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#### The desire to fill the insatiable lack creates experiences of impairment that structures the disability drive – cementing an order of signification that relies upon ableist value systems.

Mollow 15 [The Disability Drive by Anna Mollow A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English in the Graduate Division of the University of California, Berkeley Committee in charge: Professor Kent Puckett, Chair Professor Celeste G. Langan Professor Melinda Y. Chen Spring 2015. Anna Mollow received her Ph.D. in 2015 from the University of California, Berkeley, where she was an Andrew Vincent White and Florence Wales White Scholar and a UC Dissertation-Year Fellow. She is the coeditor, with Robert McRuer, of Sex and Disability (Duke UP, 2012) and the coeditor, with Merri Lisa Johnson, of DSM-CRIP (Social Text Online, 2013). Anna has published numerous articles on disability, queerness, feminism, race, and fatness. Her essays have appeared, or are forthcoming, in African American Review, Body Politics: Zeitschrift für Körpergeschichte, Hypatia: Journal of Feminist Philosophy, The Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies, WSQ: Women’s Studies Quarterly, MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States, The Disability Studies Reader, Michigan Quarterly Review, the Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Critical and Cultural Theory, Disability Studies Quarterly, Bitch: Feminist Response to Pop Culture, Autostraddle, Everyday Feminism, and Huffington Post. // WHSRS and Lex VM]

