatiality. In *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability*, Jasbir Puar (2017) argues that we can and must hold disability

and debility together: 'Disability empowerment and pride are part of rights discourses even as expressions of maiming, debilitation and disabling are central to economies and vocabularies of violence and exploitation' (p. xi). Puar speaks specifically about the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and its deliberate debilitation of Palestinians; doing so she reveals that there is a tension between 'targeting the disabled' and 'targeting to debilitate' which is ultimately 'a tension between being and becoming' (p. xiv).

For Puar debility and disability exist within 'a mutually reinforcing constellation' (p. xv), in which debility must not be left out precisely because of its ability to expose and suture the binary of non-disabled/disabled. It is therefore also crucial in the context of disability, cure, failure, and the glitch. Puar rightfully calls out the inability of Western disability studies to deal with these topics: 'the production of most of the world's disability happens through colonial violence, developmentalism, war, occupation, and the disparity of resources' (p. xix). This approach does not necessarily contradict the anti-cure politics of Clare, when understanding embodiment as a deeply complex and unstable. Like the glitch which cannot be singularly codified, neither can disability be singularly-codified. It is impossible to locate disability/debility either completely within the body, the medical-industrial complex, society, (neo)colonialism, etc. As Haraway (2016) put it, 'the partners do not precede the relatings', rather we must take these relationalities as objects of study (p. 64). This requires us to resist the temptation for wholeness, and to resist models of disability that seek to locate it within a single space, and thus to refuse the broken/whole binary also within our theorizations of disability.

Finally I want to highlight that thinking from the perspective of disability problematizes not only the broken/whole binary, but also the natural/unnatural binary. Clare argues that 'the natural' often works to obscure 'the normal' in relation to cure: 'cure aims to make us as normal and natural as possible' (p. 173). Related to this, in 'Bodies of Nature: The Environmental Politics of Disability', Allison Kafer (2015) problematizes the notion of built environment and access as it has been commonly theorized in disability studies. She argues for a crip perspective that allows one to notice that the natural environment is as much a built environment as cities and suburban environments are. Destroying the myth of the untouched wilderness, she argues that the natural environment is as much 'shaped by and experienced through assumptions and expectations about gender, sexuality, class, race, and nation' (p. 203). An example provided by Kafer shows how social arrangements have been mapped onto what are commonly considered 'natural environments', as she describes how campgrounds in the United States are designed in order to resemble suburban neighborhoods. In this ground plan, each campsite faces the road or common area. This spacing then 'discourages, or at least pushes into the cover of darkness, outwardly queer acts and practices' (p. 202). Similarly she delves into the removal of

indigenous people from parklands, so that 'new parks could be read as pristine, untouched wilderness' (p. 202). Both of these examples show human intervention in what is considered the 'natural environment' on the basis of ideologies and social arrangements.

Kafer also shows how compulsory able-bodiedness plays a role in the type of embodied experience that has become 'a prerequisite to environmental engagement', which is walking, leaving no room for the mobility-impaired body to engage with the natural environment. A crip perspective then challenges any presumption about 'authentic' and 'good' ways of engaging with nature:

> They ignore the complicated histories of who is granted permission to enter nature, where nature is said to reside, how one most move in order to get there, and how one will interact with nature once one arrives in it (p. 207).

In fact a crip perspective demands that us to reimagine other ways of engaging and interacting with nature, which is not only necessary but also productive. It means to take disability experiences seriously, as sites where knowledge about nature is produced, making it relevant for all humans across the abled/disabled spectrum because the question of human limitation effects all, especially in the context of climate change. Disability has thus been theorized as being a part of a system of compulsory able-bodiedness and compulsory able-mindedness, which has social and material consequences not only for disabled individuals but also non-disabled individuals, while also disrupting a binary construction of these categories. This relates to Puar's (2016) discussion of being and becoming, in which being emerges as a teleological movement. Becoming, however, is about 'allowing and reading more multiplicity, multiplicities of the impersonal and of the imperceptible' (p. 56). 'Becomings', for Puar, have no starting point and no narratives attached, which in the context of disability means narratives of cure. Unlike a wholistic view of disability, which reduces disability to a desire towards cure, an un-wholistic view of disability inspired by Haraway then allows me to center relationalities over singular elements and to include debility in this process.

