

Forum - The Crip, the Fat and the Ugly in an Age of Austerity: Resistance, Reclamation, and Affirmation

NoBody's Perfect: Charm, Willfulness and Resistance

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to discuss the representations of disabled bodies on the basis of Niko von Glasow's documentary film *NoBody's Perfect*. Drawing on disability aesthetics (Siebers, 2006) and the notion of crip killjoys (Johnson & McRuer, 2014), it is argued that representations of crip killjoys and their unruly corporeality offer an aesthetic and political context in which the politics of disgust and resentment can be challenged (Hughes, 2015; Soldatic & Meekosha, 2012).

Keywords: disability aesthetics, crip killjoys, willfulness.

Introduction

In this paper, I explore the representations of disabled bodies in Niko von Glasow's documentary film, *NoBody's Perfect* (2008). Von Glasow, who was born disabled due to the side-effects of thalidomide, created *NoBody's Perfect* while looking for eleven people affected by thalidomide to pose for a photography project that aimed to bring visibility to the thalidomide case. Through a darkly humorous touch, this documentary film presents the issues that the twelve social actors had to face during the different stages of their life and their reactions towards von Glasow's photoshoot project. The narrative of the film concludes with von Glasow's unsuccessful attempts to make contact with the pharmaceutical company Grünenthal, that produced the thalidomide drug. I find the material of the representations that *NoBody's Perfect* offers very interesting to discuss as it makes visible the resistance of crip killjoys (Johnson & McRuer, 2014). In this respect, it is vital to explore and discuss the charm of disabled bodies due to the shifting of representations of disabled people in terms of the neoliberal regulatory practices of disqualification and invalidation.

More specifically, I develop my argument that representations of crip killjoys are most needed in our times as they bring forward disability aesthetics and politics with a view to challenging the misleading and divisive representations of "undeserving folk devil" (Briant, Watson & Philo, 2013) that serve the politics of resentment (Hughes, 2015). The charm of disabled bodies and their political value is developed through the key points of: the impact of neoliberalism and neoconservatism on disability and its representations, the examination of aesthetics of disqualification and the importance of disability aesthetics, the practices of looking and staring and the resistance of crip killjoys. In the first section, I outline the shift in the representations of disabled people in the media globally, as this was led by the market-political and moral-political rationality that presents disability as a disgusting matter for the hygienic governmentality in austerity times. In the following two sections, I present Sieber's (2006) work on aesthetics of disqualification and disability aesthetics and their impact on

practices of staring and looking. Drawing upon the notion of crip killjoys (Ahmed, 2010; Johnson & McRuer, 2014) and the analysis of the documentary film *NoBody's Perfect* (2008), I conclude with the argument that the representations of crip killjoys and their unruly corporeality offer the aesthetic and political context to challenge the politics of disgust and resentment.

Disability: A Disgusting Matter for Hygienic Governmentality in Austerity Times

In her analysis of neoliberalism, neoconservatism and de-democratization, Brown (2006) argued that neoliberalism should not only be conceived as the set of free market economic policies that led to the deconstruction of welfare states and the privatization of public services with a knocking effect on the democratic foundations in the North and the South; it should also be perceived as a political rationality, since “it also involves a specific and consequential organization of the social, the subject, and the state” (p. 693). Drawing upon the Foucauldian term, Brown explained that “a political rationality is a specific form of normative political reason organizing the political sphere, governance practices, and citizenship” (p. 693). Neoliberalism, as a political rationality, changes the nature and the definition of the social, the subject and the state, and these changes put the democratic rationality at stake. At the same time, neoconservatism finds ground to expand, adding to the market-political rationality a moral-political rationality that is animated by the desire of a strong state (Brown, 2006) and ignites the flames of populism (Hughes, 2015). In the name of the strong state and the “moral justification,” -where “welfare reform” happens-, the discourse of “welfare burden”, “deserving claimants” (Briant, Watson, & Philo, 2013) and valued/ good citizens flourishes. The exercise and impact of populism on this discourse reinforces and reproduces the politics of disgust and resentment (Hughes, 2015; Soldatic & Meekosha, 2012). Simultaneously, market-political and moral-political rationality has led to a shift in the representations of disabled people in media globally (Briant, Watson, & Philo, 2013; Karagianni, 2017; Soldatic & Meekosha, 2012) in the efforts of sanitizing and moralizing the welfare state from an unruly corporeality. According to Soldatic and Meekosha (2012) disgust is a prominent theme in neoliberal debates:

“The disgusting excessive working-class form shares many properties with the disgusting unruly disabled form. Both sets of bodies are inscribed with normative evaluations that position their bodily performances as abhorrent, revolting and disgusting as compared to the superior social, moral and cultural sensibilities of the middle classes. Disgust is the common thread which ties the excessive working-class body to the unruly disabled body” (Soldatic & Meekosha, 2012, p. 144).

Along similar lines, explaining the development of the politics of resentment within the British context, Huges (2015) argues that the politics of resentment embrace and reproduce a “blame culture”, promoter of the construction of scapegoats. In this context the responsibility of the societal and financial problems created by neoliberal politics is shifted to

the others who live on the margins; disabled people, immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, homeless people, black and ethnic minority groups (p. 993).

The mass media reinforces the politics of resentment by shifting from sympathetic portrayals to pejorative and stigmatizing depictions focusing on narratives of invalidation and separatism between the “undeserving workless” and the “deserving hard-working”, “counterfeit citizens” and “good citizens” (Hughes, 2015). The pretext of hygienic governmentality, which asserts that “an abject population threatens the common good and must be rigorously governed and monitored by all sections of society,” (Berlant, 1997, p. 175) has served the practices of neoliberal governments well, particularly in relation to “welfare reform” and Brexit propaganda. In this setting, the manipulation and spread of aversive emotion replaced the development of reasoning. Populism mobilized by the elite found ground to indicate the dangerous “others” that take advantage of the hard-working good citizens who desire a strong state and work for it. As Hughes (2015) notes the politics of resentment that mobilize a disgust response to difference and disability serve the formation of a neoliberal state. Disabled people, as well as immigrants, are included in the “underclass” group that is presented as enjoying the benefits of a high life on the backs of hard-working citizens.

As the invalidation of disabled people is not a new phenomenon but rather a reoccurring political discriminatory practice with a long history that constructs the unruly corporeality as the scapegoat, it is important at this point to examine the aesthetics of disqualification and to explore the counterargument of disability aesthetics (Siebers, 2006).

Aesthetics of Disqualification & Disability Aesthetics

The significant presence of disability in arts and culture led Tobin Siebers (2006) to introduce the aesthetics of disqualification and disability aesthetics. Disability has been set as the marker that indicates inferiority and through this process, disqualification. It is the marker of ‘otherness’ that characterises disabled people's existence as less valued and more of a dangerous deviation. Disability also functions as a disqualifier when it intersects with race, gender, class and nationality. Siebers determines that “before disability can be used as a disqualifier, disability, too, has to be disqualified. Beneath the troping of blackness as inbuilt inferiority, for example, lies the troping of disability as inferior. Beneath the troping of femininity as biological deficiency lies the troping of disability as deficiency” (Siebers, 2008, p. 24).

Disqualification relies on the appearance of bodies and particularly on the way that bodies are presented according to aesthetic principles. Basically, disqualification is justified by aesthetic principles. According to Siebers' definition, “aesthetics studies the way that some bodies make other bodies feel” (Siebers, 2008, p. 25). In the term “bodies” he includes not just human bodies but also a range of artefacts, animals and objects in the natural world. Within this range of bodies, the sensation of otherness finds its space and unfolds as “powerful, strange and frightening”. The power of aesthetics relies on the fact that its influence occurs almost involuntarily. Apparently, bodies presented to other bodies cause

feelings that denote an unconscious communication between these bodies. As Siebers states, “aesthetics is the human science most concerned with invitations to think and feel otherwise about our own influence, interests, and imagination” (Siebers, 2008, p. 25).

