Disability and its affective affordances: deformity, decay, disruption, distortion

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CHAPTER 4

Disruption

1. Disability and the Affordances of Disruption

In the previous chapters, several instances were already given of disability's potential to disrupt. When Jane Eyre reunited with Rochester toward the end of the novel, Rochester did not know how to relate to Jane after becoming disabled. His anxiety concerning his new condition ruptured not only their ability to relate their past experiences to one another but also disrupted the process of communicating the shared anxiety felt during their reunion. Similarly, when Treves' wife Ann heard about Merrick's hope that his mother could see him with his new friends in *The Elephant Man*, the scene was ruptured by the friend in question becoming affectively overwhelmed and subsequently retreating from the scene. In *A Little Life*, after aiding Jude in moving down a fire escape to break into their own apartment, Willem witnesses Jude wincing in pain afterwards, unable to help him or relieve this pain, disrupting both his desire and ability to be of further help.

My point here is not to propose a deductive line of reasoning that would claim that disability necessarily disrupts social relations wherever it appears. Rather, I argue that *when* disability is disruptive, it draws our attention to the formal characteristics of the genre it is disrupting, e.g., a soliloquy, a situation, a narrative, etc. This affordance of disability to disrupt might seem to indicate that the forms of relationality that it disrupts are already outlined before the disruption happens. In this chapter, I argue and explore the opposite: that disruption's potential with regard to disability lies in its ability to make a relationality's formal characteristics legible through the analysis of different aesthetic forms and genres.

I examine two aesthetic forms used to mediate and represent relationality to disability, namely situational narrative and lyric poetry. These two forms are not fully opposite in how they may represent experiences of disability, as poems can possess narrative aspects and narratives may have qualities commonly associated with poetry. While lyric poetry and narrative may share certain features, I argue for the importance of some of their differences. This is primarily connected to the temporality of these genres. Whereas narrative recounts a sequence of actions and events, lyric poetry, because it is necessarily recited and overheard in the present, itself constitutes an event.

With the first case study of this chapter, Katharine Weber's novel *Still Life with Monkey* (2018), I argue how the narrativization of experiences of disability mediates the continuous adjustment to everyday life. This results in a dominant affective experience of dissatisfaction with one's life as a situational narrative that ultimately does not find a restitution but rather stresses the importance effort comes to take in living everyday life. I then move on to reading two lyric poems by Laurie Clements Lambeth. The poems' formal characteristics represent, apostrophically invoke, and disrupt the effort that is often connected to relating the experience of living with disability, implicating the reader's effort in turn. I argue that these poems' affordances of disruption can be read as a negation of narrative's dominant sequential ordering of the disabled experience that ends up requiring a "resolution" to living with disability. Simultaneously, my reading of these poems emphasizes the effort the apostrophic power to enunciate requires from the poet, disrupting a preemptive conception of seamless enunciation.

In his study *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics*, (1997) sociologist Arthur W. Frank offers a typology of illness narratives and defines what he calls the restitution narrative as consisting of the following basic elements: "The plot of the restitution has the basic storyline: 'Yesterday I was healthy, today I'm sick, but tomorrow I'll be healthy again' " (77). These three elements not only emphasize the temporal nature of the restitution narrative, but they are also a way of organizing the experience of illness. While illness and disability are different concepts, Frank's elucidation of the restitution narrative is relevant to disability studies because its ordering of events may be applied to disability as well. Frank notes that: "The restitution story is about remaking the body in an image derived either from its own history before illness or from elsewhere" (87). Thus, restitution narratives rely upon the desire to restore the ill or disabled body back to normative health, which according to Frank is constituted by the fact that illness itself necessarily signals the mortality of the subject: "What needs to be staved off is the deeper contingency represented by illness itself: the contingency of mortality. Any sickness is an intimation of mortality, and telling sickness as a restitution story forestalls that intimation" (85). In Frank's analysis, the telling of the restitution story itself functions as a disruption of the intimation of mortality. This intimation is disrupted because the restitution of the story (getting healthy again) is also often the *resolution* of the story.

But there comes a risk with designing a typology like Frank's. This risk, he states, is "creating yet another 'general unifying view' that subsumes the particularity of individual experience" (76). Such a general unifying view would rest upon a deductive line of reasoning mentioned earlier, as well as in the introductory chapter of this study:

examples are employed in order to recognize and formulate a pattern upon which a theory or typology such as Frank's can be built. Frank's defense for constructing such a typology is that the "originality" of an illness is not deprecated by it, because the three different narrative types he defines intertwine (the other two being the Quest and Chaos narrative) (76).[1] Furthermore, the restitution plot in particular is founded on the simple observation that many illness narratives are focused toward "getting well."

Typologies like Frank's bear a resemblance to the pathological patterns sought out under the medical model of disability, in that the presence of similarities between perceived disabilities may allow for the construction of a new classification or the removal of an older, outdated one. An important distinction here is that, whereas disabilities are dominantly perceived as being "natural" (that is, related to occurrences that happen in the body or mind), narratives instead fall under the umbrella of the artificial, as the constructed stories of human beings. In the telling title of his essay *Who put The* The *in the* Novel? (2002) disability studies scholar Lennard J. Davis traces the shaping of the (predominantly) realist novel as historically converging with the modern conceptualization of the normal/abnormal dichotomy (92). This simultaneous development coalesced into pervasive normative tendencies in the novel's form. According to Davis, "The novel as a form relies on cure as a narrative technique." He expounds this as the realist novel's tendency to have its characters go through moral transformations and "cure" the plot of its "abnormal initiating events" (98). Elsewhere, Davis writes that "People in disability studies have learned to be suspicious of this paradigm because it seems to be one of the master plots of an ableist culture. Nondisabled people apparently can't get enough of this narrative fix, but those of us in disability studies look cautiously at any disability whose narrative turn automatically follows this pattern" (2013: 66).

Narrative's insistence to find a resolution, or in Davis' words, a "cure," is based on the fact that, by simply being present, narratives make us desire to know what happens next. D.A. Miller points out in his study *Narrative and its Discontents* (1981) that narrative possesses a tendency to keep going yet ultimately lacks finality. He concludes that "For the production of narrative—what we called the narratable—is possible only within a logic of insufficiency, disequilibrium, and deferral, and tradi-

1 Frank designates chaos narratives as "anti-narratives" (98), and as stories that would resist mediation. Yet, by giving examples and representations of such stories, this claim may be contested. Quest narratives, meanwhile, concern those stories which are concerned with the "journey" of coming to relate to one's illness differently as the story progresses.

tional novelists typically desire worlds of greater stability and wholeness than such a logic can intrinsically provide" (265). In affective terms, the presence of a narrative situation can be understood as propelling its audience toward its resolution based on this desire toward narrative's ultimate wholeness. Peter Brooks proposes that "Narratives portray the motors of desire that drive and consume their plots, and they also lay bare the nature of narration as a form of human desire" (61). A narrative must reach a conclusion in order for it to be satisfactory. Inversely, unfinished or disrupted stories may evoke dissatisfaction. As I read in both Frank's and Davis's arguments, narrative accounts impose structure on a sequence of actions and events (life before the disability, the disabling event, life with disability), but this structure also forces the complexity given in experience to conform to narrative's genre constraints.

If narratives predominantly mediate experience in order to converge the series of its depicted actions and events towards a resolution, I argue that this can be contrasted with forms of representation that are *situational* in nature. If the events in a restitution narrative can be considered hierarchical in nature in that they culminate toward the acme of the plot, my argument is that in situational narratives events happen in a paratactic, or horizontal, manner. In a situation, arranging events in a hierarchical manner is complicated precisely because the relevance attributed to events implies that they do not work toward apotheosis. In a situational narrative, I argue, disruptions occur and are experienced over and over by the characters of that narrative in living both in the situation and continuously adjusting to it.

A contemporary approach that argues against the neat structuring of traumatic events can be found in Lauren Berlant's study *Cruel Optimism* (2011). One of the characteristic features of what they call "the historical sense of the present," is that it is "perceived, first, affectively: the present is what makes itself present to us before it becomes anything else, such as an orchestrated collective event or an epoch on which we can look back" (2). According to Berlant, our shared ideas of what it could mean to live the "good life" are in our contemporary present marked by an impasse: a situation in which no apparent progress seems possible. Whatever fantasies we may hold of the good life, these fantasies are lived and felt in the present. Such fantasies, imbued with hope and a feeling of optimism that things "could get better" and move beyond the impasse, themselves become objects of attachment which we nourish and cling onto. This explains the title of the book, because cruel optimism "exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing" (1). The complexity of the good life fantasy is rooted in the fact that, as a form of desire, such optimism is accompanied by "dread, anxiety, hunger, curiosity, the whole gamut from the sly neutrality of browsing the aisles to excitement at the prospect of 'the change that's gonna

come'" (2), making optimism itself not necessarily feel optimistic. Since Berlant's argument takes the historical present as being lived in the everyday, they contrast their work explicitly with that done in trauma theory,[2] as the latter takes as its point of departure a rupturing event that allows for the bifurcation of a "before" and "after" period formally similar to the restitution narrative. Berlant's focus on the impasse is founded upon the notion that crises can become stretched out and experienced over a longer period of time that is therefore not an exception to ordinary daily life, but rather *becomes* it.