Glitch is to technology as disability is to embodiment

A strong connection emerges between the glitch and its relation to failure, or to the break, and disability as a break from normative embodiment. The glitch as break, especially in the conceptual framework of Menkman, bears a striking resemblance to the disabled body as not necessarily in need of cure (such as in the anti-cure politics of Clare, 2017) but as an unsettling of normative standards, expectations, and ideas of progress. 'Staying with the trouble' then, means staying with the glitch and with disability, to see value in what is popularly not considered valuable. Their ability to disrupt technologies and embodiment in turn reveals a great deal about our (cultural) expectations of the way technologies are meant

to function (perfect transmission flows), as well as bodies (remaining 'whole', functional within a capitalist society). Both challenge wholistic ideals by revealing the potential of the broken. Glitch art and crip theory then work to make desirable what conventionally is not considered desirable. Just as the glitch reveals 'the ghost in the machine' (Cubitt, 2017, p. 20), disability haunts the non-disabled subject, like the latent ghost in the body. I use latent here to denote the fact that all humans likely at some point will have to deal with disability and illness (though that does not mean we will all at some point claim disability). Lindsey Dolich Felt (2019) makes a similar connection between cripping, error and noise in relation to cybernetics: 'like "cripping," error and noise also reproduce disjunction and refuse order' and 'affordances for unruly bodies or partial communication are encoded – and even preserved – in cybernetic systems' (p. 23). According to Felt, failure is not located within the body, but in the inherent assumptions within 'prescriptive top-down systems designed to contain bodies' (p. 27).

I treat the glitch and disability not in the sense of being, as 'being a glitch' and 'being disabled', but as 'becoming a glitch' and 'becoming disabled' (following Puar, 2017), to allow non-linear narratives to emerge. Centering 'becoming', here is a way to center relationalities, and to highlight how both the glitch and disability exist within a larger framework of technology and embodiment. Both the glitch and disability are noise artifacts in an otherwise idealized system of productivity, that tries to exclude both, and does so violently especially in the case of disability and cure. The approach of prioritizing becoming over being, is part of the methodology of Braidotti and Roets (2011) discussed earlier, who approach their subjects by centering the 'affirmative actualization of the encounter' (p. 168). An encounter between the glitch and disability then, as an 'intensive form of interdisciplinarity and boundary-crossings' (p. 168), shows their similarity in that both are part of an interpretative process, and therefore do not exist without their respective counterparts (the ideal of the abled body, the myth of perfect transmission). We could also consider this the other way around, that these ideals and myths do not exist without the ghostly presence of the disabled body and the glitch (whether we consider it as failure or not).

The desire for cure then, sets in motion a certain trajectory, a roadmap towards normalcy even when this is not possible. Cure contains a relation of cruel optimism (Berlant, 2011), 'when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing' (p. 1). A clear example of the cruel optimism of cure, is the use of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) as a treatment for children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). ABA trains children to showcase 'correct responses' to particular stimuli, through extensive long sessions, also using physical force. It is a form of cruel optimism, precisely because ASD as a form of neurodivergence cannot be cured, ABA problematically makes no distinction between conditioning and cure. The appearance of 'correct responses' itself becomes a move

towards normalcy, at the cost of mental wellbeing (Sandoval-Norton and Shekdy, 2019). This focus on appearance again shows the importance of the distinctions between being and becoming. ABA proposes that autistic children indeed can 'be' normal, rather ABA should be thought of more as a forced 'becoming' normal, a goal that will never be fully attainable and thus remains a cruel optimism. This process, which is ultimately a process of trying to fit in, is deeply cruel as it may lead to what has been described as 'autistic burnout' (Raymaker et. al., 2020).