Tropes of disability are also present in what Edelman reads as Jean Baudrillard‟s “panicky offensive against reproduction without heterogenital copulation,” in which sex is described as devolving into a “useless function” and humans are distinguished (unsuccessfully, Edelman argues) from “the order of the virus” (qtd. in Edelman 64, 62).111 Edelman‟s apt reading of these remarks by Baudrillard in relation to what was once called “the gay plague,” as well as his own plays on the word “bent,” suggest that it can be difficult, in homophobic and ableist culture, to distinguish between queerness and disability (62, 90).112 Anti-queer religious leaders, Edelman notes, characterize queer sexualities as “unhealthy” and “ugly,” and “ministries of hope” offer cures to those who have “grown sick-to-death of being queer” (91, 47). 113 Against the “pathology” or “social disease” as which queerness is diagnosed, queer-baiting of children, Edelman argues, functions as a form of “antigay immunization,” while the narrative of A Christmas Carol serves as an annual “booster shot” (143, 19, 49). These repetitive references to disability suggest that not only queerness but also disability might be a fitting name for what Edelman, alluding to the death drive, calls “the remainder of the Real internal to the Symbolic order” (25). Indeed, disability metaphors are often the closest approximations that Edelman can find for the “unnameable” death drive (25). The terms that Edelman uses to describe the death drive include “wound,” “fracture,” “stupid enjoyment,” “mindless violence,” “lifeless machinery,” “senseless compulsion,” “disfiguration,” and a “shutdown of life‟s vital machinery” (No Future 22; “Kid” 28; No Future 38, 23, 27, 38, 37, 44). Although these signifiers do not directly refer to specific impairments, they do, taken together, evoke the physical and mental injury and dysfunction as which disability is commonly understood. And then there is Edelman‟s term “sinthomosexuality,” a neologism formed by “grafting, at an awkward join,” the word “sexuality” onto Lacan‟s term “sinthome.” With its “awkward” “grafting,” the word “sinthomosexuality” embodies disability at the level of the letter.114 Etymologically, too, Edelman‟s term harkens back to disability: “sinthome” is an archaic way of spelling the French word for “symptom” (qtd. in Edelman 33). The root meaning of “sinthomosexuality,” then, is something like “symptom-sexuality.” However, Lacan‟s “sinthome” means more than simply “symptom”: it refers, Edelman explains, to “the particular way each subject manages to knot together the orders of the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real” (35). The sinthome is the only means by which the subject can access the Symbolic order of meaning production; but paradoxically, because each subject‟s sinthome is arbitrary and meaningless (as individual as a fingerprint), the sinthome also threatens the Symbolic order to which it provides access (36). Both this access and this threat are figured as disability. In order to be constituted as a subject and to take one‟s place within the Symbolic order, one must be metaphorically blind: the cost of subjectivity is “blindness to this determination by the sinthome,” “blindness to the arbitrary fixation of enjoyment responsible for [the subject‟s] consistency,” “blindness” to the functioning of the sinthome (Edelman 36, 38). The alternative to subjectivity as disability would be, according to remarks that Edelman attributes to Lacan, “radical psychotic autism” (qtd. in Edelman 37).115 That is, whatever might alleviate our constitutive “blindness” by exposing “the sinthome as meaningless knot” must effect a “disfiguration” (Edelman 38), the consequences of which would be “pure autism” (Žižek 81, qtd. in Edelman 38). On the one side, blindness; on the other, disfiguration, psychosis, autism: when it comes to recognizing the senselessness of one‟s sinthome, it seems we‟re disabled if we do, disabled if we don‟t. This is why I have proposed that the “death drive”—a force that has less to do with literal death than with a strange persistence of life in death, or of death in life (perhaps like the “life not worth living” of which disability is often supposed to consist)—would more accurately be termed the “disability drive.” Writing of the contingency of disability as an identity category, Michael Bérubé observes: Any of us who identify as “nondisabled” must know that our self-designation is inevitably temporary, and that a car crash, a virus, a degenerative genetic disease, or a precedent-setting legal decision could change our status in ways over which we have no control whatsoever. If it is obvious why most nondisabled people resist this line of thinking, it should be equally obvious why that resistance must somehow be overcome. (viii) Could part of this resistance be attributable to a fear that, in the car crash or other identity- shattering event, it might be the driver‟s own hand that makes that disabling turn, that is, that the driver might be driven by an impulse, unwanted and unconscious, toward something beyond the principles of pleasure and health? Applying the name “the disability drive” to this “beyond” affords insight into the reasons that images of disability so powerfully excite and repel, becoming, as Tobin Siebers writes, “sources of fear and fascination for able-bodied people, who cannot bear to look at the unruly sight before them but also cannot bear not to look” (178). Later in this chapter, I will define the affect that Siebers references here as “primary pity.” For now, though, I simply want to point out that Siebers‟s important observation can be extended by noting that it is not only nondisabled people who react to images of disability with a mixture of aversion and attraction. Disabled people may also respond in this way, especially when contemplating impairments other than those that currently disable us.116 Building on Douglas Baynton‟s famous assertion that “disability is everywhere,...once you begin looking for it,” I suggest that the same