The nature of a sustained and self-perpetuating crisis integrated into daily life makes Berlant focus on what they define as a situation: "A situation is a state of things in which something that will perhaps matter is unfolding amid the usual activity of life. It is a state of animated and animating suspension that forces itself on consciousness, that produces a sense of the emergence of something in the present that may become an event" (5). A situation is marked by its focus on orientation and a fleeting sense of passage: a state of affairs that *could* come to matter, but not necessarily so. The "animated and animating suspension" of such a state of affairs shows how that suspension itself is felt in the present, as it lies on the cusp of becoming what we could dub "an event," wherein the designation of something *as* an event would rupture the perpetual impasse that was posed by the situation in the first place. Situations allow themselves to be stretched out over a longer time, where the suspension here is not the same kind of suspense found in the restitution narrative. There, the suspense lies in the decisive event in which a disabling and disruptive event will be restored, creating a longing for resolution. In the situation the sense of suspense lies in what may turn out to become designated as an event in the first place, constituted by its trademark sense of indirection and indecisiveness. Berlant's theory thereby seeks to undermine the way in which fantasies of upward mobility project a promise that, since that promise is lived in the present, does not necessarily come to unfold. What may or may not become recognized as an event remains to be seen, and even when it does become recognized as such, its impact is not predetermined. Berlant delineates the relationship the situation has with genre in the following way:

> As Fredric Jameson would argue, the activity of living within and beyond normative activity gets embedded in form, but I am less interested in the foreclosures of form and more in the ways the activity of

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2 Particularly the work of Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) and *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996).

> being historical finds its genre, which is the same as finding its event. Adjustments to the present are manifest not just in what we conventionally call genre, therefore, but in more explicitly active habits, styles, and modes of responsivity. (20)

The "activity of being historical" finding its genre can be connected to narrative's constituency of a series of actions and events, which constructs a history. Narrative as genre thus "finds it event" as that event becomes historical when told in a narrative. Berlant is keen to point out that adjustments to the present are manifest "not just" in what we could call a genre (like narrative), but also in the habits and styles through which we respond through living in that present. I argue for and delineate a nuance of Berlant's claim. Different genres allow for different styles and modes of responsivity to manifest themselves. Since in the situational narrative events do not necessarily culminate toward a resolution of plot, Berlant distinguishes between their use of the terms "event" and "happening" within situational genres. Happening refers to the narrative's tracking of what may become designated as an event. However, Berlant adds that even when something becomes recognized as an event, "there is no *a priori* consequence, habit, or style of resonance that intensifies the ordinary in a particular way" (80).

Berlant's distancing themselves from the "foreclosures of form" mentioned earlier should not be understood as a distancing of formalism altogether. Elsewhere, referring to Sara Ahmed's *The Promise of Happiness* (2010) and Michael Snediker's *Queer Optimism* (2008), Berlant notes that "*Cruel Optimism* is a more formalist work than either of these projects. Here, optimism manifests in attachments and the desire to sustain them: attachment is a *structure* of relationality" (13). The kind of formalism Berlant is interested in, closely resembling the interest of this study, lies in the formal aspects of "active habits, styles, and modes of responsivity," precisely because their inherent relationality allows us to make legible the ways in which relationships of attachment gain form.

Scholarly work on the relationship between cruel optimism and disability is limited, and it has so far focused on how common promises connected to disability consist of "citizenship, empowerment, community, social action and a route out of, or protection from, poverty" (Runswick-Cole et al. 2015: 163), as well as on the relationship between disabled people and the International Symbol of Access (Fritsch, 2013: 135), where the latter would promise access and participation. These studies elevate cruel optimism's analytical lens in order to study systemic promises of upward mobility that people with disabilities are subjected to, but they lose the focused scope of the

analysis of adjustment to the present in everyday life that Berlant's own work is interested in, on which I also focus.

In what follows, I will not analyze the notion of disruption through a narratological lens emphasizing what events would be disrupting in a story, which would follow the restitution narrative model discussed above. My line of analysis follows Berlant's approach to the extent that the analysis of modes of adjustment to the present through different genres allows me to examine how and where the affective lives of the characters involved become disrupted through the situational narrative of living with disability. In this conceptualization, disruption is thus not understood as a single, larger, rupturing event, but rather as a series of smaller ruptures that occur in relation to attachments to fantasies of the good life via the situational genre.

2. Dissatisfaction: The Affective Tonality of Disability's Situational Narrative

I delineated the situational narrative as concerning a state of affairs characterized by its animated and animating suspension, which produces a sense of the emergence of something in the present that may eventually become an event. In order to examine how situational narratives represent the adjustments to everyday life with disability, I take as my first case study Katharine Weber's novel *Still Life with Monkey*. Weber's novel follows the life of a middle-aged, well-to-do American couple, Duncan and Laura Wheeler, when Duncan becomes a quadriplegic after a car accident. Laura convinces Duncan to get the help of a trained capuchin helper monkey, named Ottoline, as they adjust to their new life with Duncan's disability; hence the novel's title. In contrast with the plot-driven restitution narrative, the novel is not concerned with the fantasy that Duncan's condition will get "better," since any such possibility or prognosis is removed from the outset. Rather, the principal fantasy that the novel is concerned with is the possibility to adjust and come to terms with the situation of living life as a quadriplegic, for Duncan to come to accept his new condition.

In its opening chapter, the novel details a scene depicting Duncan's new situation, as Laura shows one of Duncan's Personal Care Assistants (PCA's), Martha, their garden. The state of the garden is described as follows: "Nothing out there had been touched in four months, except the little patches of grass in front and back which got mowed too short by the indifferent lawn care jockey who came too often and charged too much" (10). This is closely followed by a description of Duncan's reaction:

> He couldn't bear to watch Laura showing Martha the ruined garden. Duncan hated the way he felt like an abandoned child at these moments, left out, spying pathetically on the grown-ups he depended on for everything. How could anyone expect him to get used to living this way? Who would be satisfied, who would think this was enough of a life? (11)

The scene combines Duncan's physical inability to tend to the garden and its poor state with his affective inability to bear Laura showing the garden to Martha, of which he is not a part. What is suspended in this situation is Duncan's condition, which will not improve. The situation's sense of emergence, meanwhile, is proposed through the questions posed in the scene: "How could anyone expect him to get used to living this way?" and "Who would be satisfied, who would think *this* was enough of a life?" The questions are not directly posed by Duncan, however, but by the narrator, making them instances of free indirect speech. Both questions refer to the situation (living *this* way, who would think *this* was enough), and thereby establish the *tone* of the situation.

I.A. Richards posited the concept of tone as the attitude of the speaker to the listener: "He chooses or arranges his words differently as his audience varies, in automatic or deliberate recognition of his relation to them. The tone of his utterance reflects his awareness of this relation, his sense of how he stands towards those he is addressing" (182). The rhetorical tone of the questions does not directly relate Duncan's thoughts but instead establishes the tone of the situation *because* of their inability to be answered in a straightforward fashion, while their referential nature aids in establishing the situation *qua* situation, a new state of affairs that unfolds because Duncan finds it unbearable to have become dependent. In *Ugly Feelings* (2005), Sianne Ngai traces the development of the concept of literary tone and expands on this concept as follows: "It should be clear that by 'tone' I mean less the dramatic 'attitude' adumbrated by the New Critics than a global and hyper-relational concept of feeling that encompasses attitude" (43). Ngai's conception of tone still envelops the notion of a relational attitude but expands it as including what she calls the text's affective bearing, which implies its orientation toward its audience. She emphasizes that the analysis of tone is predominantly concerned with the formal aspects of how we gain an understanding of the work as a "totality," as well as the "holistic matrix of social relations" in which we understand the work (43). Tone therefore implies a sense of speaking referentially of the text or artefact as "whole" or "total" (the tone *of* the text) but at the same time such holism remains conceptual in nature. Ngai goes on to state that "tone is a feeling which is perceived rather than felt and whose

very *nonfeltness* is perceived. There is a sense, then, in which its status as feeling is fundamentally negative, regardless of what the particular quality of affect is" (76). For Ngai, tone conjoins both to the formal aspect of a work with the perception of what is *not* felt, but only perceived, due to its holism. We can speak of the tone of a situation in that a situational narrative combines this holism with the sense of emergence of what may become an event in the state of affairs of which the situation consists.

Several chapters into the novel, the situation Laura and Duncan are in is further established through elaborate descriptions of their new shared everyday life and Duncan's apparent inertia in it:

> When Laura insisted on turning the television off, Duncan would sit in his chair in front of the big front windows in their living room, gazing out at the daily life of Lawrence Street with at least a flicker of interest, which was better than the zombie television stare. Laura had no idea what could possibly hold his attention for so many hours. Their neighbors' activities had never before fascinated Duncan in the nine years they had lived on this block. The comings and goings of the children across the street, almost always herded by their au pair and not their parents, held his attention for a few moments, but sometimes, when Duncan had stared out the window all afternoon, barely answering any of her attempts at conversation with more than a syllable or two, Laura felt herself on the edge of panic. How could this go on? His point exactly. (89)

This passage follows Duncan's different modes of looking, (gazing through the window, staring at the TV) as the object of Laura's own perception is the relationship between Duncan's orientation and his perception. The shift Laura detects and follows thus carries the amount of interest Duncan has in what he is perceiving, to the point of being oriented towards something (the TV) but apparently not perceiving at all (suggested through the zombie stare that accompanies his orientation). If tone is what is perceived rather than felt, and it is the nonfeltness that is perceived, what Laura perceives is the *lack* of any affective bearing in Duncan's perception regardless of his orientation. This is further amplified because, as I.A. Richards posited, tone reflects "the awareness one has towards those he is addressing." Duncan, barely communicating with Laura, thus signals a lack of awareness of, and interest in, the world around him, including Laura herself. In turn, this propels Laura to "the edge of panic," where the perceived lack of affect in someone else is the cause of heightened affect in Laura.