The aesthetics of disqualification is not just a matter of artistic expression and critique sheltered in museums but should be approached as a political process, since the oppression of minorities derives from their disqualification, which is also determined by aesthetic principles. An understanding of aesthetics is thus crucial because it reveals the operative principles of disqualification used in minority oppression.

The aesthetics of disqualification are dealt within the counterargument that Siebers (2006) calls “disability aesthetics”; a critical concept which shakes down the conception of otherness and exoticism applied in representations of disability as the notion of aesthetics expands to different criteria and values. According to Siebers disability aesthetics brings attention to disability in the tradition of aesthetic representation suggesting that the representation of what is traditionally promoted as the healthy body should not be the sole determination of the aesthetic (p. 64). The concept of disability aesthetics is introduced, not as a means for examining the exclusion of disability from art but as a means for bringing the impact of disability on arts to the surface of academic interest. With his critical analysis on disability aesthetics, Siebers claims that disability has a rich but hidden role in art, and that, by accepting its presence, materialistic notions of aesthetics become richer and more complicated. In contrast, if the influence of disability is rejected then the definition of artistic ideas and works is set as limited. The presence of disability in art requires us to question and revise traditional conceptions of aesthetic production and appreciation:

“Disability aesthetics prizes physical and mental difference as a significant value in itself. It does not embrace an aesthetic taste that defines harmony, bodily integrity, and health as standards of beauty. [...]The idea of disability aesthetics affirms that disability operates both as a critical framework for questioning aesthetic presuppositions in the history of art and as a value in its own right important to future conceptions of what art is” (Siebers, 2006, pp. 71–72).

Disability aesthetics seems to find expression and application though modern and avant-garde art. Most importantly in terms of meaning-making and adding to the shaping of the disability identity, disability aesthetics finds ground and flourishes within disability culture. In this vein, disability film festivals are also the space where viewers are introduced to disability aesthetics and new ways of looking, so all the actions taken in this space should be coordinated towards its fundamental mission. Arguably, changing the ways of looking at disability and becoming familiar with disability aesthetics can lead to the development of inclusive thinking.

In his introduction to disability aesthetics, Siebers (2006) noted that making the influence of disability present in the arts requires a revision of the traditional conceptions of aesthetic production and appreciation. This process will also challenge established aesthetic presuppositions.

The interesting part here is that disability film festivals can expose a variety of looks in the form of point of view in screened films and educate participants about ways of looking. Snyder and Mitchell (2008) suggest that the multiple ways of viewing disability offered at disability film festivals introduce the audience to the politics of atypicality: “The refusal to remain within the strict boundaries of medically and socially prescribed categories of sameness” (p. 14). Viewers are exposed to a variety of depictions devoid of an educational or medical context. Disabled people come on the screen with their stories that in their generality are a close up of numerous human conditions. Documentary films can potentially offer engaged staring encounters where disabled people guide the viewers on how to look at them and in this way, - as Garland-Thomson (2009) notes in her analysis of staring, “Move the audience towards a “newness” that can be transformative” (p. 188).

Gaze, Staring and Disabled Bodies

Repulsive and distasteful or nicely erotic? What would the comments be at the sight of a nude photoshoot of a disabled body? In response to the confusion that the view of a disabled body could cause, Harriet McBryde-Johnson, an American author, attorney, and disability rights activist, stated, “It's not that I'm ugly. It's more that most people don't know how to look at me” (2003, para. 7). Disabled people are regularly subjected to and exposed to different gazes and practices of being stared or looked at.