may be true in regard to the disability drive: this ego-undoing psychic force shapes the subjectivities of disabled and nondisabled subjects alike (52). Manifestations of the disability drive may be present in Edelman‟s discussion of Tiny Tim. Take, for example, Edelman‟s contention that “the pleasurable fantasy of survival” in Dickens‟s story requires the survival of the fantasy that Tiny Tim “does not excite an ardent fear (or is it a fearful ardor?) to see him . . . at last cash in his chips” (45). It‟s a familiar cultural fantasy: cure ‟em (as Dickens might hope) or kill ‟em (as Edelman suggests readers must secretly wish).117 But in this unacknowledged wish, there may be more at stake than either killing or curing. In the chapter that follows his reading of A Christmas Carol, Edelman adduces Lacan‟s discussion of the legend of Saint Martin, who was said to have cut his own cloak in two in order to give half of it to a beggar. “Perhaps,” Lacan suggests, “over and above that need to be clothed, [the beggar] was begging for something else, namely that Saint Martin either kill him or fuck him” (qtd. in Edelman 83). Drawing upon this passage in his analysis of North by 72 Northwest, Edelman proposes that as Leonard attempts to push Roger Thornhill to his death from atop Mount Rushmore, he “enacts . . . the one [killing] as displacement of the other [fucking]” (85). Killing as displacement of fucking: might a similar displacement be at work in Edelman‟s attribution, to Dickens‟s readers, of a “fearful ardor” to see Tiny Tim “at last cash in his chips” (45)? As evidence for this suggestion, take the mode by which Edelman introduces his discussion of A Christmas Carol: “Take Tiny Tim, please!,” “with a nod to the spirit of the late Henny Youngman” renders Tiny Tim wifelike—clearly undesirable in this context, but not wholly uneroticized (41). And then there is the word “take,” which, particularly when followed by the word “please,” has a meaning other than the ones Edelman seems deliberately to invoke: “take” means “fuck,” and so Edelman‟s directive to “take Tiny Tim, please!,” which echoes his earlier injunction to “fuck Annie; fuck the waif from Les Mis; fuck the poor, innocent kid on the Net,” seems to authorize an additional imperative: fuck Tiny Tim. “Fuck” here means, of course, “remove” or “the hell with,” but it also means fuck.118 Arguably, these two ways in which No Future says “fuck Tiny Tim” coincide with what disability studies most ardently desires. “Fuck Tiny Tim, please!” disability scholars beg: rid us, please, of this most reviled textual creation. And also: if it is our cultural mandate to embody this pitiable, platitude-issuing, infantilized, and irritating figure—well, then fuck us, every one. Fuck us because figuratively, we are already “so fucked” by our culture‟s insistence, through this figure, that the disabled are not fuckable. This insistence must be understood as a form of reactive reinforcement: propelling every cultural representation of disability as undesirable, there may be a “fearful ardor,” an unacknowledged drive. Such representations include Edelman‟s abjection of Tiny Tim. And, I will argue, they also pertain to a similar abjection of Tiny Tim in the field of disability studies. As we shall soon see, the drive that infuses affective reactions to disability with ardor is often expressed through the emotion of pity. In taking account of the various forms that pity can take, we will be led to pose a question to disability studies and to queer antisocial theory together: are we sure that we want to take Tiny Tim out of the cultural text? A Tale of Two Pities “Piss on pity,” declares a well-known disability activist bumper sticker. A more polite companion to this tag, the slogan “No pity” is a rallying cry of the disability rights movement.119 For disability studies, a field that since its inception has vigorously resisted the imposition of pity upon disabled people, Tiny Tim is anathema. Understandably so: every year, the image of Tiny Tim is used to drum up pity for disabled people; the widespread circulation of this affect, disability scholars have compellingly argued, does not alleviate the social barriers that we face but instead reinforces our oppression. Indispensable as this disability studies analysis is, it leaves some important questions about pity unanswered. For example: if, as is commonly said, “No one wants to be pitied,” then why is this so? And also, if nobody wants to be pitied, who, if anyone, wants to feel pity? At first glance, the answer to the latter question might seem to be “everyone.” Certainly, multitudes of moviegoers appear to enjoy our culture‟s annual recitations of Tiny Tim‟s pity inducing tale. If it can be fun to perform pity, perhaps this is because pity gives a boost to the ego of the pitying person. “You are broken, and I am whole,” the pitier says to the one who is pitied. “I look down on you because you suffer.” Naturally, disabled people resist performing this service for the nondisabled. “Spare us your pity,” we say, because pity is felt to be demeaning. 73 Yet an incoherence structures this familiar account of pity: if pity fortifies the ego of the subject who feels it, then why do people so often resist feeling pity? Some folks get pissed when they are prodded to pity. “Your appeals to pity won‟t work,” they say. “I have no pity for you.” This is the attitude that Scrooge takes toward Tiny Tim. It‟s also the stance that Edelman invites queers to take in relation to the Child—and not only to the Child per se, but also to anyone who calls for a performance of pity. Edelman argues that compassion (which, of course, is a close relative of pity) is fundamentally narcissistic (73). When we call ourselves compassionate, we think we‟re feeling for the other; but, Edelman contends, we‟re really only feeling for ourselves (83). That is, compassion involves projecting one‟s own ego onto the object of one‟s compassion. In this schema, the pitied person is used as a vehicle for the pitier to feel sorry for his or her own self.

