standings of it changed, how it shaped our lives and how we shaped our lives around it.

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Concerto for the Left Hand: Disability (in the) Arts

MICHAEL DAVIDSON
University of California, San Diego

In its short existence as an academic discipline, disability studies has devoted significant attention to the representation of disabled persons in the visual arts, literature, theater, and public life. Disability scholars have studied the ways that cultural forms depend on a putatively normal body to reinforce regimes of national, racial, and sexual normalcy while using the person with a cognitive or physical impairment as a metaphor for the queer, subaltern, or marginal. A common recent criticism among disability scholars is that metaphoric treatments of impairment seldom confront the material conditions of actual disabled persons, permitting dominant social structures to be written on the body of a person who is politely asked to step offstage once the metaphoric exchange is made.[1] Disabled artists and activists have attempted to reverse this pattern, turning their cameo appearances in such theaters back on the audience, refusing the crippling gaze of an ableist society and reassigning the meanings of disability in their own terms. As Carrie Sandahl says, people with disabilities are "not only staring back, but also talking back, insisting that 'this body has a mouth'" (13).

By framing disability in the arts exclusively in terms of social stigma, on the one hand, and advocacy, on the other, we may limit a disability aesthetic largely to thematic matters, leaving formal questions untheorized. How might the aesthetic itself be a frame for engaging disability at levels beyond the mimetic? How might the introduction of the disabled body into aesthetic discourse complicate the latter's criteria of disinterestedness and artisanal closure? Consider Ravel's D-major *Concerto for the Left Hand*. Commissioned in 1930 by the pianist Paul Wittgenstein, who lost his right arm during World War I, the Ravel concerto is perhaps the best-known work in a surprisingly large repertoire of works for the left hand. Brahms,

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Saint-Saëns, Strauss, Janáček, Prokofiev, Scriabin, and Bartók all wrote significant compositions in this vein, often to showcase or strengthen a hand that commonly accompanies more difficult material in the right. It is less often recognized that many of these works were commissioned by pianists who, through repetitive stress disorders, arthritis, or injury, lost the use of one hand. Pianists such as Geza Zichy, Paul Wittgenstein, Leon Fleisher, and Gary Graffman are among the best known of these disabled artists, but most pianists at some point in their career temporarily lose the functioning of one or another hand. At least forty compositions were written at Wittgenstein's request, and despite his cool response to the Ravel concerto it became one of the composer's most popular works.[2]

The one-hand piano repertoire offers us an interesting site for considering the status of disability in the arts. On one level, these compositions might seem to propose a kind of aesthetic prosthesis, akin to what David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder see operative in narrative works in which the presence of a one-legged Ahab or a hunchbacked Richard III serves as a "crutch" in the representation of normalcy. Adapted to music, this prosthetic interpretation could regard the technical difficulty of one-hand playing as a compensatory response for the missing hand, a response that requires the pianist to imitate the full pianistic range, coloration, and dynamics of the nineteenth-century virtuoso style. If we treat Ravel's concerto as an able-bodied response to Wittgenstein's impairment, then the latter's performance becomes a triumphalist overcoming of disability—an overcoming that has rightly been the subject of much disability studies critique.

We might also read this concerto from a different angle, understanding that by enabling Wittgenstein, Ravel disables Ravel, imposing formal demands on composition that he might not have imagined had he not had to think through limits imposed by writing for one hand.[3] In this regard, Ravel's work could be linked to the work of artists whose disability, far from limiting possibilities of design or performance, liberates and changes the terms for composition. One thinks of the late works of Goya, Milton, Beethoven, Nerval, Schumann, Monet, de Kooning, Close, and others, composed when the artists were becoming physically or cognitively impaired. I mean not to substitute for a politically self-conscious "disability arts" a canon of well-known artists who happened to be disabled but to broaden our focus to include the larger implications of corporeality in the arts. By bringing such matters to bear on disability, I want to foreground the extent to which the aesthetic, from Kant's third critique to recent performance art, is a matter of the body and of affective possibilities created by incorporating its limits into composition.[4] Disability arts foregrounds the extent to which the body becomes thinkable when its totality can no longer be taken for granted, when the social meanings attached to sensory and cognitive values cannot be assumed.