Initially, the medical gaze was the one that came with the power to regulate “lives worth - or not - worth living”, classifying them in labelled categories and objectifying disabled people to case studies and medical experiments. Disabled people were exposed to this medical gaze from the moment they were born, dealing with normalizing practices that contributed to the construction of “other” in oppressive and painful ways (Clare, 1999; Lapper, 2005). Foucault (1979) called this the clinical gaze and, as Garland-Thomson (2009) comments, it “is one form of person-to-person staring that is highly impersonal, scripted, and asymmetrical” (p. 28) as it is practiced for an invasive visual scrutiny that focuses on isolated elements that indicate pathology. The clinical gaze focused on the pathology and the distinction between normal and abnormal contributed to the production of medical photography and its representations. Millet-Gallant (2010) notes that “nineteenth-century photography produced visual images of pathology and deviance, both corporeal and moral, against which mainstream society could assure their own normality” (p. 90). The clinical portraits followed very strict visual conventions, as they were considered objective medical evidence, and represented human bodies with an aesthetic and discursive detachment. These clinical representations established medical authority over the body and constructed a very particular image of the pathologized and medical body for the public. It is interesting that one of the practices of objectifying the subject of the clinical portraits was to cover the eyes or the face. Even though this technique was applied to protect the patient's dignity and anonymity, it also protected the viewer by preventing a returned gaze (Millet-Gallant, 2010). In historical cases, the clinical gaze engaged a particular hostile stare at people considered degenerated, a stare that Garland-Thomson (2009) calls “the eugenic stare”: “a perverse form of recognizing human particularity in order to extirpate it” (p. 177).

Regulatory and oppressive gaze is the controlling gaze of applied panopticism in asylums, clinics, institutions and segregated schooling. As Foucault (1979) discusses, at these settings of surveillance, “the gaze is alert everywhere” (p. 195) in order to reassure that obedience is retained through the discipline mechanisms and punishment is applied to tackle transgressive actions. Within the settings where panopticism is applied, each individual is “the object of information, never a subject in communication” (Foucault, 1979, p. 197), because the dissociation of the see/being seen dyad is secured. Disabled people were given the position at the peripheral ring of the Panopticon; where “one is seen without ever seeing” whereas in the central tower, those that exercise power on disabled people’s lives, “see everything without ever being seen” (Foucault, 1979, p. 197).

Garland-Thomson (2009) notes that the gaze is different from the stare, as the former is defined as “an oppressive act of disciplinary looking that subordinates its victim” (p. 9), while the latter is “an ocular response to what we don’t expect to see. [...] More than just looking, staring is an urgent eye jerk of intense interest” (p. 3). Staring comes with questions that demand the story of people whose appearance or activity challenge our set expectations and in this way it creates meaning. According to Garland-Thomson (2009), “Staring offers an occasion to rethink the status quo. Who we are can shift into focus by staring at who we think we are not” (p. 6). Staring is a face-to-face encounter between the starrer and the staree where a visual confrontation takes place, bringing various reactions such as engagement, avoidance, mutuality or a combination of these. These reactions derive from socio-cultural and psychological filters, as well as the residuals of gaze traditions that are involved in learning how to look, or how to look away. Curiosity is the genuine response when we encounter novelty but limits of indulging our curiosity are set by socio-cultural and moral rules. Not knowing how to look is the result of the limitations imposed by those socio-cultural and moral rules that regulate not only curiosity but disability too. The face-to-face encounter between the starrer and the staree is a “living communication filled with complex and dynamic interrelations” (Garland-Thomson, 2009, p. 86). As such, it brings valuable knowledge that could cease personal and social anxieties, firstly by teaching us how to look, and secondly by offering the opportunity to interact and think about expanded aesthetics. Garland-Thomson (2009) suggests that experienced starees can guide the starrers to overcome their limited understanding of human variation and the anxiety caused by this limited social awareness. In this context, starees stare back and even make open calls to be looked at.