#### There is a two-tiered affective reaction when confronted with disability – primary pity damages the egos’ ability status, which invokes secondary pity to overcorrect for the threat.

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A great deal of the pain and pleasure of primary pity center on questions about what, or who, this fallen self is. When most people think about pity, we refer to an affect in which, to adopt Edelman‟s phrase, we purport to “feel for the other.” But as with primary narcissism, in which the self has not yet been constituted, and therefore cannot be said to enter into intersubjective relations with an “other,” primary pity entails a mixing up of self and other such that the ego, in becoming permeable to pain that may properly belong to “someone else,” is profoundly threatened in its integrity. Primary pity is that intense pain-pleasure complex that is provoked by the image of a suffering other who, it seems momentarily, both is and is not one‟s self. This affective response can feel unbearable, as seen in Siebers‟s formulation: one “cannot bear to look…but also cannot bear not to look.” Primary pity is difficult to bear because it involves a drive toward disability (one cannot bear not to look), which menaces the ego‟s investments in health, pleasure, and control—because to contemplate another person‟s suffering is to confront the question, “Could this happen to me?” Such a prospect, although frightening, may also be compelling; in this way, primary pity replicates the self-rupturing aspects of sexuality. Indeed, the unbearability of primary pity reflects its coextensiveness with sexuality. Sex, or the Unbearable, a book coauthored by Edelman and by Lauren Berlant, argues that sex “unleashes unbearable contradictions that we nonetheless struggle to bear” (back cover). This claim accords with Freud‟s account of sexuality as a “pleasurable” “unpleasure” that the ego can never fully master or control (Three 49,75). As Leo Bersani puts it in his reading of Freud, “the pleasurable unpleasurable tension of sexual enjoyment occurs when the body‟s „normal‟ range of sensation is exceeded, and when the organization of the self is momentarily disturbed”; thus, “sexuality would be that which is intolerable to the structured self” (Freudian 38). Primary pity is also intolerable to the structured self, because it entails a fascination with the fantasy of a self in a state of disintegration or disablement. Secondary pity is something else, although it cannot wholly be differentiated from primary pity. Secondary pity attempts to heal primary pity‟s self-rupturing effects by converting primary pity into a feeling that is bearable. As with secondary narcissism, secondary pity involves both an attempt to get back to that ego-shattering state of painfully pleasurable primary pity, and at the same time to defend against that threat to the ego by aggrandizing oneself at someone else‟s expense. Secondary pity refers to all those ego-bolstering behaviors that most people think of when they talk about pity. Disabled people are all too familiar with these behaviors: the saccharin sympathy, the telethon rituals of “conspicuous contribution,” the insistence that “they” (i.e., nondisabled people) could never endure such suffering. More commonly known in our culture simply as “pity,” secondary pity encompasses our culture‟s most clichéd reactions to disability: charity, tears, and calls for a cure. Correlatives of these commonplace manifestations of secondary pity are the obligatory claims that disabled people‟s suffering is “inspiring.” Indeed, the speed with which conventional cultural representations of disability segue from overt expressions of pity to celebrations of “the triumph of the human spirit” highlights the ways in which secondary pity, as a defense against primary pity‟s incursions, reinforces the ego‟s fantasy of sovereignty. Secondary pity, in other words, can be seen as a variation of secondary narcissism: these affects enlarge the ego of the pitier or the narcissist at the expense of someone else. But primary pity is not the same as either primary narcissism, secondary narcissism, or secondary pity. Unlike primary narcissism, a feeling that emerges out of a relation to the world in which notions of “self” and “other” do not obtain, primary pity does depend upon the constructs of self and other, although these constructions are unstable and are continually threatening to come undone. Primary pity can thus be envisioned as a threshold category occupying a liminal position between the total denial of the other that is inherent to primary narcissism and the rigid structure of (superior) self and (inferior) other that constitutes secondary narcissism and secondary pity. My concept of primary versus secondary pity also differs from Freud‟s primary secondary narcissism distinction at the level of genealogy. Like Freud‟s account of primary and secondary narcissisms, my model of primary and secondary pities involves a temporal transition; but whereas Freud imagines the movement from primary to secondary narcissism as a passage from an earlier to a later stage of an individual‟s development, the temporal shift from primary to secondary pity happens much more quickly than this. It happens in an instant: that moment in which we feel primary pity and then, almost before we can blink, deny that we feel or have felt it. The denial is understandable: who wants to admit that one gets pleasure from the sight of another person‟s suffering—or, to make matters worse, that this pleasure derives in part from the specter of disability‟s transferability, the possibility that this suffering could be—and, fantasmatically, perhaps already is—an image of one‟s own self undone?

#### The 1ACs belief of a better future is tied to rehabilitation where the signifier of the Child is placed forward to demean disabled people.