The tone here is determined by juxtaposing two differentiated affective bearings of the situation's characters: one perceived as being void of affect, the other affectively charged *because* of the void perceived in the other. Laura "feeling herself on the edge of panic" becomes, again through free indirect speech, connected to a question: how could this go on? The rhetorical nature of this question, however, suggests it should be read as though implying the presentimental repercussion of a state of affairs where the exact opposite is implied: *this is how things will be forever*. The situation's quiddity is marked by it being an impasse, the seeming impossibility of the situation to effectively change. Laura's state *isn't* panicking, however, but rather being "on the edge" of it. Being on the edge implies a tipping point, as though, in contrast to the dissatisfaction referred to earlier (as not being able to make enough of the situation), to Laura it is a question of the situation possibly becoming "too much" because of the lack of change. The text thereby manifests how the affective tension elicited by the situation Duncan and Laura find themselves in runs parallel to the way situations relate to events. In this situation, affective tension comes close to its cusp but does not culminate as a transition to a different affective state (like elation), which could effectively mark the parallel transfer to a different event, possibly rupturing the situation's impasse.

In both scenes, the posing of rhetorical questions through free indirect speech (who could be satisfied with this life? How could this go on?) sets up the tone of the situation as one of dissatisfaction. Etymologically, satisfaction can be traced back to the Latin *satisfacere* (to make amends), which in turn is a compound of *satis* (enough) and *facere* (to make). With the prefix *dis-*, dissatisfaction connotes not making enough. Dissatisfaction implies the presence of a particular affective tension arc, where this tension is seemingly oriented toward becoming satisfied—the possibility, or promise, of making enough out of a situation. Dissatisfaction's tension arc may therefore initially seem to resemble that of the restitution narrative. But unlike the restitution narrative, dissatisfaction within what is predominantly a *situation*, by contrast, does not imply a progression that is adamantly driven by its plot. In my reading of the scenes above, the tone was established by a supposed lack of change in the situation itself, and a lack of potential for the situation to change. As such, the sense of emergence characteristic for the situational narrative as genre is that the state of affairs *won't* change, that there won't be an even that will rupture the situation back into a plot-driven narrative.

Earlier, I delineated how, in Berlant's account, situations involve the adjustments of habits and styles to the situation. In her study *Looking Away: Phenomenality and Dissatisfaction, Kant to Adorno* (2009), Rei Terada proposes, through a reading of Nietzsche,

that dissatisfaction involves *minding*, the minding of the suffering that one undergoes (120). In *Still Life with Monkey*, the activity of minding becomes the predominant mode of responsivity for Duncan as he adjusts to the rearrangement his home requires. When the Wheelers' home becomes rearranged in order to make space for various devices and objects Duncan will need to use, this is narrated as follows:

> The worst of it for Duncan was the sight of the commode squatting on its rubber-tipped feet on the lovely spalted maple floorboards (he had refinished them himself over a long weekend), which glowed like honey in the late summer sunlight filtering through branches of the overgrown rhododendron outside. His blood pressure had soared within minutes after he rolled in the door. A headache suddenly pin-balled from temple to temple as he looked around his reorganized study. He felt the room growing dark. "They must work hard to make all this shit as ugly as possible!" Duncan exclaimed. (123)

Duncan's perception of the commode on his "lovely spalted maple floorboards" involves a doubled contrast: not only are the lovely floorboards contrasted with the ugly commode, but the arrangement of the room is also contrasted with how Duncan himself once did it. The original arrangement involved a specific pleasing aesthetic perception and sensation (the glowing of the floorboards through the rhododendron) contrasted with the current arrangement. The original arrangement connoted light and warmth, whereas in the new arrangement Duncan feels "the room growing dark." This then culminates in a definitive aesthetic judgement: they must work hard to make "all this shit" as ugly as possible. Although a comparison, "all this shit" does not refer to just the commode but the entire rearrangement of the room. But by comparing it to what is possible to make of the room, the comparison thus involves not two clearly designated objects but two abstract conceptualizations: the whole of the actual reorganization of the room, and all possible arrangements of the room to choose from. Sianne Ngai notes on the form of aesthetic judgements themselves that "Although judgments also have form, style, and a kind of apparitionality (through a 'strange and anomalous' grammar converting evaluations into properties of objects), it is as if the mere fact of being verbal blocks us from recognizing that they are no less 'aesthetic' than the perception of form, a moment stereotypically imagined as silent" (2020: 21) and that "ways of speaking tethered to specific ways of perceiving are as meaningful as the latter—and constitute forms of appearance in their own right, too" (2020: 21–22). I noted how dissatisfaction's etymology connotes not mak-

ing enough, and here this emphasis on *making* is reflected in Duncan's judgement. Duncan's own arrangement of the room was made by himself, with specific attention given to wood choice and the way the light falls on it. The arrangement of the room made by the PCA's, meanwhile, neglects any aesthetic considerations concerning the room's appearance.

In the situational narrative, ruptures take place in the rearrangement of specific forms of adjustments made in everyday life, like the arrangement of a bedroom: the rupture not only between one arrangement of the room and another, but the role that aesthetic considerations could play in such arrangements. As I have read the tone of the situation in *Still Life with Monkey* as being one of dissatisfaction, this allows me to further elucidate different aspects of disruption that now gradually become apparent. If in the restitution narrative, disruption is predominantly understood at the level of event, in the situational narrative of life with disability we can now start to see that disruption occurs at the level of one's mode of responsivity. Since the adjustment of habits and styles necessarily presumes the capacity to adjust from the person whom the adjustment concerns, it is this aspect that becomes emphasized in *Still Life with Monkey*, as Duncan finds his life disrupted by all the things to which he himself does *not* have the ability to adjust anymore.

3. Paratactic Disruptions of the Everyday

Above, a happening was delineated as a "becoming-event," i.e., something that occurs that is *not yet* accorded the status of event but rather something that carries the sense that it *could* become designated an event once it ends up changing the state of affairs of a situation significantly. The rearrangement of Duncan's room may thus be read as a happening, as something with *some* significance, yet not enough to become an event within the narrative structure. Many happenings can thus occur in a series, in turn compromising a situation's state of affairs. The series in turn contributes to constituting the text's tone, which is a mode of address that here was primarily expressed through free indirect discourse. As a narrative is necessarily an account that relates a series of actions and events, it implies that the account is addressed to someone. Judith Butler, in *Giving an Account* (2005) offers a critique of the relationship between narrative and the structure of address:

> I would suggest that the structure of address is not a feature of narrative, one of its many and variable attributes, but an interruption of

> narrative. The moment the story is addressed to someone, it assumes a rhetorical dimension that is not reducible to a narrative function. It presumes that someone, and it seeks to recruit and act upon that someone. Something is being done with language when the account that I give begins: it is invariably interlocutory, ghosted, laden, persuasive, and tactical. It may well seek to communicate a truth, but it can do this, if it can, only by exercising a relational dimension of language. (63)

For Butler, a certain structure of address itself could be a disruptive gesture within the context of narrative. The underlying argument for not subsuming the structure of address as a feature of narrative is that "To hold a person accountable for his or her life in narrative form may even be to require a falsification of that life in order to satisfy the criterion of a certain kind of ethics, one that tends to be break with relationality" (63). As for such a break, they specify it as follows: "we may be preferring the seamlessness of the story to something we might tentatively call the truth of person, a truth that, to a certain degree, for reasons we have already suggested, might well become more clear in moments of interruption, stoppage, open-endedness" (64). Butler's argument has two distinct parts. First, to give an account of oneself in narrative form tends to require coherence in and of the narrative. The various actions and events follow one another in such a fashion that they evoke a sense of the "seamlessness of the story"—of everything fitting neatly together. Yet in the process of creating a seamless story, the person who tells the story might end up (inadvertently) falsifying the given account, as that is what a seamless, coherent narrative demands. Secondly, according to Butler it is the ruptures and stoppages of the structure of address that could clarify what they refer to as "the truth of a person." While Butler's contestations against narrative are primarily ethical in nature, a story's seamlessness or its rupture is also an aesthetic concern. As I previously argued, stories can make us desire to know what happens next in order to reach a satisfactory ending. Stories that do not follow a seamless sequence of actions and events are not, however, void of aesthetic sensibility.