The management of staring requires the application of interpersonal techniques and communication skills that allow the shifting of the power within looking. Visual and performing arts are powerful mediators that allow this shifting. Social groups that are stared at and have experienced the oppression of clinical, controlling, or colonizing gaze invite viewers to have a good look at them either in performances, photography exhibitions, film screenings or narrative accounts, where they choose how to present themselves and how they wish viewers to look at them. Thus, starees take the lead in directing the staring encounters. This is also translated as an act of emancipation. Garland-Thomson (2009) notes that the “scenes of staring can help us understand our impulse to look hard and our responses to being looked at hard” (p. 94). As scenes of staring, she defines “sites from which interactions arise” (p. 95),

which could be “stareable aspects of human anatomy” (p. 95) such as faces, hands, breasts, bodies.

Documentaries that focus on disability offer rich material of such scenes that invite audiences to have a good stare, challenging them to reflect on the way they look at the disabled body. Viewers are engaged in a mediated but also in some cases a direct encounter with starees and this brings about a new knowledge that has the potential to alter or expand their understanding of disability.

The Charm of Crip Killjoy

When disabled bodies openly and intentionally trouble the narrow and oppressive expectations that are dictated by neoliberal capitalist norms, it is an action of crip willfulness. Crip theory (McRuer, 2006) questions cultural locations and socio-political constructions that reproduce compulsory heterosexuality and compulsory able-bodiedness. One of crip theory’s main principles refers to the construction of an accessible world in opposition to neoliberalism. McRuer pinpoints that access should be understood “both very specifically and very broadly, locally and globally” (p. 71).

A latest development that combines the feminist and crip theory strands is the notion of a “crip killjoy.” Merri Lisa Johnson and Robert McRuer (2014) came up with the concept of “crip killjoy” and “crip willfulness” drawing upon Sara Ahmed’s work on feminist “killjoys” and “willfulness”. Ahmed (2010) examines happiness and socio-cultural instructions for acting happy in an oppressive context, where individuals’ (particularly female individuals’) positioning is fixed, ordered, and imposed, according to society’s perceptions of different social divisions. She specifically notes that:

“The figure of the feminist killjoy makes sense if we place her in the context of feminist critiques of happiness, of how happiness is used to justify social norms as social goods (a social good is what causes happiness, given happiness is understood as what is good). . . . Not to agree to stay in the place of this wish might be to refuse the happiness that is wished for. To be involved in political activism is thus to be involved in a struggle against happiness” (Ahmed, 2010).

Crip killjoys also refuse to fake satisfaction and happiness to justify the current neoliberal social norms that are actually oppressive for disabled people. According to Johnson and McRuer’s (2014) cripistemologies, disabled people are called to deal daily with “the inter-implications of capacity and debility,” which, as in the authors’ cases, led them to “crip willfulness”. They explain that crip willfulness is a refusal to act in accordance with the demands of compulsory able-bodiedness that puts individuals in the oppressive process to disregard their discomfort when they deal with the inter-implications of capacity and debility.

Social norms create particular social expectations that put individuals in a position of dealing with the discrepancy of how they feel and how they should feel. Ahmed (2014) explains that, “Willfulness as a judgment tends to fall on those who are not compelled by the reasoning of others. Willfulness might be what we do when we are judged as being not, as not

meeting the criteria for being human, for instance” (p. 15). The importance of “willfulness” is the transformation of being, when not being (not being white, not being male, not being straight, not being able-bodied) is coming up against being. When crip killjoys become “willful” against the oppressive, ever-present comfort and happiness that is imposed by compulsory normalcy, it is a political decision “to be unstable, incapable, unwilling, disabled,” and this decision “opens up a world of possibility” (Johnson & McRuer, p. 137). In this respect, crip willfulness is an act of resistance to neoliberalism and its practices of abjectification and the political decision of crip killjoys to become willful is a claim for diversity and democracy.

The Charm of NoBody’s Perfect

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, *NoBody’s Perfect* is a documentary film where the participants, twelve people born disabled due to the side-effects of thalidomide, act as crip killjoys refusing to take the seat that a pharmaceutical company, with heavy historical associations with Nazis’ eugenic practices and experiments, arranged for them. They ask not just the viewers but the public to have a good look at them in order to gain knowledge.