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Elsewhere, I have argued that No Future‟s impassioned polemic is one that disability studies might take to heart. Indeed, the figure that Edelman calls “the disciplinary image of the ‘innocent’ Child” is inextricable not only from queerness but also from disability (19). For example, the Child is the centerpiece of the telethon, a ritual display of pity that demeans disabled people. When Jerry Lewis counters disability activists‟ objections to his assertion that a disabled person is “half a person,” he insists that he is only fighting for the Children: “Please, I’m begging for survival. I want my kids alive,” he implores (in Johnson, Too Late 53, 58). If the Child makes an excellent alibi for ableism, perhaps this is because, as Edelman points out, the idea of not fighting for this figure is unthinkable. Thus, when Harriet McBryde Johnson hands out leaflets protesting the Muscular Dystrophy Association, a confused passerby cannot make sense of what her protest is about. “You‟re against Jerry Lewis!” he exclaims (61). The passerby’s surprise is likely informed by a logic similar to that which, in Edelman‟s analysis, undergirds the use of the word “choice” by advocates of legal abortion: “Who would, after all, come out for abortion or stand against reproduction, against futurity, and so against life?” (16). Similarly, why would anyone come out for disability, and so against the Child who, without a cure, might never walk, might never lead a normal life, might not even have a future at all? The logic of the telethon, in other words, relies on an ideology that might be defined as “rehabilitative futurism,” a term that I coin to overlap and intersect with Edelman‟s notion of “reproductive futurism.” If, as Edelman maintains, the future is envisaged in terms of a fantasmatic “Child,” then the survival of this future-figured-as-Child is threatened by both queerness and disability. Futurity is habitually imagined in terms that fantasize the eradication of disability: a recovery of a “crippled” or “hobbled” economy, a cure for society’s ills, an end to suffering and disease. Eugenic ideologies are also grounded in both reproductive and rehabilitative futurism: procreation by the fit and elimination of the disabled, eugenicists promised, would bring forth a better future.” (68-69)

#### The alternative is to disable the figure of the “Human.” Instead of seeing disability as a redeemable position within civil society, the alt weaponizes disability’s structural position against the human. The ROTJ is to question ideological optimism in the classroom.

Mollow 12 [Mollow, Anna. "Is Sex Disability? Queer Theory and the Disability Drive." Sex and Disability, by R. McRuer and A. Mollow, Durham, Duke UP, 2012, pp. 306-10. http://www.sfu.ca/~baw2/GSWS826/Mollow.pdf] //Lex VM