This example highlights how disability is part of an interpretative process, and as I argue so is the glitch. Part of this interpretative process means that various issues and disagreements emerge when trying to define disability and the glitch. This difficulty around definitions reveals how neither the glitch nor disability can be located within either the technology/the body or in the cultural realm of human perception and interpretation. Instead, they exist within what Puar (2017) refers to as 'a mutually reinforcing constellation' (p. xv), and it is through the employment of Glitchspeak that it becomes possible to attend to the disruption of flow(s). The glitch and disability exist, as Menkman would put it, in the break. Both refuse to be 'singularly codified' in a system of complex embodiment and complex technological processes. This does not mean that it is not also important to point at structural inequalities and access to healthcare, impairment through environmental damage or as a result of neocolonial exploitation, rather refusing a singular origin gives justice to the complexity of 'becoming disabled' or 'becoming impaired' while also refusing to see bodies as separate from their surroundings. Similar for the glitch, it matters less whether it actually is a failure or not (since this also depends on how one defines failure), what matters is the glitch's critical potential in the break. The glitch demands that we take a step back and pause, and so does do crip bodyminds.

Returning to earth: A Crip Anthropocene

What can a crip perspective then provide for rethinking wholism in our relation to the planet? To uncover this I first bring in the work of disabled artist Riva Lehrer, specifically her self-portrait 'In The Yellow Woods' (Fig. 2). This painting depicts Lehrer kneeling on the ground in a forest, using a knife to peel bark from a branch, while being surrounded by scattered bones carved from trees. Her deep concentration seems to signify a certain loss, but also the necessity for carving a new untouched body, not yet marked by pain, illness, or medical procedures. Writing about this painting, Kafer (2018) argues that it is 'not about creating wholeness, not about finding cure in this forest; she has not arranged the bones in the shape of a body, and she is not inserting them into her skin. Rather the bones seem to sink into the fall's leaves, to become part of the autumn landscape' (p. 229). It is particularly the 'becoming part of' that is relevant here to my argument, as the painting both suggests a

new understanding of nature as well as the body. The painting suggests a mode of becoming that connects caring for and tending to the earth, to caring for and tending to the body. It does so without suggesting that disability is a personal hurdle to overcome.
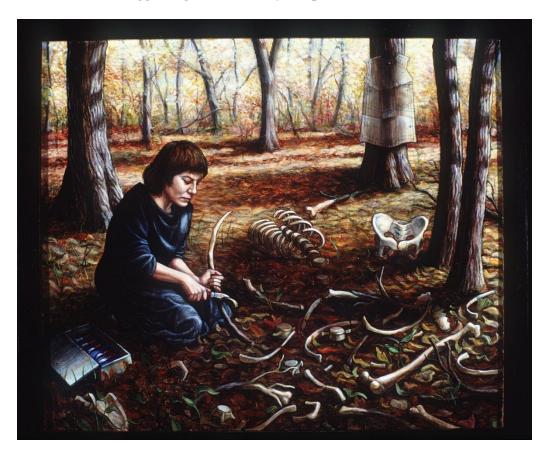

Figure 2: Lehrer, R. (2004). In the Yellow Woods. Acrylic on wood.
https://www.rivalehrerart.com/in-the-yellow-woods (Accessed Dec. 10). Image Alt Text:
painting of a woman kneeling in an autumn forest, carving a tree branch into the shape of a
bone, other bone shapes scattered around her.