In this film, von Glasow invites eleven adults from Germany and the U.K. to participate in a nude photo project for a calendar publication that will raise awareness of the thalidomide case and compensation claims from Grünenthal GmbH. Even though the idea of this project started as a challenge for von Glasow who also poses for the photo book, to come to terms with his personal concerns about self-image and his disabled body, it develops in to a practice of visual activism. The twelve nude stills showing the models in actual size were exhibited publicly outside the Roman-Germanic Museum (Römisch-Germanisches Museum) in Cologne, receiving comments that cover the two poles of reactions from “nicely erotic” to “repulsive and distasteful”:

“Not repulsive or anything. I think they are just lovely. Very erotic but nicely erotic. A naked man with crippled arms, is really just repulsive. And children walking by can see them. I don't like it. Why? He was damaged by Thalidomide. Why can't he show himself naked? I can't say off the top of my head. Of course I have nothing against Thalidomide victims, but I find it tasteless to show it in public. They're strong people. That takes courage. They must be strong people to show themselves like that” (von Glasow, 2008).

These comments reflect what Garland-Thomson (2009), drawing upon Sontag’s (2003) work *Regarding the Pain of Others*, describes as bad and good staring: “Bad staring leads to the ethical dead end of *schaudenfreude*, of taking satisfaction in someone else’s misfortune” (p. 186), affirming at the same time that “this is not happening to me”. Bad staring fails to achieve the transition from the place of discomfort, shock or fear to empathetic identification. Good staring encloses readings mobilized into political action that allows the development of ethical relations. “If starers can identify with starees enough to jumpstart a sympathetic response that is then *translated into action*, staring turns the corner toward the ethical” (Garland-Thomson, 2009, p. 186).

What also worked as a strong motivation for the participants of Glasow's project, apart from the political action against Grünenthal GmbH that did not respond to compensation claims, is the empowering act of staring back:

Sofia (one of the participants): I've changed sides now. Normally, as a disabled person, you're always being stared at. Now, I am on the offensive. I've done these photos and I'm saying: "Look! Look at me!" (von Glasow, 2008).

Crip killjoys of *NoBody's Perfect* keep getting in the way of various oppressive positioning through the whole film. Mat Fraser, who is also one of the participants, reacts to the publisher's suggestion to offer the revenue from the photo shoot to charity:

Mat: Hold on how they are going to advertise it? "Come and see twelve really sexy, middle age, people, some of them have got weird arms and legs, but you know...whoaaw!! Get the calendar now!", that I am up for but... "Oh! It's such a great project and you'll be doing great things..." I don't want to be part of that! Just because it's disabled people, it should not be automatically a charity event.

Niko: But she likes that because she is going to sell more copies.

Mat: Right, ok. I don't want any of my money to go to charity. I want the money.

Niko: Good, good point.

Mat: Why does it always has to turn to a big orgy of compassion?

Mat Fraser has very sound views on being in control of his actions and choices for participation as a disabled person and actor. He jokes about investing his payment from the project on a "thalidomide toilet" that apparently requires the application of specific technology, making a few points at the same time about disabled people's rights; firstly, by refusing the charity model that immediately positions their lives as being in need and dependence, secondly by receiving payments from the projects they participate in, thirdly by standing by decision making that supports and empowers their independence. Fraser, von Glasow and the rest of the participants, some of whom are also politically active, express very strong political voices and educate the viewers not only on the thalidomide scandal but also on the image of the disabled body and disability aesthetics, illuminating the complexities of disabled people's personalities and lives and, countering a fixed homogenized depiction of disability.