But here a problem emerges: as we have seen, the writing by Bersani and Edelman that I have examined forwards powerful arguments against the project of becoming human. Urging queers to embrace the “inhumanity of the sinthomosexual,” Edelman observes that the liberal goal of expanding the category of “human” to encompass those presently excluded from it will not “stop the cultural production of figures” made to embody the inhumanity of the death drive (No Future 107). What would it mean for disability theory to embrace disabled people’s figuration as inhuman? As we contemplate this possibility, a moment from How I Became a Human Being may give us pause. After a presentation by the physicist Stephen Hawking at the U.C. Berkeley campus, O’Brien posed the following question: “Doctor Hawking, what can you say to all the disabled people who are stuck in nursing homes or living with their parents or in some other untenable situation and who feel that their life is over, that they have no future?” (Human Being 230). A response that might be derived from Edelman’s book—that there is, and can be, no future, since the future, by definition, can only ever be a fantasy (“always / A day / Away,” in Annie’s paean to “Tomorrow”)—hardly seems more adequate than Hawking’s reply: “All I can say is that one must do the best one can in the situation in which one finds oneself ” (No Future 30; Human Being 231). In light of O’Brien’s question, Edelman’s embrace of the death drive, or Bersani’s celebration of what he calls “the breakdown of the human itself in sexual intensities,” can easily appear as irresponsible theoretical indulgences (“Rectum” 29). Indeed, the word “irresponsible” is one that Bersani himself uses when he reflects, at a distance of thirteen years, on “Is the Rectum a Grave?”: “Much of this now seems to me a rather facile, even irresponsible celebration of ‘self- defeat.’ Masochism is not a viable alternative to mastery, either practically or theoretically” (“Sociality” 110). This remark highlights important shifts and ambivalences in Bersani’s thinking over the course of his career, which may serve as an entry into the question of the status of the human in disability theory. Bersani and Edelman are often cited, as if in the same breath, as proponents of an “antisocial” or “antirelational” “thesis” in queer theory, in opposition to which some critics of their work, such as Muñoz, have defined their own projects as “utopian.”17 But Bersani’s work, rather than conforming to either side of a utopian/antirelational binary, often reveals an interest in thinking in both of these ways at once. For example, writing of passages in his book, Homos (published in 1995) that are frequently cited as the origin of the “antirelational thesis,” Bersani describes the “performance of antirelationality” that he celebrates in Jean Genet’s Funeral Rites as a “utopic form of revolt” (“Sociality” 103; emphasis added). This joining of the utopian and the antirelational corresponds to what Bersani describes, in an essay published in 2004, as a central concern throughout his career: “a dialogue (both conciliatory and antagonistic) between” Foucault and Freud (“Fr- oucault” 133). In this essay and other recent writings, Bersani moves away from the “Freudian” and toward the “Foucauldian.” Worrying that the psychoanalytic (or antirelational) side of this paradigm may be politically irresponsible (insofar as its insistence on the intractability of the death drive seems “resistant to any social transformations whatsoever”), Bersani has become increasingly interested in the creation of what, invoking a phrase of Foucault’s, he calls “new relational modes” (“Fr- oucault” 134). Interestingly, this “admittedly utopic” project often employs a rhetoric of futurism, both reproductive and rehabilitative (Bersani, “Fr- oucault” 134). For example, in a reading of Plato’s Symposium, Bersani approvingly observes that “the goal of a love relation with Socrates” is “the bringing to term of the other’s pregnancy of soul” (“Sociality” 110; 117).18 Not only a pregnancy but perhaps also a rehabilitation of the soul is at stake at moments in which a utopian impulse is evident in Bersani’s work—as when, for example, he speaks of effecting “a curative collapse of social difference,” or of enabling a future enjoyment of “as yet unarticulated pleasures” that have thus far been “suppressed and crippled” (Homos 177; “Fr- oucault” 137; emphasis added). If, as these examples suggest, Edelman is correct in asserting that we cannot think of the future without reference to the Child—and if I am right in suggesting that the overlapping ideology of rehabilitative futurism is equally pervasive and insidious—then how should disability theory answer O’Brien’s question? The disability rights movement, of course, has already provided compelling responses: protestations against the injustice of institutionalization, critiques of the nursing home lobby, and advocacy for attendant programs. Theoretically, it could be said that the goal of de- institutionalization is merely a liberal one, as it aims only to include disabled people within the social fabric. Yet in this instance (and many similar ones), an imperfect politics clearly seems better than no politics at all. But what is the role of disability theory in relation to this politics? Is it, as Paul Longmore described disability studies in 2003, to serve as the “academic counterpart to disability rights advocacy” (Burned 2)? Or should disability theory conceive of itself as sometimes in tension with this movement (as queer theory often is in relation to the mainstream lGbt movement)? Insofar as it has acted as a “counterpart” to the disability rights movement, disability studies has made crucial contributions to what might be called a humanizing enterprise. It has offered, for example, myriad analyses of the reasons for our society’s willingness—its desperation, even—to dehumanize and exclude disabled people, even to the point of locking them up. But when sex enters the picture, things get complicated. Consider, for example, the following remark, made by a doctor to a group of patients at one of O’Brien’s rehabilitation hospitals: “You may think you’ll never have sex again, but remember . . . some people do become people again” (Human Being 80). The doctor’s comment points to a paradox that inheres in any conversation about sex and disability: disabled people, it is implied here, are less than fully human because they are presumed not to “have sex”—but sex, psychoanalysis shows us, is radically dehumanizing, effecting a “shattering” of “the structured self ” rather than its entrenchment in personhood or identity. This paradox is at the root of the double bind I discussed in the introduction to this chapter, in which disability simultaneously figures sexual excess and sexual lack: disabled people are regarded as sexually deficient and therefore not fully human, but at the same time, disabled people register as less than human because disability is the ubiquitous figure for a dehumanizing, identity- disintegrating force that resembles sex. If, as the second half of this paradoxical construction suggests, assertions of humanity are in necessary conflict with expressions of sexuality, then perhaps disability theory should, rather than seeking to humanize the disabled (insisting that disabled people be treated “as human beings”), instead ask how disability might threaten to undo, or disable, the category of the human. It might do so in part by attending to the insights Bersani’s and Edelman’s readings of psychoanalytic theory yield, according to which sex, far from enabling us to “become people,” ruptures the self and dehumanizes us all. But what, then, would become of disability politics? Critics of No Future— despite Edelman’s insistence that its argument pertains to “figurality,” not to “being or becoming” the death drive—tend to read the book as advocating, on a literal level, the abandonment of hope and political goals (No Future 17; 25).19 As noted earlier, however, it is “politics as we know it” that Edelman refuses, and even this refusal does not mean that queers should stop insisting on “our equal right to the social order’s prerogatives” (No Future 3; 29; emphasis added). Edelman further clarifies this point in his essay “Ever After”: “Without for a moment denying the importance that distinguishes many [political] projects, I want to insist on the need for an ongoing counterproject as well: a project that’s willing to forgo the privilege of social recognition” (473; emphasis added). Such a counterproject—one that can be read as possibly opposing the humanizing impulse behind O’Brien’s narration of How I Became a Human Being—may take shape in some of O’Brien’s own poetry. While the title of his autobiography speaks of becoming human, his unpublished poem “Femininity” disrupts this trajectory. O’Brien writes of lying: Naked on the gurney in the hospital corridor, surrounded by nurses, tall, young, proud of their beauty, admiring my skinny cripple body. “You’re so thin, you should’ve been a girl.” “I wish my eyelashes were as long as yours.” “Such pretty eyes.” I thought or think I thought or wish I’d said, “But your bodies work. Get scissors, cut my cock and balls off. Make me a girl, without anaesthesia, make me a girl, make me a girl.”20 Much of the unnerving intensity of these lines derives from what, invoking Bersani, we might refer to as their embrace of “the suicidal ecstasy of being a woman” (or a girl, or queer, or disabled); from their rejection, that is, of the ideology of rehabilitative futurism, and from their refusal to engage in a “redemptive reinvention” of sex or disability. O’Brien’s speaker does not plead with the nurses who admire his “skinny cripple body” to “cure me” or “make me walk again.” Nor does he attempt to redefine his body (which does not “work”) as merely a manifestation of human variation. Suffering and lack, rather than being dissociated from disability, are amplified and eroticized: “cut my cock and balls off . . . without anaesthesia,” the speaker implores, the repetition of his plea (“make me a girl, / make me a girl”) evoking the repetitiveness of a drive. “Femininity” can indeed be read as an instantiation of the disability drive: disability in this poem, like “the rectum” in Bersani’s essay, “is the grave in which the masculine [and nondisabled] ideal of proud subjectivity is buried.” It will of course be tempting to evade this “nightmare of ontological obscenity” (“Rectum” 29), this fantasy of un- becoming human.21 But the dehumanizing double binds that so persistently structure cultural representations of sex and disability suggest that such evasions may be futile. Intrinsically obscene, yet inherently asexual: rather than attempting to assume a different position within this impossible paradigm, disability theory should perhaps underscore its pervasiveness as evidence of a disability drive; as a sign, that is, that our culture’s desexualization of disabled people functions to defend against a deeply rooted but seldom acknowledged awareness that all sex is incurably, and perhaps desirably, disabled.