The phrase "disability arts" could include a number of artists whose work may or may not address disability but whose formal production confronts, in some way, the rhetorics, genres, and technologies by which bodily norms are interrogated and disseminated. Such a frame would include the work of Joseph Grigely, who makes museum installations out of the conversation slips exchanged between himself as a deaf person and his hearing interlocutors. It could include the work of Bill "the Crutchmaster" Shannon, once a poster boy for Easter Seals, who now creates virtuoso dances and videos out of teen and hip-hop genres (skateboarding, break dancing) while on crutches. Mary Duffy's *tableau vivant* performances offer a feminist critique of art history by featuring the armless artist, who appears nude in the posture of classical sculptures and delivers monologues from the standpoint of both artist and model. One might point to

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the performance work of William Pope.L, an African American performance artist who is not disabled but whose "Crawl" pieces involve the artist crawling long distances along public thoroughfares, dramatically illustrating problems of access and urban alienation that link poor, minority, and disability communities. The American poet Larry Eigner is seldom identified as disabled, yet his poetics of real-time observation and his characteristically stepped, highly enjambed lines are a direct response to the physical limits of living with cerebral palsy.[5] Finally, disability arts defines the work of the deaf British artist Aaron Williamson, whose performances often involve a complex technological interface by which his Artaudian whoops and howls are recycled through voice-recognition software onto himself as a way of illustrating the imposition of textual and oral regimes on the deaf body. In response to a question from the audience regarding when he lost his hearing, Williamson said, "I prefer not to say when I lost my hearing but when I gained my deafness. Everything I do as an artist begins with this fact." I would like to extend Williamson's remarks to the work of Terry Galloway, a deaf performance artist and playwright who uses social stereotypes of deafness and embodiment to satirize ableist, audist culture, while at the same time delivering a critique of what she calls "authentic" Deaf culture.

Trying to Code It Differently

How to have a voice in theatre. How to be heard. How to be a poor, queered, deaf, unbeautiful girl and still make a claim on that empty space. Everything I do is autobiographical, but I'm trying to code it differently.

—Terry Galloway ("Making" 51)

Terry Galloway is author and performer of a series of plays, monologues, videos, and audio texts that foreground the intersection of identities. Deaf since a young age, Galloway creates memorable, often hysterically funny performances that interrogate a wide range of cultural signage—from noirish radio dramas and movie melodramas to the Jerry Lewis telethons. As the above epigraph implies, Galloway seeks a "voice" in a theater that has little room for deaf actors, but she also seeks a form of autobiography that uses the "empty space" of an inaccessible theater for a "queered, deaf, unbeautiful girl." She wants to "code it differently," by acknowledging limit as constitutive force: "What if your whole performance is predicated on the fact that you are not: not the usual performer, not the usual beauty, not what is usually seen. And that you are deliberately not saying the same old things about art and life that are usually said" ("Making" 51). One might add to this list of negatives the fact that Galloway does not present herself as a member of Deaf culture with a basis in American Sign Language, having been mainstreamed as a child in public schools. Although her oralist basis removes her from more traditional venues of Deaf culture, it permits her access to a wide range of acoustic environments, including film, radio, verbal monologue, and stand-up poetry, on which she draws with caustic wit and broad satire.

In her radio drama *Jake Ratchett: Short Detective*, Galloway recycles 1940s radio detective dramas, complete with sound effects, mood music, and advertisements. She reveals the extent to which early radio drama deployed a somewhat surreal level of verbal patter punctuated by musical cues, dramatic inflections, and generic self-reflexiveness. For a deaf performance artist, such use of acoustic materials may seem a hopeless concession to oral culture, but by playing on the coded nature of reproduced speech, Galloway is able to "talk" about "talking" itself. References to *The Maltese Falcon*, existentialism, Peter Bürger's theory of "institution art," sexual and scatological double entendres, and the idiolects of hard-boiled masculinity show a sophisticated understanding of cultural signage, but they

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also comment on noir's own self-reflexive treatment of midcentury gender trouble.

> 4:25 a.m. The city they call Chicago is sleeping like a baby. A baby shark. And sharks don't sleep. Neither do I. Me? Call me Jake. Call me the next time you're in trouble. Trouble's my business. I'm Jake Ratchett, Short Detective. Yeah, you heard me, sweetheart—a gumshoe, a private eye, a hard-boiled dick! Crooks don't like me, cops don't like me, but hookers let me ride half fare. . . . Sure, it's a dirty, lousy, rotten, nasty, filthy, stinking job—but I'm just the dirty, lousy, rotten, nasty, filthy, stinking guy to do it. (*Jake Ratchett*)

The scandal of Galloway's performance in a Deaf cultural context is that she uses sound at all.[6] The fact that she creates her performance in a medium available only to the ear poses an interesting conundrum for a disability narrative. Thinking through this problem requires looking at the performance as the site of two discourses, one dealing with deafness and the other dealing with the codes of masculinity embodied in the hard-boiled detective genre. By adopting the "voice" of the able-bodied, if existentially wounded, detective (Jake refers to himself as a "hard-bitten dick"), Galloway achieves a gender-ambiguous identity through the radio medium. At one point, a rich entrepreneur offers Jake fifty thousand dollars to solve the problem of the stolen "Maltese Toilet Seat," to which Jake replies, "I'm your man—I'm your woman; I'm anything you want me to be. . . ." This is a nice send-up of the crasser motives of the noir detective, but it is also a way of queering that crassness around the ways that money reinforces gender positions.