Von Glasow's film serves up the idea of familiarizing the viewers with disability, and includes many slow close-ups on limbs affected by thalidomide initially, and, as the film reaches the day of the photo shoot, the nude models' body parts. The aesthetic of the photo shoot and filming creates an elegant but sensual artwork where disabled bodies are appreciated on the grounds of their beauty, charm, sexiness and assertiveness countering constructed notions imposed by compulsory normalcy. The choice of the aesthetics of nude is also very significant. Much like in cases of feminists' performances, where nude is perceived as a celebration of the female body and an action of "reclaiming it from multiple histories of objectification" (Millet-Gallant, 2010, p. 38), a nude representation of a disabled body supports the originality and authenticity of disability and disabled self and, nothing more

nothing less. Free from projections of guilt and fear, free from normative and oppressive camouflage, the charm of the disabled body is revealed claiming its place in the world of aesthetics and visual activism challenging perceptions.

Von Glasow and his models use their bodies as art to upset the status quo of normalcy confronting an aesthetic economy from which their bodies have been disqualified, excluded and in many cases made freakish. It is a representation of resistance to aesthetics of disqualification and the oppression of compulsory normalcy. An action of crip willfulness. As Millet-Gallant (2010) states:

“The naked body in representation may signify a lack of moral concern and sinful behaviour, and yet such shamelessness may also suggest a freedom from shame or a state of unashamed truth” (Millet-Gallant, 2010, p. 39).

The nude disabled body is free from the applied practices for not passing as disabled. These practices are strongly linked with shame, since they prevent it but also act as reminder of it. Free of markers of disqualification, shame and oppression, the representation of the nude disabled body offers an open encounter with disability aesthetics. This open encounter can challenge established aesthetic presuppositions and change the ways of seeing disability. When the depictions of disabled bodies are clear of the impact of the privileged gaze, they break down the image of the disqualified “extraordinary” body as they expose the embodiment of different types of disabilities and the physicalities of different conditions. Through this approach, the viewers are put in a position of applying good staring and experiencing familiarity with disabled bodies.

Conclusions

In this paper, I have attempted to disturb the pseudo-happiness that neoliberalism and neoconservatism promises through practices of abjectification of the “dangerous others,” by arguing that to insist on making the charm of disabled bodies visible is a required action of resistance that documentary films and disability arts in general can initiate. The representations of crip killjoys offer the counter-narrative, the disability aesthetics and the political engagement to challenge the discourse that populism reinforces in austerity time through the presentation of disabled people as undeserving counterfeit citizens. Already, the cuts in social care funding, the reassessments of benefits claimants, the reduction of funding for employment schemes and the cuts in disability allowances has had a disastrous impact on disabled people even costing them, in several cases that have been silenced, their own lives. Beresford (2017) recently accused the British government of waging a war against the disabled people based on the latest neoliberal actions and their impact on disabled people’s lives. He stated that when the policies are so catastrophic they are associated with something more visceral:

“Governments and policymakers haven’t caught up with the reality that medical advances and social and cultural changes mean that the nature of who we are as a

population has changed. There are now many more disabled people. Making our lives increasingly difficult may kill some of us, but it won't seriously change the maths.

The failure of policymakers is that so many disabled people still face appalling and increasing barriers to employment, education, training, family and social life. It's not getting rid of us that welfare reform should be about, but about challenging and ending these attitudinal, institutional and cultural barriers" (Beresford, 2017, para. 16–17).

It is therefore in these times, more than ever, when austerity is used as the wrecking ball of de-democratisation that knocks down human rights and any sense of social justice and welfare state, that the visibility of cripple killjoys and actions of cripple willfulness should be prominent in education, arts, disability and body politics. The lack of understanding the disability politics and the willfulness of unruly corporeality has created a gap of knowledge that populism takes advantage of in order to shift the image to the support of the politics of disgust and resentment. In this regard, against the homogenization imposed in the name of a "strong and healthy state", the cripple willfulness responds with the political position that *NoBody's Perfect* employs, using disability aesthetics and the politics of atypicality to talk back to the politics of resentment. In this regard, against the homogenisation imposed in the name of a "strong and healthy state", the cripple willfulness responds with the political position that *NoBody's Perfect* employs, using disability aesthetics and the politics of atypicality to talk back to the politics of resentment. NoBody's perfect! Keep willful!

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