### Link Wall

#### 1. Willpower - The 1ACs focus on performance erases the material conditions of disability.

Siebers 06 (Tobin, Prof of Literary and Cultural Criticism at the U of Michigan, “Disability Studies and the Future of Identity Politics”) DR 16

The attack on identity by social constructionists is designed to liberate individuals constrained by unjust stereotypes and social prejudices. The example of disability in particular reveals with great vividness the unjust stereotypes imposed on identity by cultural norms and languages as well as the violence exercised by them. It also provides compelling evidence for the veracity of the social model. Deafness was not, for instance, a disability on Martha’s Vineyard for most of the eighteenth century because 1 in 25 residents was deaf and everyone in the community knew how to sign. Deaf villagers had the same occupations and incomes as people who could hear.3 This example shows to what extent disability is socially produced. In fact, it is tempting to see disability exclusively as the product of a bad match between society and some human bodies because it is so often the case. But disability also frustrates theorists of social construction because the disabled body and mind are not easily aligned with cultural norms and codes. Many disability scholars have begun to insist that the social model either fails to account for the difficult physical realities faced by people with disabilities or presents their body and mind in ways that are conventional, conformist, and unrecognizable to them. These include the habits of privileging pleasure over pain, making work a condition of independence, favoring performativity to corporeality, and describing social success in terms of intellectual achievement, bodily adaptability, and active political participation. David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder have noticed that the push to link physical difference to cultural and social constructs, especially ideological ones, has actually made disability disappear from the social model. They cite a variety of recent studies of the body that use “corporeal aberrancies” to emblematize social differences, complaining that “physical difference” within common critical methodologies “exemplifies the evidence of social deviance even as the constructed nature of physicality itself fades from view.”4 As Davis puts it, cultural theory abounds with “the fluids of sexuality, the gloss of lubrication, the glossary of the body as text, the heteroglossia of the intertext, the glossolalia of the schizophrenic. But almost never the body of the differently ab led.”5 Recent theoretical emphases on “performativity,” “heterogeneity,” and “indeterminancy” privilege a disembodied ideal of freedom, suggesting that emancipation from social codes and norms may be achieved by imagining the body as a subversive text. These emphases are not only incompatible with the experiences of people with disabilities; they mimic the fantasy, often found in the medical model, that disease and disability are immaterial as long as the imagination is free. Doctors and medical professionals have the habit of coaxing sick people to cure themselves by thinking positive thoughts, and when an individual’s health does not improve the failure is ascribed to mental weakness. Sontag was perhaps the first to understand the debilitating effects of describing illness as a defect of imagination or will power. She traces the notion that disease springs from individual mental weakness to Schopenhauer’s claim that “recovery from a disease depends on the will assuming ‘dictatorial power in order to subsume the rebellious forces’ of the body” (43-44). She also heaps scorn on the idea that the disabled or sick are responsible for their disease concluding that “theories that diseases are caused by mental states and can be cured by will power are always an index of how much is not understood about the physical terrain of a disease” (55). The rebellious forces of the body and the physical nature of disease represent a reality untouched by metaphor. Sontag insists that “the reality has to be explained” (55).