Butler writes of "narrative form" as well as "primary forms of relationality," where the latter possesses the potential to break the seamless flow of the former. As such, it would be inaccurate to say that the disruptions that disrupt narrative forms would be non-relational. Rather, *Still Life with Monkey* traces its own stoppages and interruptions through the interruptions of what were everyday events. In a dialogue that spans three pages, Duncan explains to Laura how the PCA's repeatedly burn or unevenly slice the English muffin he has for breakfast. Although Laura first mocks Duncan ("Oh

no, the horror!" (206)), Duncan presses the issue: "I feel deprived and I get upset, and then I feel guilty, as if I'm being peevish with the PCA's about every little thing, and meanwhile, even when I am fussy, they can't get everything right. I give up asking. I don't care. It doesn't really matter" (206). On the following page, however, Duncan seemingly contradicts himself, saying that he "loved the little details of my life" and that now he is supposed to be the "patient patient," even though he *does* still care about these minute details (207). The point here is not that one statement would be truer than the other. Indeed, it could be easily argued that Duncan's statements are contradictory and incoherent, but this was Butler's point in arguing that a certain structure of address can interrupt narrative; it is no longer seamless. One arguably obvious way of reading this sequence is that something that would be marked as trivial is blown up out of proportion, hence Laura's initially mocking reaction. But another way of reading this sequence is that the concern Duncan shows with "being peevish about every little thing" points to the nature of the disruption taking place. The disruption, then, is not *just* the inability to prepare the English muffin the way Duncan wants to. It also concerns a rupture in the seamlessness of preparing it, which involves the tone the text consequently takes. Either Duncan cares and addresses the "little details," or he plays the "patient patient."

The crispness of the English muffin that Duncan addresses over these three pages may be read as *pars pro toto*, where the apparent minutiae of everyday life need to be addressed in order to begin the larger project of addressing not just that one's life has been disrupted by an accident, but rather the stream of disruptions that continue to ripple throughout everyday life. Adjacent to the seamlessness that narrative could provide when it gains coherence, *Still Life with Monkey* proposes its own aesthetic theory at the beginning of the novel, around the concept of *sprezzatura*.[3] The novel elucidates *sprezzatura* as follows:

> There was a word for this false carelessness, this studied nonchalance, Laura had told Duncan the first time he admitted to her this chronic habit of his, when they had been together for about a month. When he revealed the way he concealed his efforts because he wanted everyone to believe that his brilliant work and accomplishments flowed naturally from a wellspring of genius, she had nodded and simply replied, *sprezzatura*. He didn't know there was a word for this, that it was not

3 The concept was originally introduced by the Italian Renaissance author Baldassare Castiglione in his *The Book of the Courtier* ly introduced by the Italian Renaissan(2004 ([1528]).

> solely his invention and experience. When he looked it up, Duncan discovered that Laura was more than exactly right. *Sprezzatura* can also describe a form of defensive irony, the disguising behind a mask of apparent indifference what one really desires, feels, thinks, or intends. That too. (15–16)

Sprezzatura, the novel tells us, involves a "studied nonchalance," where one's actions and achievements may appear effortless, but in fact are rooted in the sustained practice and/or study of particular acts or gestures. But it is also defined as an apparent indifference that conceals one's actual, underlying state. What both of these definitions share is that they involve a form of concealment. Where they differ is how they conceptualize this concealment. In the first definition, the thing concealed (the practice) is not something that could be retrieved because the practice has been integrated into the practice of the action: the effort that has given rise to the effortlessness of a gesture. In the second instance concerning "defensive irony," however, whatever is concealed lays behind a mask, suggesting accessibility if the mask were to be removed.

In his monograph on *sprezzatura*, the Italian aesthetician Paolo D'Angelo writes on *sprezzatura* that "it is etymologically connected with disregard and heedlessness, we should bear in mind expressions such as "heedless of danger": one is heedless of art, ability, and ostentation, just as she is heedless of a dangerous situation, that is, she is not ignoring the situation but preventing it from making her behave rigidly or with apprehension" (14).

In my reading of *Still Life with Monkey*, I have sought to trace how efforts concerning adjusting to modes of everyday life not only required *more* effort but also how this increase in effort itself became one of the narrative's focal points. Rather than possessing the ability to afford heedlessness, different aesthetic activities, from the proper arrangement of a room to the right preparation of an English muffin, became something to be heeded by Duncan. Thus, rather than concealing effort in order to do everyday activities in a seamless manner, the disruptions of everyday activities come to emphasize the effort now needed not only to adjust to Duncan's new situation but also the continuous awareness of adjustment. If successful *sprezzatura* involves the concealment and integration of the effort put into one's heedlessness of a situation, *Still Life with Monkey* explores what happens when the nature of effort becomes the focal point of everyday living.

One of the novel's final chapters consists of a suicide letter Duncan has written for Laura. Although various things are addressed in the letter, a full page and a half is dedicated to all the things Duncan misses, from the ability to scratch his butt to being

able to plan a yoga class and then not attend (266). As these experiences of the everyday change due to Duncan's inability to perform these actions, or that he has come to rely on others to perform them, the effortlessness and heedlessness with which Duncan lived his life become enlarged and emphasized. This emphasis becomes a concern *for* form. Earlier, I argued for narrative's incapability to mediate and represent the whole of experience of life with disability. By default, then, Duncan's list is inexhaustible; it could go on indefinitely. The fact that there is a list implies that the list both has a form and that this form itself metonymically suggests its inexhaustibility. Here is an excerpt from the list:

> I miss being spontaneous in a million ways. I miss cooking. I miss working in the garden. I miss yoga even though I hardly ever went to the yoga classes I signed up for. I miss signing up for yoga classes and not going to them. I miss riding on trains and planes. I miss shifting gears while accelerating, feeling the gears engage as I shift the stick hard into the top gear and ease off the clutch, timing it perfectly to mesh with the surge of power as I step on the gas. I miss stepping on the gas. I miss getting dressed. I miss getting undressed. I miss turning over in bed. I miss using my hands. (266)

There is no immediately clear connection to the activities mentioned in this list. Some of them refer to the absence of bodily ability, but not all of them. As the list goes on beyond this segment, the examples become even more disparate and differentiated. Rather than reading this list as attempting to represent all the experiences Duncan misses, I argue that this could be better read as a form of parataxis. Literary scholar Michelle Dicinoski offers a concise and clear delineation: "In paratactic structures, component parts—independent clauses of a sentence, for example, or sections of a book—are placed side by side with little or no overt linkage. Juxtaposed, the parts form a whole, but the relationships among the different parts are often unclear" (100). Stanley Fish describes parataxis as "Rather than indicating the logical progression of thought, connectives such as 'thus' and 'so' are just place markers; 'but' and 'and' are the words that carry the experience forward, the first signaling a thought going in a new direction, the second saying 'and, oh, this has just occurred to me.'" (62). What both of these quotes make clear is that parataxis is founded on the unclarity of those activities or items it connects by putting them side by side—there is a certain triviality or arbitrariness to them. As Dicinoski proposes, parts may form a whole since a list like Duncan has a definitive beginning and end. Simultaneously, the list itself does

not necessarily contain all of the things that Duncan misses. The importance of the paratactic form is that it denies a grammatical arrangement that would indicate a hierarchy between activities.

Disruption, as I have argued, is not only a disabling event that takes place on the level of the structure of the story. Instead, different forms of disruption continually happen in adjusting to life after a disabling event. *Still Life with Monkey*'s situational narrative is thus far from a seamless narrative. Rather than strictly following the (hierarchical) linearity of the restitution narrative, the novel follows a paratactic (or horizontal) arrangement of happenings in its modes of responsivity to the everyday, whereby what happening matters, and to what degree, remains quite unclear due to the paratactic arrangement of this everyday life.

I can now more clearly distinguish the different kinds of disruption that I have delineated in my reading of *Still Life with Monkey*. Disruption occurs at the level of the mediation of experience through narrative. While the whole of experience cannot be mediated by narrative, narratives carry a sense of seamlessness, of a logical or linear sequence of actions and events. In *Still Life with Monkey*'s situational narrative, linearity is displaced by parataxis, as a seemingly trivial collection of happenings that stand side by side. The linear progression of the restitution narrative is disrupted by a form that manifests a horizontal order of representation that subsequently disrupts the prioritization of happenings and events, canceling the possibility of the restitution narrative's hierarchical ordering toward a seamlessly structured plot.

The paratactic nature of all the examples given is constituted by parataxis' *lack* of clarity: there is no hierarchy of importance between the proper preparation of an English muffin and the inability to work in the garden. But while the interruption of these events is trivial insofar as they could be replaced by another example, they are concurrently relevant in that the very disruption of such everyday activities has been fundamentally changed in everyday life, allowing for the genre of the situation to emerge, and causing these activities to stand side by side in a horizontal fashion. From the defilement of the arrangement of a room to the inadequate preparation of food, my reading of *Still Life with Monkey* emphasizes both the evaluative aspects and the sensibility concerning the amount of effort any disruptive event and action costs.

4. A Poetics of Permutability: Attempt, Effort, and Sensible Form

In my critique of the genre of the restitution narrative, I have been careful not to *fully* oppose it to the situation, since situations too still possess a degree of sequential

ordering of actions and happenings. Hence my use of the term *situational narrative*, to convey that, to a certain extent, the linear arrangement of action and events of which any narrative consists still applies to what we designate as situations.

The question that I now turn to pursue pertains to the way in which genre and adjustment to the present coalesce when the genre moves on from narrative altogether to lyric poetry. A different genre from narrative, lyric poetry offers different affordances in the mediation of disability's rupture from narrative. The lyric poem, however, is not merely the form through which these habits and styles in the adjustment to the present are represented (as though they are simply its "contents"). Such a conceptualization of form is explained by literary scholar Angela Leighton as follows: "The question 'what is outside or what is inside a form?' perfectly captures the way that form is both a container and a deflector. Imagined visually, it looks two ways: to the shape it keeps in and the shape it keeps out" (16). The inside/outside conceptualization of form connotes the idea of form as a "container" of its contents, whereas the "deflector" aspect of form concerns how the form of an object marks its boundaries from other objects. Thinking of form in terms of it being a container of experience is problematic because it suggests that its contents could then be simply transposed into another form. Building on this, I argue that we cannot separate the form of address from whatever it is that is addressed.