In her video performance *Annie Dearest*, Galloway takes on a sacred text of disability literature, Helen Keller's autobiography, and its representation in the 1962 film *The Miracle Worker*. Speaking of her interest in this role, Galloway remarks:

> As a little crippled girl I was expected to act that part. But what part was that? Pattie Duke as Helen Keller in *Miracle Worker*? I wouldn't have minded that in the least. She got to run around like crazy and break and shatter things in her furies and there was nothing more appealing than her homo erotic attachment to Ann Bancroft. So boy, I was willing to try that role. ("Tough")

The first part of the performance features a black-and-white reenactment of the moment in the film when Keller (Patty Duke) makes the verbal connection between the word *water* and the water being pumped out of a well by Annie Sullivan (Anne Bancroft). Galloway parodies the sentimental framing of this moment—the swelling music and epiphanic discovery by Keller of language—by linking Sullivan to Joan Crawford as the abusive mother represented in her daughter's memoir, *Mommie Dearest*.[7] In Galloway's version, Annie Sullivan, Keller's patient, heroic, hearing teacher morphs into a demonic, oralist instructor who forces Helen to endure various forms of water torture until she pronounces the acceptable phonemes. *Annie Dearest* is not only a parody of sentimental portrayals of disabled persons but also an exploration of sensationalist human-interest stories (of which Christina Crawford's memoir is an example) through which disabled persons are represented.

In an afterword to the film, Galloway appears—now in full color—as the cocreator of *Annie Dearest* and, most important, as an "authentically deaf person." She stands before her interpreter, Stevie, who signs Galloway's speech in front of her, a variation on the deaf tradition of "four hands signing." This irreverent coda has, at its heart, a serious subtext: the claim for an authentic Deaf identity marked by exclusive use of manual signing and a repudiation of concessions to audist culture. It is also about the fragile trust between the deaf individual and the oral world that interprets experience for her. The more Galloway claims to be an "authentically deaf person," the more unstable becomes the claim, a situation reinforced by the constant presence of Stevie signing her remarks. Galloway "performs authenticity" while acknowl-

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edging her marginality among deaf persons. But while she is critical of the "official hierarchies" of Deaf culture, she is also aware of the insidious role that audism plays in performance itself—through the use of various forms of translation (voice-over, closed-captioning, and hearing ASL signer). When she asks Stevie if Stevie has been "talking behind my back," we understand the complex and multifaceted implications of depending on others who may literally and figuratively wrest power from the deaf person.

Conclusion

This brief example suggests that what it means to be "authentically" disabled or Deaf may depend less on the impairment than on adjustments made to social rhetorics and formal genres in which disability is framed. The scandal of Terry Galloway's performance in a Deaf cultural context is her deployment of a wide variety of acoustic media in her performance arsenal, not to capitulate to oral culture but to interrogate identities constructed in an acoustic and visual environment. In her performances, Galloway's deafness cannot be dissevered from her queer identity, through which she works to deconstruct ableist visions of marked bodies. I stress the role of the aesthetic here to counter the prevalent view in cultural theory that views matters of form, design, structure as inherently ahistorical and apolitical. As Martin Pernick shows in *The Black Stork*, it was precisely aesthetic values that drove early proponents of eugenics and racial science to argue for sterilization of mentally retarded children and to establish "ugly laws" to protect society from unsightly physical specimens (22–24). Determining social policy during the Progressive Era, these proponents used the aesthetic to validate and reinforce the so-called objective science of heredity by declaring what should or could be seen in public. Disabled artists, fully cognizant of this history and how those values apply to them, have taken the aesthetic as a means not of transcending the body but of thinking through it.

Notes

[1] This metaphoric transfer has been described by David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder as "discursive dependency" (5).

[2] On the one-hand piano repertoire, see Edel.

[3] Indeed, the Ravel D-major concerto is a considerably leaner, less bombastic work than most of Ravel's orchestral music.

[4] At this level, the one-armed pianist Paul Wittgenstein joins his two-armed brother, the philosopher, for whom language is always a system of physical acts in situations.

[5] I have discussed Eigner's material page and his use of the typewriter in "Missing Larry."

[6] I have discussed this aspect of Deaf performance in "Hearing Things."

[7] The short film is closed-captioned, allowing Galloway to indicate through ironic titles the emotional register being reinforced by nondiegetic sounds.

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