#### 2. Feminist valorization of independence, strength, health exclude disabled women, reifying their precarity and locking in abjection.

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I get why this is happening. Feminism doesn’t know WTF to do with disability, because disability throws a huge monkey wrench into the gears of the feminist notion that we’re supposed to be strong, independent, and accomplished beings, healthy and full of power. Great! What about the women with disabilities [disabled women] for whom going to the grocery store takes a profound amount of energy? What about women whose bodies are weak? What about women who rely upon others for assistance with basic tasks? What about women in constant pain? What about women incarcerated in nursing homes and mental institutions? Where do they fit into your dream of the strong, independent, accomplished women? /// They don’t. WE DON’T. /// What so many able-bodied feminists don’t get is how profound an experience disability is. I’m not just talking about a profound physical experience. I’m talking about a profound social and political experience. I venture out and I feel like I’m in a separate world, divided from “normal” people by a thin but unmistakeable membrane. In my very friendly and diverse city, I look out and see people of different races and ethnicities walking together on the sidewalk, or shopping, or having lunch. But when I see disabled people, they are usually walking or rolling alone. And if they’re not alone, they’re with a support person or a family member. I rarely see wheelchair users chatting it up with people who walk on two legs. I rarely see cognitively or intellectually disabled people integrated into social settings with nondisabled people. I’m painfully aware of how many people are fine with me as long as I can keep up with their able-bodied standards, and much less fine with me when I actually need something. /// So many of you really have no idea of [how rampant the discrimination is](http://www.disabilityandrepresentation.com/2013/07/21/disability-rights-are-civil-rights/). You have no idea that disabled women are routinely [denied fertility treatments](http://www.ccdconline.org/case/196) and can be [sterilized without their consent](http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/11/10/sterilization-women-and-girls-disabilities). You have no idea that disabled people are at very high risk [of losing custody of their children](http://www.npr.org/2012/11/27/166010275/parents-with-disabilities-and-family-law). You have no idea that women with disabilities [disabled women] experience [a much higher rate of domestic violence](http://www.wcsap.org/disability-community) than nondisabled women or that the assault rate for adults with developmental disabilities is [4 to 10 times higher](http://www.nhcadsv.org/victims_disabilities.cfm) than for people without developmental disabilities. You have no idea that over 25% of people with disabilities [disabled people] [live in poverty](http://www.disabilityscoop.com/2011/09/14/more-1-in-4-poverty/13952/). You have no idea that [the ADA hasn’t solved everything](http://www.riverfronttimes.com/2010-12-09/news/americans-with-disability-act-twentieth-year-cerebral-palsy/full/) and that disabled people are still kept out of public places, still face discrimination in employment, and are still treated like second-class citizens undeserving of rights. /// So many of you aren’t even thinking about disabled people when you casually throw words into your social justice rhetoric like crazy, insane, moronic, idiotic, and lame to describe ideas you do not like. /// So many of you have no idea that the civil rights of disabled people are being violated every damned day only because they are disabled.