Parallel to the form-content question as it pertains to genre runs the form-content question concerning appearance. As I argued in my reading of *Still Life with Monkey*, appearances in relation to disability become concerned with the effort of appearance's visibility and concealment. It became clear that appearance itself does not disappear in the mastery of a gesture through rigorous effort; rather, the appearance of *effortlessness*, as the concept of *sprezzatura* suggests, is what is manifested. Coming back to Berlant's claim that the activity of the historical present finding its genre is the same as it finding its event, appearances are not divorced from the events of a particular genre but on the contrary, gain form *through* the genre that manifests their appearance.

The poetry collection *Veil and Burn* (2008) by American poet Laurie Clements Lambeth shows particular interest in this inter-formal relationship. In an essay included in *Beauty is a Verb: The New Poetry of Disability* (2011), Lambeth, who has multiple sclerosis, delineates how her early symptoms manifested themselves: "The outlines between things blurred. Unable to detect the difference between my skin and fabric, my thumb and a buttonhole, my hair and the elastic I stretched to contain it, I slipped into a dimension where there was little distinction between the outside world and the inner contours of my own body" (174). And that "It was this way that MS entered my poetry—not in subject, but in the ways in which it altered my body's place in the

world, as though the outline of what I could call 'me' was a broken line, permeable and wavering, and what was inside that perimeter was a shimmering transparency, at once me and not me" (175). Here we find an interest in form through the notion of the outline—the separation between body and world. Yet the outline is not described as a solidified, stable form but on the contrary, as permeable and wavering, a broken line. And while she on the same page refers to the "fluidity" of this outline, this outline still marks the "inside of a parameter," which in turn is a "shimmering transparency, at once me and not me" (175). In Lambeth's words, we seemingly find both the notion of the container (the bodily outline as a parameter of the self), and that of the deflector: the bodily form's boundary with the world. Yet the container is a container that spills over, the deflector an unsteady outline of the body's variable contours. There is a commitment to form in Lambeth's formulations, but that commitment is specifically focused on the potential of form's permutability, its wavering and fluid nature. Concomitant to this commitment to form is the attention given to appearance. In the first quote, there is the emphasis of dressing the body (and the indistinctness between dress and body) and the "shimmering transparency" that the unsteady outline of the body demarcates. The combination of the permeable form and the wavering transparency suggests a conceptualization that imagines the constitutive principle of the relationship between form and self to be their interdependent unsteadiness.

The question Lambeth's poetics consequently poses is how we may apprehend an appearance when its very foundation is its instability. *Veil and Burn* alternates its poems with reflective vignettes, called fragments. In the *Gauze Fragment*, Lambeth reflects on her deteriorating eyesight and shows where the collection's title came from: "In Hollywood's golden age, the camera was often veiled by a thin piece of fabric to dissolve any harsh features or wrinkles in close-ups. The cameraman burned cigarette holes into the fabric to bring the eyes to sparkle. I have a feeling that my vision is something between the veil and the burn, or that it alternates between the two" (39). The constellation of the employed metaphor consists of three separate elements: the camera, the veil put over the camera to "dissolve any harsh features," and finally the burns made in the veil to make the eyes sparkle of the actors on screen. If the common metaphor (or metonymy) for the eye would be the camera itself, Lambeth equates her vision as either the veil *or* the burn that veils the camera, or as alternating between them. Thus, her vision is that which veils the vision of the camera, which would dissolve the harsh features of the people seen, or the burns, which bring out the sparkle.

Similar to the conceptualization of her protean bodily outline, Lambeth imagines her deteriorating vision as that which *enhances*, and concurrently manipulates, the

appearances on the screen as recorded by the camera. Both this fragment and the collection's title refer to the veil and the burn, the veil draped over the camera and the burns burned into the veil. But simultaneously *veil* and *burn* are also verbs. Something is being veiled just as something burns, or that thing is being burned into. Even if the veil and the burn as nouns enhance the image perceived when draped over the camera, Lambeth's vision is concurrently what does the veiling and what is burning into whatever it perceives.

Lambeth's foundation of the conceptualization of both her body and vision is constituted by the unsteadiness and deterioration of bodily impairment. As briefly mentioned in the introductory chapter, Sharon Snyder and David Mitchell have proposed a cultural model of disability with a reading of impairment that involves both the encountering of environmental obstacles *and* the socially mediated difference of embodied difference itself (2006: 10). To think through impairment as itself being socially mediated is relevant to Lambeth's poetry because, as my reading of her poetics shows, she is specifically interested in exploring the permutable, wavering nature of her own body through lyric. Rather than opting for either impairment or disability as her poetic principle, however, I read her poetics as one where the term *permutability* is more fitting. Permutability is a compound of *permutation* and *ability*. The first word can be traced back to the Latin *permutationem* (a change, alteration, or revolution), whereas ability can be traced back to *habilis* (that which is easy to manage or handle) and *habilitatem* (an aptitude or suitability). Permutability, then, connotes the continuous change (or revolution) in and of one's aptitude and what needs to be "handled." Since permutability connotes the continuous changeability of form, the notion of form as "container" (where the form could change, but the "content" would stay the same), is challenged.

Philosopher Catherine Malabou has offered the following astute critique of this delineation of form:

> I do not believe that the problem of the limit of metamorphoses as traditionally conceived derives from the fact that they [metamorphoses] present themselves as the journey from one form to another. It is not form that is the problem; it's the fact that form can be thought separately from the nature of the being that transforms itself. The fact that form is presented as skin, vestment or finery, and that one can always leave without an alteration in what is essential ... As if, in the evening, form could be left hanging like a garment on the chair of being or essence. (17)

Malabou dismisses the idea that metamorphosis could take place where a change in form would be unaccompanied without a concurrent change in the "being" or "essence" of whatever underwent that metamorphosis. As the last line indicates, the notion that form would be only a garment is what needs to be contested. If we bring Malabou into conversation with Lambeth, what is striking is that Malabou too uses examples we often associate with form, that which is sensible and located on the surface of the body: skin, vestment, and finery. The sensible appearance of the surface is, however, not superficial; the point is that it is not the only aspect that changes, not that it is irrelevant. In *Veil and Burn*'s second poem, entitled *Symptoms*, Lambeth explores this relationship between dress and body:

> I'll try to tell you how it feels: girdle
> my grandmother wore, tight-laced corset
> worn by her mother in Wales, but it seldom slips
> from my ribcage. No hooks or laces, only
>
> spaces of remission, then relapse,
> a trip to the ancient clothes again:
> crinolines, skirts grazing ankles, long
> satin embroidered sleeves that rub and pull
>
> naked skin, saying, *now and then you must*
> *try to feel through this, and this*. All that fabric
> wound around torso, legs, the dresses
> and sheets binding to keep me in
>
> bed. *The cure is rest*, they tell me. Dizzy,
> drunk when I haven't drunk, I'm drawn
> to the wall to prop me. I've been known to sport
> a cane, per the fashion, to smooth the gait.
>
> Fix my mouth in a loose pout when speech
> eludes its muscles, tired, stiff as the garments
> that hold me. On occasion, they'll fall
> to reveal this body, a window of cellophane
>
> wrapping my limbs, a ring for each finger. (3)

In this poem, the genre (lyric) finds its event in that of the *attempt*. For the first sentence announces the speaker's intention: she will *try* to tell "you" (which may be us, the readers of the poem, or an unnamed addressee) "how it feels." Rather than simply telling us, the intention of *trying* to tell us, to attempt it, is explicated. In the third stanza, the prosopopoeia of the clothes the speaker wears, too, tell her that she should *try* to feel through their fabric. Echoing my reading of *sprezzatura* earlier, there is an emphasis on effort as being pivotal in the way in which the speaker relates both *to* her body and how she relates her body *in* the poem to her addressee. Thus, there are different kinds of attempt and effort involved here. The speaker's attempt to convey "how it feels" can be differentiated from the attempt of the clothing to bind the speaker's body and ask her to try and feel through them. This is still different from the muscles holding the body together, and in particular the speaker's mouth (which she "fixes" in the last stanza), through which the speaker tries to speak. In a mimetic gesture, the speaker attempts to implicate the reader in her own attempt to convey "how it feels" (where we are not privy to what "it" refers to) through requiring the reader's own effort in reading or listening to the poem and make sense of it. Thus, the effort required from the reader studying the poem is not that of the speaker, since the poem relates the speaker's attempt to relate how it feels, implicating the reader in turn to *try* to relate to what it is the speaker attempts to convey. Rather than referring to a particular emotion with the phrase "how it feels," the speaker seeks to communicate affective conditions concerning her body (the fixing of it, the binding of it, holding it together) precisely through this nesting of effort and attempt within the poem.