There is somewhat of a holistic argument (which I noted is not the same as wholism) at play here in suggesting that we are all made from the same matter, that tree and bone are interchangeable. There is subversion in the image of crip bodyminds in nature, given that disability is still often located within the medical-industrial complex. The difference between this form of holism, and wholism that works against the broken, is that it is more of a 'solidly locating that body in space and time' (Kafer, 2018, p. 232). It does not propose that the whole is to be appreciated above the broken, and here lies the essential difference between holism and wholism. Whereas holism encourages thinking relationally, wholism denies these relationalities in an inability and unwillingness to deal with the broken through the cruel optimism of cure, no matter the cost. Lehrer's crip perspective rejects wholism, and in doing so it is a similar approach to that of Anna Tsing et. al. (2017) in *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*, which is the art to reimagine, to commit to healing rather than desiring wholeness, to nurture unexpected collaborations all the while demanding 'a certain suspension of ontologies and epistemologies, holding them lightly, in favor of a more venturesome,

experimental natural history (Haraway, 2017, p. M45). In this light, perhaps we could also think here of the arts of living in a damaged body, which certainly makes sense in the anti-cure framework.

In *The Arts of Living on a Damaged* Planet, the metaphor of the ghost is a core concept, which is interesting given that the ghost also appeared in the glitch (the ghost in the machine). The authors here use it to analyze the landscape of the Anthropocene: 'Whereas Progress trained us to keep moving forward, to look up to an apex at the end of a horizon, ghosts show us multiple unruly temporalities' (p. G8). This returns me to my argument on a comparison between cure and the body, and cure and the earth, related to temporality. As cited earlier, Clare (2017) writes that cure 'grounds itself in an original state of being' (p. 15), believes that this state of being was superior to the current condition, and therefore seeks to cure what is broken and return to this 'original state'. While Clare here writes about the body, this strikingly also applies to some of the narratives around climate change, especially those that Haraway critiques. As a sidenote, though this is not the argument I wish to make here, of course from a postmodernist point of view, the trouble already starts with thinking that an 'original state of being' can even be defined. Following Haraway (2016) we might add that this idea replicates the notion of bounded individualism, which simplifies relations between individuals and their environments. Haraway argues that in reality, there is no clear separation between the two. Note also again the return to being over becoming, signifying a static existence. However, this aside, in the insistence on retaining (or put otherwise, conserving) the whole by curing the broken, as well as the insistence that past stages of being were superior to the current condition, hides a deeply conservative argument.

While environmental justice and climate change action are often associated with progressive politics, they should also be associated with conservatism, as the term 'climate conservation' reveals. After all, what is more conservative than the desire to conserve things exactly as they are? As argued by Bruce Pilbeam (2003), the most obvious commonality between conservatives and green politics is 'a commitment to preserve that which exists, married to a distrust of 'heedless' experimentation' (p. 493). Pilbeam also discusses both conservatism's and green politics' 'belief in fundamental holism and harmony' (p. 497), which manifests itself in the idea that the natural condition of the world is actually one of stability. The free-market perspective then mirrors environmentalism, in that it thinks of the market as an ecology that is capable of restoring itself.

More distressing is the rise of eco-fascism, a connection that came to the forefront after the white-supremacist Christchurch shooting as well as the El Paso shooting, both shooters promoting ecological tropes in their manifestos. However, as Alexander Reid Ross and Emmi Bevensee (2020) reveal, this connection between fascism and ecological thought is historical: 'There is a long-standing, and growing, green tendency within fascism as

hazards posed by climate change pose an existential threat to the sustainability of structures undergirding a perceived white identity' (p. 8). In the 'fetishization of the rural peasants', the concept of 'Lebensraum' (living space), among other things, a connection between fascism and ecological thought already emerged in Nazism. The desire for a 'rebirth of a mythical past greatness through sacralized political violence' (p. 10) is the exact of opposite of Haraway's 'staying with the trouble'. Ross and Bevensee argue that at the core of eco-fascism is a refusal of the complexity of climate change, and the unwillingness to recognize that complex issues such as these require complex actions.

A lack of complexity is also at the core of Haraway's critique of the term Anthropocene, which she argues gives humans far too much agency:

> The story of Species Man as the agent of the Anthropocene is an almost laughable rerun of the great phallic humanizing and modernizing Adventure, where man, made in the image of a vanished god, takes on superpowers in his secular-sacred ascent, only to end in tragic detumescence, once again (Haraway, 2016, p. 47).

