

**2019 Seminar Abstracts: Disability and Its Intersections**  
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### **Wise fools and poverty in early modern plays**

In this paper I examine the intersectionality between intellectual disability and class in three early modern plays featuring witty fools. I suggest that fools' non-normativity reflects property-related legal notions of intellectual disability. As a consequence, wise fools tend to portray various facets of poverty, acting like beggars, masterless or dispossessed men.

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### **Shakespeare's Crip Poetics**

In this brief paper, I will argue that reading the speaker of Sonnets 37 and 89 as disabled yields political meaning and poetic complexity that is overlooked when the speaker's avowed "lameness" is restricted to metaphor. With this reading, the speaker's disability becomes a way for him to assert poetic mastery and imagine a radical political alternative to the social hierarchies of the poet-patron relationship, one that can be described as a queer crip poetics.

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### **"Spying My Shadow in the Sun": The Counterfactual Body and Early Modern Speculations**

In this brief piece, I read my embodied experience beside Shakespeare's Richard III to consider how the counterfactual mode helps us engage with disability during the early modern period. I conclude with some thoughts on queer and crip time, soliciting your thoughts on theorizing intersections and divisions between the two.

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### **"Disability, Passing, and Performance"**

Abstract withheld at author's request.

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### **Intersecting Disability, Ethnography, and Shakespeare Studies**

In this short piece, I describe my relationship to Disability Studies and other related areas of identity disclosure for which Disability Studies has served as a model. I conclude with two pragmatic questions with which I continue to struggle in my conversations, research, and writing.

**Royce Best, Johns Hopkins University**  
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### **What about Metatheatre?: Choreographing Crip History**

This essay notes the reliance upon but under-theorization of metatheatre in disability studies discussions of medieval and early modern drama by Cameron Hunt McNabb and Tobin Siebers. It uses recent work in metatheatre studies by Callan Davies to suggest that metatheatre is useful for theorizing disability in premodern drama. Lastly, the essay suggests that the intersection of disability and metatheatre in premodern drama is an exemplary critical site for what Susan Leigh Foster calls “choreographing history,” ultimately reminding theatregoers that all embodiment is complex embodiment.

**Justin Shaw, Emory University**  
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### **“Haply, for I am Black”: Imagining a Black, Disabled, and Happy Othello**

What are the possibilities of a happy and melancholic Othello? This paper begins to explore a practice of reading Othello as a disabled black character – albeit one who is interested in the pursuits of his own happiness as much as he is in the active resistance of antiblack and ableist oppression. In the end, Othello’s melancholic happiness does operate as a mode of resistance as it subverts expectations of melancholic existence and norms of happiness in his social environment.

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### **Shakespeare’s Maimed Quartos or Florio’s Defective Translations: Queering and Crippling Early Modern Authorship**

This paper focuses on paratexts from Shakespeare’s First Folio and John Florio’s 1603 translation of Montaigne’s *Essays* to explore metaphors of books as disabled children. It considers the way that (dis)ability and heteronormativity intertwine in constructions of authorship and authorial legacy, and looks to new intersections between disability studies, sexuality studies, and book history.

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### **The (Dis)Embodied Chorus of *Henry V***

This paper raises questions about the embodiment of the Chorus of *Henry V*. Both representative of many bodies—a chorus of voices—and yet distinct from the characters of the play, the Chorus shifts between presence and absence, and is itself preoccupied with the bodies of Harry and his soldiers. I gesture toward, and begin to wonder about, the Chorus’s use of “cripple tardy-gaited night” to describe a military camp prior to Henry’s arrival.

**Rachel Ellen Clark, Wartburg College**  
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### **Witchcraft and the Intersections of Disability**

Scholars have long recognized that early modern English witchcraft exists at the intersections of gender, religion, and class, but have paid less attention to the intersections with (dis)ability. This essay examines the links between (dis)ability and witchcraft, considering witches who are depicted with impairments, witches who embody the tropes of the “superpowered supercrip,” and witches who introduce racial difference, all of which reveal the importance of the “passible” body to early modern conceptions of witchcraft.

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### **Disability, Dance and Measurement**

What are the various *dispositifs* by which the able body is shaped, formed and disciplined? I begin by thinking about the historicity of measurement—the fact that the very idea of measurement, and precisely measuring the quotidian world, only became possible in the early modern period, producing a new onto-epistemology of the body. I think through the genealogical tie between measurability, norms, and (later) eugenics. Finally, I consider the relation between measurement and precision, in the world of dance. I argue that dance manuals invited a new type of bodily precision and movement in the court and in the colonies, thus contributing to the formation of an ideal, able body.

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**Aphra Behn's *The Dumb Virgin: or, the Force of Imagination: Transformative Thinking and Disability***

Sami Shalk's employs the term *bodymind* in her book, *Bodymind Reimagined: (Dis)ability, Race, and Gender in Black Women's Speculative Fiction*. *Bodymind* refers to the "materialist feminist disability studies concept from Margaret Price that refers to the enmeshment of the mind and body." Shalk continues, "the term *bodymind* insists on the inextricability of mind and body and highlights how processes within our being impact one another in such a way that the notion of a physical versus mental process is difficult, if not impossible to clearly discern in most cases" (5).

I have been thinking a lot about the construction and manifestations of imagination and the work of the mind as it relates to disability and its connection to Sami Shalk's notion of *bodymind* as I parse the multivalent representations of disability in Aphra Behn's short work, *The Dumb Virgin: or, the Force of Imagination*. On the one hand, the narrative of disability in *The Dumb Virgin* connects it directly to the imagination of the mother in the story, as her mind dictates the disabling of her two daughters, Belvideera and Maria. On the other hand, *The Dumb Virgin* also highlights how the mind of the father in the story, Rinaldo, changes potential outcome for his daughters by insisting on their education and development of talents, which signifies a changing of the narrative of disability that is reflected in late-seventeenth century culture. What are we to make of the connection between the physical, mental, and environmental representations of disability in Behn's work?