It might be tempting, given the poem's title, to read the speaker's efforts as wanting to convey the bodily symptoms of MS. The word symptom can be traced back to its Greek roots in *symptoma*, a happening or accident, and its stem *sympiptein*, to fall or coincide together. Just as the speaker tells us that she will try to tell us how it feels, coincidentally, the speaker's clothing tells her to "feel *through* this." In the last stanza we learn that what the speaker would feel through her clothing, namely her own body, is "a window of cellophane wrapping my limbs." The clothing that covers the speaker's body therefore covers a body which is itself a window, suggesting a framed opening that admits light, evocative of translucence. The transparency that a window of cellophane suggests is contrasted with the material fact that this cellophane window is wrapping her limbs—which of course refers to the speaker's own body as well. The body is, then, translucent and opaque simultaneously, both the frame and the object framed. As the speaker's body is both formed and evocative of being transparent, this in turn is done through the lyrical form itself, allowing these different conceptualizations to stand next to each other.

In *Forms of Poetic Attention* (2020), literary scholar Lucy Alford proposes that "In poetic contemplation, the object of attention is composed as present before us by the formal object that is the poem. Here the formal and semantic objects are perhaps the most in sync, as the one act of attention runs parallel to the other. The mirroring of direct (formal) and imagined (representational) perception causes the gap between the two to narrow nearly to the point of immediacy" (57). While the poem's formal structure is present to us as readers, it needs to be read in order for the representational objects of what the poem relates to us to be conveyed. In this case, what the speaker attempts to relate is the experience of her bodily condition, which, like the poem itself, involves at once both a semantic and formal object. The body as semantic, representational object (as that which is dressed and bound, but concurrently described as a window of cellophane that wraps the limbs in turn) informs our semantic conception of the body's formal materiality: as what needs to be dressed but simultaneously dresses itself. Thus the "gap between the two"—the semantic and formal objects—that a poem relates is here to be understood as being mirrored in what this poem itself both addresses and is, while simultaneously establishing the interdependence of the semantic and formal dimensions of the body represented both *in* and *as* poem, proposing how the two are inescapably intertwined.

The poem succeeds in conjoining the speaker's effort to relate "how it feels" with the reader's effort to understand the speaker's effort in turn. Contrasting the effortful attempt with which the speaker's attempt to "tell us how it feels," is the ease with which the speaker relates her appearance to the reader through its descriptions and stress on the appearance and garments the speaker wears. The third stanza relates the speaker's appearance with cool confidence: "I've been known to sport a cane, per the fashion, to smooth the gait." And "Dizzy, drunk when I haven't drunk, I'm drawn to the wall to prop me." In both sentences, what could have been related as a matter of functional and bodily attempt and effort, the speaker here endows her movement and appearance with particular aesthetic qualities. The cane is not related as an instrument of support or prosthesis, since the verb *sporting* implies the active intent on the speaker's behalf to display the cane, turning it into an aesthetic accessory with the aim of manifesting a smoother way of moving. The speaker drunkenly-but-not-drunk being drawn to the wall to prop herself, rather than connoting the more serious implication of the speaker being unable to balance her body, suggests a theatricality in and of her movement.

In juxtaposition to the effort of the clothing and muscles that hold the speaker's body together, the bodily appearance of the speaker is related as a matter of fashion and aesthetic effect. Considering Lambeth's earlier statement about her vision being

both the veil (which diminishes harsh features) and the burn (which brings out the sparkle), the speaker through these phrases moves to conjure her appearance in the reader's imagination as one where the supposed "harsh features" of her movement and appearance instead become evocative of being fashionable and worthy of capturing the reader's visual imagination. But this is not all the poem has to tell us about appearance. In the second stanza, the speaker relates some of the clothing that she wears. What is noticeable is that the mentioned garments all cover up the speaker's body. Crinolines (structured petticoats that hold out a skirt), the skirts grazing ankles, and the sleeves that cover up the speaker's arm, all cover up and bind the speaker's body. The juxtaposition of effort and appearance should not be understood as the direct opposition of those terms. Rather, in continuation of my reading of *Still Life with Monkey*, to display one's appearance requires a degree of effort, and that effort can itself come to have an appearance through gaining form. Thus the phrase "sporting a cane" cleverly shifts the image of the disabled body relying on the cane for support (a predominantly functionalist image), to the body that supposedly chooses to appear in a particular way of its own volition. As I argued in my reading of *Still Life with Monkey*, *sprezzatura* connotes the concealment of effort, bringing about a display of effortlessness. Similarly, the phrase "sporting a cane" emphasizes the speaker's choice on the use of the cane, while the reader may wonder whether the cane is also necessary.

Italian philosopher Barbara Carnevali, in her monograph *Social Appearances: A Philosophy of Display and Prestige* (2020), has written on appearance that

> Appearance is basically a fabric caught between two conflicting, equally powerful impulses: displaying versus concealing, public versus private, vanity versus shame and *decoration* versus *decorum*. Whatever displays also conceals; whatever seeks to cover up is often precisely what exposes and highlights: a veil over a face, the strands of hair combed over a bald spot, or the blushing and stammering of someone who is intimated, all end up calling attention to exactly what they seek to conceal. (23)

Carnevali offers several oppositions, but the quotation starts with the metaphor of appearance as a "fabric caught between two impulses." The metaphor is not trivial because fabric is itself what is on the surface and sensible. Thus, for Carnevali, the conflict between the pairs of powerful impulses she contrasts is itself made sensible by taking place on those surfaces that are sensible to others. Through this sensibility, appearance becomes a medium of communication:

> The aesthetic dimension of communication lies in this *irreducibility of the medium*, from which social philosophy should also draw its relations between form and content. Compared to the romantic conception of expression, the representative view breaks the immediate communicative relationship, inverting its principle and logical order, so that it is not intention that makes use of the medium (as subordinate and derivative instrument) but rather the mediation itself that makes communication possible: mediation incorporates internally, as it intrinsic possibility, the principle of noncorrespondence that the philosophy of the 1960s was fond of defining as "difference". (29)

Coming back to Carnevali's statement above regarding concealment, we can now understand a conception of concealment as non-intentional, which is relevant to the argument I am making regarding disruption. In my reading of Butler, I argued how their critique of narrative as a mode of address rests primarily on the supposed seamlessness that a story can convey in the act of giving an account. This seamlessness is itself then considered valuable, which for Butler's was motivation to argue for the value of interruptions and stoppages in narrative as tentatively signaling "the truth of a person." The structure of Carnevali's argument follows a similar reasoning. For Carnevali, the non-intenional reading of appearance and concealment rests on the "irreducibility of the medium," by which she means that concealment, too, is susceptible to being sensed precisely because when we sense concealment it is still a matter of sensible appearance. Thus, the sporting of a cane, the drunkenly prop against the wall, might be initially understood as intentional gestures in order to conceal something, but this concealment is sensible through the *appearance of* the concealment itself—we can sense something is concealed from us.

In my conception of disruption, disruption is to be understood in a similar vein as Carnevali's fabric. On the one hand, there is the way in which one wishes to appear or display oneself (and the effort this takes), and on the other, the actual sensible form that results from the effort and attempt to appear in a particular manner. But it is this sensible form, following Carnevali, that is mediated to us. It is important to emphasize that any "intentionality" is itself *mediated* within what is made sensible through a particular form, and which we sensibly perceive as what is being disrupted. My conception of disruption is therefore less interested in the notion of the supposed "success" of an appearance, since this would reify an intentionalist stance, and instead relays the focus on the ways in which disruption-as-form is made sensible via different representational genres.

I now want to come back to Berlant's argument that the adjustment to one's situation (or historical present) does not only manifest in genre but also through the habits, styles, and modes of responsivity to that situation. It becomes clear that different genres afford different modes of responsivity. The situational narrative of *Still Life With Monkey* positioned Duncan as becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the situation he was in and his inability to continue and adjust his habits before his accident. In this case the use of the genre of narrative itself necessitates the narration of adjustment to one's situation. Concurrently, in my reading of the novel, one would also still be able to make a clear distinction between disability and impairment as conceived through the social model. Duncan's quadriplegic condition as impairment can then be separated from all the things that disable him in the situational narrative, like the inability to prepare his muffin the way he prefers it. As I showed earlier, the cultural model by contrast understands impairment, too, as socially mediated difference. In a further exploration of the cultural model, sociologist Anne Waldschmidt has proposed that we should therefore also understand our conception of impairment as an effect of cultural mediation and discourse (2017: 24 in *Culture—Theory—Disability*). I would like to take this argument one step further. When the speaker in *Symptoms* imagines her body both as what needs to be held together by her garments *and* as a window of cellophane that wraps her own limbs, the speaker proposes a different conception of the body, which rests, as I have argued, on the permutability that Lambeth's lyric makes possible.

5. Enunciation Impaired: Epideictic Events and Poetic Power

In *Symptoms*, the speaker conceptualized her body as what is on the edge of the lack or loss of containment and form. Parallel to this lies the speaker's explication of the attempt to try to tell us how "it" feels, where my reading argued that this "it" refers to both the body's simultaneous containment and the loss of that containment. If narrative by definition represents a series of actions as events, the lyric poem can also do those things. But it is concurrently an event itself. Jonathan Culler writes how lyric attempts "to be itself an event rather than the representation of an event" and that, in Aristotle's conception of mimesis, lyric was not included because it was "considered a speech event, *epideixis*, rather than a representation of action" (2015: 35). Culler's claim does not refute the formalist model of reading a poem with a fictional speaker in which an audience overhears the speaker's address to an addressee (also

called triangulated address).[4] Culler, building on work by Barbara Cassin,[5] proposes that "Despite the plurivocity of the term *performance* in both English and French, 'performance' is doubtless the best translation of *epideixis*: discourse conceived as an act, aiming to persuade, move and innovate" (130).