The Anthropocene, for Haraway, is too much of an anthropocentric concept. Instead she offers the concept of the Chthulucene, which stresses complex relationality, it is 'made up of ongoing multispecies stories and practises of becoming-with in times that remain at stake, in precarious times, in which the world is not finished and the sky has not fallen – yet' (p. 55). Humans are not the only important actors, 'the order is reknitted … and the biotic and abiotic powers of this earth are the main story' (p. 55).

In relation to disability, Haraway's focus on 'multispecies stories' and 'becoming-with', much can be learned from Indigenous ontologies, settler colonialism, and the disablement of the Earth. Laura Jaffee and Kelsey John (2018) argue that these issues have been largely ignored within canonized disability studies, and show how 'Indigenous ontology, specifically relationships to land' challenge 'disability at the epistemological level by rejecting the taken-for-granted dualism between the environment/space and (disabled) humans/bodies within (settler) disability studies' (p. 1408). While Jaffee and John recognize three areas of potential convergence between disability and Indigenous theories, I want to focus here on the third, 'theorizations of *futurity* and an instance on imaging alternative futures [emphasis in original]' (p. 1409). In closing, I will shortly bring together these notions of futurity, cripping, and the glitch, as well as what Legacy Russell (2020) calls 'glitch feminism' as I call for us to begin imagining a Crip Anthropocene.

Jaffee and John highlight how Indigenous scholars have intervened in linear temporal narratives, as a way to refuse Western notions of progress, focusing instead on Indigenous understandings of temporality as 'cyclical or simply non-linear' (p. 1419). Haraway (2016) therefore also includes a history of Navajo weaving in her chapter on sympoiesis, categorizing it as an 'ongoing mathematical, cosmological, and creative practice' (p. 89). Instead of disconnecting temporality from spatiality, Indigenous scholarship raises

questions such as 'What does the futurity of space look like?' (p. 1419). In the context of erasure, genocide and dispossession, Indigenous futurity relies on 'the survival of Indigenous peoples in the past and present' (p. 1420). Refusal of 'progress' and thus linear temporality, as I have shown, has been central in refusing compulsory able-bodiedness and refusing cure. Jaffee and John show how Indigenous people's ability to imagine other futures is not only desirable, but deeply life-preserving and life-saving, as they 'invariably have consequences for present-day decisions, policies, and practices' (p. 1420). In the face of extinction, as also shown by Haraway, one is forced to imagine otherwise, and living under conditions of mass disablement has made some communities especially equipped to do so. Doing so, it is unavoidable to center becoming over being.

I have called on the glitch as a mechanism for change, highlighting its ability to disrupt and to lay bare the myths upon which information transmission is built. Similarly, I have treated disability as a desirable and productive force, in its ability to challenge notions of progress that enforce normalcy through cure, the refusal of which reveals what lies at its heart, a desire for eradication. The glitch and disability combined, allow for the kind of refusal that Haraway deems so necessary in our current situation, and that is needed for 'staying with the trouble'. Inspired by Indigenous futurity, I propose the Crip Anthropocene as a way to glitch linear temporality and normative embodiment. The glitch as a metaphor and method has functioned here as what for Russell (2020) is 'a form of refusal', which she celebrates within glitch feminism as 'a vehicle of refusal, a strategy of nonperformance' (writing however, more specifically on the refusal to adhere to the gender binary) (p. 8). Glitch feminism turns to the in-between as a 'core component of survival' (p. 11): 'Thus, the glitch creates a fissure within new possibilities of being and becoming manifest' (p. 11). Centering the 'crip' as glitch in a theory of the Anthropocene, refuses wholism as a conservative ideal of retaining what once was, and provides us with a playground to imagine other futures, looking at what we may be becoming rather than to think from 'being'. The Crip Anthropocene refuses simplistic answers to climate change, and instead embraces complexity. Recuperation, according to Haraway (2016), 'is still possible, but only in multispecies alliances, across the killing divisions of nature, culture, and technology and of organism, language, and machine' (pp. 117-118).

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