When the speaker in *Symptoms* attempted to *try* to tell her addressee "how it feels," the event of it *being* an attempt is constituent of succeeding in bringing about what it describes, precisely because we as readers become implicated in the attempt. The point is not, then, as Girard Genette has maintained, that lyric is ultimately susceptible to being understood as mimetic representation (1992: 32). Rather, even if lyric has representational aspects, it concurrently is epideictic—an event itself.

In the final poem that I now turn to, bearing the humorous title *Ode to the Upper Lip*, the speaker invokes the epideictic figure of the apostrophe:

> O delicate and subtle row,
> o lines that grow downward,
> spiny fence stakes every one,
> forgive me your uprooting,
> o moustache:
> equivalent to an adolescent boy's
> tender growth, fuzz
> too rampant for beauty. (31)

This opening stanza immediately sets up a dramatic relationship between the speaker and her own body through the speaker's address. The speaker's facial hair, described as "rampant," is what requires "uprooting" for beauty's sake, causing the speaker to apologize. The stanza's first three lines all offer figurative and hyperbolic descriptions (delicate and subtle row, lines that grow downward, spiny fence stakes) before the sixth line apostrophically puts a name to what the speaker has been describing (and to which her apology is directed), namely her moustache. As Culler points out, the figure of the apostrophe is often connected to the notion of an intense feeling, causing the speaker in question to break out lyrically. But why does an impassioned speaker turn to apostrophe? Culler's reply is that "to apostrophize is to will a state of affairs,"

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4 This model, as Northrop Frye delineated it, supposes that the poet "turns his back to his listeners, in order to address something which the audience then 'overhears'" (2000: 250 [1957]).

5 See "La performance avant le performative, ou la troisième dimension du langage," in *Genèse de l'acte de parole*, ed. Cassin and Carlos Levy (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 122–128.

whereby inanimate objects may be bound to the speaker's desire (215). Culler goes on to argue that apostrophe invokes the object addressed to act or not act in a certain way, relying not on the speaker's passionate intensity but rather on "the possibility of magical transformation" (216).

The provocative twist in the poem at hand is that it turns this apostrophic logic around. Rather than being either inanimate or animate, the speaker's apostrophizing personifies the moustache as inanimate receiver of the apostrophe, but the moustache is itself *already* animate, since it grows on the speaker's body. The possibility of a magical transformation takes place through the moustache's growth; what the apostrophe instead does is address this transformation. Moreover, the growth is not willed by the speaker. On the contrary, the removal of the growth is that for which the speaker is apologizing. As such, the moustache's growth is considered rampant and unruly. The poem *does* bend the moustache to its desire, however, by employing it as a recipient of the speaker's apology. This apostrophe's attempt to will a state of affairs involves turning the moustache into its recipient. The poem's second stanza continues:

> Dissolved, camouflaged, cut,
> yanked, tweezed in a desperate hour,
> exhumed, weeded, mown.
> O how you suffer. Unwelcome, you return. (31)

The rich variations of verbs used to refer to hair removal are not only in keeping with apostrophe's hyperbolic nature but also build up to the last line, the suffering of the moustache itself. We can of course ask *how* the moustache itself could suffer since it is a part of the speaker's body. As Barbara Johnson has noted, "Apostrophe is … both direct and indirect: based etymologically on the notion of turning aside, of digressing from straight speech, it manipulates the I/Thou structure of *direct* address in an indirect, fictionalized way. The absent, dead, or inanimate entity addressed is thereby made present, animate, and anthropomorphic" (1986: 30). What the various recipients of the apostrophe proposed by Johnson share is their lack of animation; they are all inanimate. This notion of the apostrophic recipient becomes disrupted in Lambeth's poem precisely because the speaker addresses something that is *already* animated. Similar to *Symptoms*, *Ode* mirrors this disruption of lyrical convention in the representational aspects of the poem because the moustache's growth too is disrupted in the poem. As the first stanza already indicated, the moustache's removal is inescapably bound to the speaker's beauty. The poem then introduces Irena, who we can deduce to be a beautician tasked with the removal of the speaker's wanton hair:

> O moustache, if it were the fashion,
> I would cultivate and twist your ends,
> eager to see (and feel!) how long
> you'd grow, how you'd curl.
> But now I must deny you.
> Irena hands me the mirror.
>
> *A little red now, but ... you know,*
> she says, smoothing on a lavender
> shimmer, *beauty hurts.* (32)

The speaker here shifts from being the voice who's apostrophically addressing the moustache to becoming an actor in the situation who is handed the mirror. In the last stanza, while not explicated, it is suggested that it is Irena who is now addressing the speaker through prosopopoeia, not the moustache. In fact, the moustache has completely disappeared, as the "little red" refers to the speaker's waxed upper lip, the part of the body where the moustache once was.

The poem's animated (and subsequently removed) recipient of the speaker's apostrophe therefore invites two different readings of disruption. From one perspective, the moustache's animated perpetual growth is what disrupted the speaker's beauty, provoking its removal. On the other hand, it is the growth itself that is disrupted by its removal that the speaker laments. This duality is mirrored (and ultimately resolved) in the poem. For while the speaker's apostrophic address animates an already animated object, the speaker, asserting to the moustache, "But now I must deny you," effectively nullifies the apostrophic address with this denial, as by the end of the poem, the addressed object, and with it, the apostrophic enunciation, have been removed altogether.

What connects both of Lambeth's poems is their shared concern for containment, appearance, and the sensible form of the epideictic event. I connected this to the notion of permutability, which concerns the continuous change of what needs to be handled in Lambeth's poems—the body. One may be inclined to assume that the final poem does not explicitly address disability, but *Ode* invokes rampant and unruly hair growth, metonymically connected to disability through its shared *lack* of restraint and the need for containment of her body. *Symptoms*, meanwhile, connects the explication of the attempt and the effort needed to relate bodily experience through the lyric to the effort that living with that body itself requires. The disruptive affordance disability offers lyric poetry, thus points not to the *effect* that a poem has (which is

often considered in terms of successful or unsuccessful), but to the effort required to enunciate or recite poetry in the first place. Culler's observation that "The 'O' of apostrophic address connects mouth and event" (223), shows that *a* mouth is always needed to invoke apostrophe, and while prosopopoeia often attributes mouths to objects that have none, lyric theory has not yet carefully considered the effort of the mouth required to invoke the apostrophic event, which my readings of Lambeth's poems emphasize.

What differentiates narrative from lyric, according to Culler, is that the telling of a narrative necessarily refers to past events, while the lyrical enunciation always occurs in the present time, therefore making itself an event (226). This ability to evoke the "now" of lyrical time rests on the poet's power to enunciate. As Barbara Johnson states, "The poetic performance suggests not that the poet is more intense than other people, but actually that he says less. The complete thought he utters is not 'X is Y', but 'I invoke X'. The problem of poetic authority does not depend on what the poet says but on his capacity to *call*" (2008: 8–9). Like Culler, Johnson refutes the notion of the impassioned poet who breaks out in apostrophe to release and express her feelings, though she does relate a different aspect: that of the poet's *capacity* to call. Culler similarly speaks of poetic power: "If one major effect of lyric address is the replacement of a narrative temporality with temporality of the poetic event, this contributes to what is perhaps its most important effect, the evocation of poetic power" (229). Poetic power, according to Culler, involves the poet's vatic ability to address, for example, the sun, winds, or their own body; to will a state of affairs that involves the apostrophic addressee. Poetic power connects this capacity of the poet to call with the effects that call can have. Examining the limits of poetic power, Culler offers a reading of a poem in which the poet commands a river to rise, then stop (both of which have no effect) and finally to "not turn back," to which the river evidently concedes. Culler consequently reads poetic power as the poem's power to effectuate a state of affairs, which can be taken into doubt—not all poem's succeed in what they say they (will) do.

What this and many analyses of lyric poems have in common is that they focus on the apostrophic *effect* of the poem through which the addressee becomes animated, but implicitly tend to take for granted the poet's *capacity* to enunciate the poem in the first place. Literary scholar Frans-Willem Korsten notes: "To Culler, the 'self' is central, both as the one who calls the things into being that it addresses and as the one who, simultaneously, calls itself into being" (192). Korsten's concern lies with the inherent relationality of apostrophic address (between speaker and addressee) on which it is constituted, and that this relationality suggests that the speaker, through

this capacity to address, therefore also calls themselves into being *as* speaker. This further elucidates Culler's claim that the apostrophe connects mouth *and* event since the result of this connection is that a "self," or speaker, is constituted through the poetic call.

In *Mood and Trope: The Rhetoric and Poetics of Affect* (2020), John Brenkman poses that "Modern criticism has responded to the paradoxes of the lyric I with approximate, largely inadequate distinctions such as empirical self and poetic self, biographical self and persona, poet and speaker, and so on. Such distinctions beg the question of the relation of the poet to the speaker, the person to the persona, and so on" (91). Such a distinction between poet and speaker, I argue, should also concern the study of the relationship between the capacity of the speaker's body and how this capacity constitutes the figure of the rhetorically effective, enunciating poet. The poems I have read concern the poet's relationship to her body, including the capacity to "try to tell how it feels"—thereby connecting the poet's power to effectuate an external state of affairs with the bodily capacity to speak.

Reading *Symptoms*, I emphasized the effort required from the poet to enunciate through elucidating lyrical address as attempt ("let me *try* to tell you how it feels"). While any state of affairs willed by apostrophic address may fail to effectuate, by displacing the inherent assumption of the success of the power to address with this explication that the poet is *trying* to enunciate rather than simply enunciating, the poem paradoxically cannot but succeed *as* mode of address (because it is addressed nonetheless). Meanwhile, it thereby offers us the understanding that the power to enunciate itself should not be taken for granted. Jacques Rancière has proposed that "the modern lyric revolution is not a way of experiencing oneself, of experiencing the profundity of one's inner life, or conversely, of immersing it in the profundity of nature. It is primarily a specific mode of utterance, a way of accompanying one's saying" (2004b: 12). Rancière's rhetorical shift from an expressive model of the lyric to the emphasis on utterance as a way of accompanying (rather than coinciding with) one's own words is more closely aligned with my readings of Lambeth's poetry. For while Lambeth's poetry employs apostrophe (and therefore calls a speaker, or a self, into being, as Korsten suggests) in addressing objects (like the moustache) and an audience (like an implied reader), both poems disrupt the correspondence of the I of the speaker with the conventions associated with apostrophe because of the permutable conceptions of the body Lambeth manifests through her lyrics.

Since the poet addresses something that is *of* her but not *her*, the poem suggests that the capacity of the poet's body and the poet as speaking I, as a subject who apostrophically addresses, do not coincide. For it is precisely the capacity of the speaker's

body to disrupt the speaker's beauty with its unruly growth that provokes the invocation of apostrophe by the poet. But since the speaker's body is unruly, so too can her enunciation be disrupted by that body. The notion of the accompaniment of one's words can here be understood as the differentiation between the disabled body's own capacities (to grow as it wants, to be unruly, and so on) and the necessity for this to be lyrically addressed, which thereby in turn necessitates the invocation of a lyrical I that addresses. Rather than an originary I addressing what is happening to the body, Lambeth's poems carefully delineate the disruption the body manifests as that which the speaker may attempt to describe while being disrupted, which affirms the differentiation between the body's capacities and the poet's poetic power.

The conceptualizations of bodily disruption in Lambeth's poems I delineated are relevant to disability theory, because it builds on the elucidation of the cultural model's differentiation between impairment and disability. If impairment, too, can be socially mediated, as the cultural model maintains, how and where do we read for this mediation? As my readings of these poems argue, the presence of lyrical address implies at the very least the success that such address is taking place, but it can simultaneously emphasize the effort on the speaker's behalf to enunciate, appear, contain, or dissolve her body through lyric poetry. Impairment is intrinsically linked to the bodily capacity needed to address such an impairment or to the poet's capacity to invoke the apostrophic call. It also connotes that the presence of lyrical address, even when written, *asserts* the concurrent inevitability of disruptive bodily presence—the body of the speaker and that of the poem are fundamentally intertwined. The cultural model follows the social model's understanding of disability insofar as it also understands disability as that which becomes constructed in the interaction between individual and an environment. But it also asserts that physical impairment, which necessarily refers to and involves one's bodily condition, is *also* socially mediated rather than being an *a priori* condition as the impairment/disability opposition might suggest, as per the social model. What my readings have shown is that the notion of impairment should not be thought separately from bodily capacity, since bodily capacity itself functions socially: in how we can and must address how our bodily capacities become (dis)abilities.

6. Conclusion

I started this chapter by arguing for the limitations of the restitution narrative model as it pertains to disability. In this model, disruption is conceptualized as the break in

between life before and after disability in a sequential series of actions and events. I contrasted this notion of disruption with the argument that disability's disruption can point us to the formal characteristics of what it is disrupting. Different genres through which the experience of and relationality to disability is mediated thus afford different kinds of disruption. In the situational narrative, an impasse experienced in living with disability was shown to be concerned with a suspended state of affairs centered around a sense of emergence, in which a happening may actually become a larger event and thereby drastically alter the situation. I read the situational narrative as creating a paratactic, horizontal arrangement of its happenings and becoming-events, precisely due to this apparent lack of "big" events, in which all of the happenings of everyday life with disability come to seem inconsequential and incapable of manifesting change. I connected this to the tonality of dissatisfaction and effort, the concern of the affective work to "make enough" out of a situation, to become satisfied with it.

This emphasis on effort and its appearance was continued in my reading of Lambeth's two lyric poems. While the temporality of the lyrical present distinguishes it from the sequential telling of narrative (even when, as in the situational narrative, the sequence of actions and events is experienced as suspended), what connects all of my readings offered in this chapter is the emphasis on effort disability can place in both narrative and lyrical genres. In *Still Life with Monkey*, Duncan and Laura's apparent inability to make enough out of their situation was connected to the notion of *sprezzatura*, the ability to make any particular gesture appear as effortless. Effort became connected to disability precisely through showing how everyday actions, like tending to a garden or preparing one's favorite meal the right way, become disrupted *because* they suddenly require new and different effort. Likewise, Lambeth's depiction of her appearance in her poems allowed her to "sport" her cane but disrupted the form of lyrical enunciation by simultaneously explicating it as attempt.

As Butler suggested, when one tells a narrative (or gives an account of oneself through a narrative), there is a tendency to want it to carry a sense of seamlessness, when a plot finds its resolution, for example. A primary problem with the seamlessness of these accounts, I have argued, is how they formally organize and represent effort in relation to disability. If effort is often conveyed as hardship that has been overcome by the end of the story, this is precisely not the relationship to effort that the texts I have studied in this chapter manifest. For what connects both the novel and Lambeth's poems is the sustained emphasis on effort *throughout*, that to socio-aesthetically appear (without a moustache, sporting a cane, or presenting one's disheveled and untended garden) is never separated from the bodily effort it requires to appear (or

make an object, like a house, appear the way one desires). The sustained attention on the effort of appearance marks an imperative shift from the notion of disruption as singular break to a conceptualization of disruption as continuous because the affective work effort requires is itself continuous. This stress on the effort appearance requires might be reason to pause: for what is it that such sustained attention given to effort affords readers?

As the notion of *sprezzatura* suggests, the effort put into a gesture or action might disappear from sight with enough practice of that act. And while it may be possible to represent an amount of effort required for a particular gesture or skill, the perceived or sensed effort then becomes framed through the particularity of that action and its accompanying moment. In contrast, in the case studies I have analyzed, effort is not a matter of singular incident but rather of continuity. To stress or demand that attention be given to the effort of appearance in life with disability does not come without friction. This sustained attention given to the effort appearance requires (again and again) can be tied to what Rancière elsewhere calls the "rules of appropriateness between the significance of words and the visibility of things" (2011: 21). Such rules of appropriateness dictate how, when, and where something is made visible and sensible, and how, when, and where it is addressed—which does not need to coincide with an appearance.

The capacity needed to enunciate or to appear is commonly simply considered a given. Even if appearances conceal something, or if apostrophic enunciations do or do not effectuate their intended state of affairs, what is considered appropriate is that we do not call into question the givenness of this appearance or enunciation itself, but instead examine their effects. The demand on and implication of one's sustained attention given to effort that I have argued for in this chapter can disrupt what is conventionally considered to be appropriate to address. What such conventional "rules of appropriateness" dictate is not that they neglect or disregard disruption in relation to disability. More accurately, such conventional rules (or narrative models) propose a conception of disruption that one can come to understand as made to fit into the seamlessness of a given account. Such a conception of disruption, as seems to be suggested through the restitution narrative, then posits disruption as a break (the moment or incident that one becomes disabled) that fits its model, thereby making it appropriate to it. Effort in this model subsequently becomes the work of restoration, of "getting better."

The understanding of disruption I delineated can be understood as being subversive to this previous understanding and is so precisely because it requires sustained attention to effort. When attention to effort becomes connected to everyday life with

disability, effort ceases to be optional; hence my usage of the terms "requirement" and "demand." In relation to representation, this shifts the distance restitution narratives may evoke (as concerning an account of events that happened in the past) to the demands that effort asks in somehow accounting for its everydayness, thereby also asking for its recognition and subsequent address. This address concerns itself with the way in which disruptions happen in everyday life with disability over and over, ultimately resisting representational models that converge toward the affective states of "overcoming" or "acceptance." Moreover, connecting effort to the way in which it is addressed implies that it has a communicable, social function. The visibility of effort, and inversely, the effort of visibility, or the effort of appearance, is intrinsically connected to the way the affective work effort requires is or is not addressed and how we recognize and socially acknowledge and tend to it.

In this chapter, I have argued for the intertwinement between the formal aspects of representation and how they may draw our attention to and even emphasize bodily capacity (which, like the term *affect*, also cannot be directly represented), often setting affective demands on the reader (to be invested in, or to put effort into the text). This offers an entrance into the fourth chapter, which is concerned with the concept of distortion, traditionally understood as the bending out of shape of an originary form. Rather than questioning the normative assumption of "originary" in originary form, I instead look at the affordances of disability to twist objects and words out of shape and, following this chapter, how this further relates to the affective capacities of the disabled body.