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Introduction: Crip Temporalities

When we proposed this special issue to the editor of the *South Atlantic Quarterly* nearly two years ago, we knew that crip temporality was an important and pressing matter, not just for disabled and chronically ill people but for all subjects living under the conditions of late capitalism, global technocracy, and medicolegal regimes. As academics, we knew that our lives were structured by time as a vector of power, from minutiae, such as class schedules, through annual reviews and milestones, such as merit steps and promotions, through the larger temporal systems that govern invisibly, which Michel Foucault ([1975] 1995) understood as the heart of discipline and which one of us calls "chrononormativity" (Freeman 2010). As scholars of temporality, we understood that the legal category of disability has been constructed through an elaborate artifice of permanence, of bodies and minds that cannot move through time along the smooth rails of normative life stages but are always being asked, "Will you ever work again? Will you ever walk again? Will you ever get better?" As disabled people, we knew that medicine, too, conceives disability and illness in linear temporal terms, such as *prognosis*, *remission*, *recurrence*, *chronic*, and/or *terminal* (see Jain 2007; Kafer 2013; Samuels 2017;

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Clare 2017).[1] And as denizens of the twenty-first century, we knew that the world had been accelerating out of control through hypercapitalization, the high-speed growth of private enterprise, and the digital transformation and that, at the same time, it was being consumed by the slow violence of climate change (Nixon 2011) and the forced stagnation of the public sector, with both temporal regimes literally disabling more bodies and minds.

What we could not have anticipated, though, is how the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 would transform the social and temporal landscape in ways that are still ongoing and impossible to fully predict. As we write this, we don't yet know exactly when the pandemic began or when it will end, or what the world "after" COVID-19 will look like. Those of us residing in the United States are subject to constant, destabilizing change and unpredictability in governmental and institutional responses to the pandemic, while here, as well as in other parts of the world, its impact exacerbates existing states of debility and violence. In this new and evolving situation, crip temporality feels even more urgent than before. And more than ever before, it can be said that all of us now are living in crip time (see Shew 2020).

Let us give a concrete example of this universalization of crip time, from US academe. As pandemic time arrived, professors had to move their classes online, often very quickly and with little or no training in how to teach online or to use the various technologies involved. Think pieces quickly proliferated about how to navigate this change: how to teach effectively or, ironically, how to do a terrible job teaching.[2] What all parties could agree on, however, was that this shift was difficult, imperfect, physically and mentally draining, and profoundly time-consuming. Instructors had not only to do all the usual work of teaching—writing and delivering lectures, creating PowerPoints, leading discussions, responding to students' questions, crafting assignments, and grading assigned work—but also to master a variety of technologies for doing so: learning how to record lectures and upload them to course management systems, to create and host Zoom classrooms, to give assignments that students could complete from home, perhaps with limited computer or internet access, and to do all of this under the pressure and duress of both a frightening physical contagion and the normative timeline of the usual semester or quarter.

This move to pandemic pedagogy mirrors in many ways the prior experiences of disabled instructors and students. Those of us fortunate or persistent enough to receive reasonable accommodations must generally put in massive effort and time in order to use them, even as we are expected to

adhere to the same timelines of study and instruction as nondisabled peers. Most nondisabled people (or even disabled people who don't use a particular technology) are unaware of how very imperfect and time-consuming many alternative technologies are. Screen reading and voice recognition software programs, for example, are not seamless tools but vary widely according to which hardware and software platforms they must interface with, what tasks must be performed, and how conscientious designers have been in making various platforms accessible. Every time new course software is adopted or an email system is updated, many disabled users must spend additional tedious hours figuring out how to use it with their adaptive tech, if the new platforms are even usable (often they are not, despite legal requirements in the United States). Even as simple an adaptation as changing from a sitting to a standing or reclining workstation involves expense, trial and error, a certain amount of bodily and mental achiness, and a certain number of well-placed curses.

What is nearly always true, however, is that using a different form of technology for access reasons means that everything takes longer. And this is true not just for users of complex technologies like screen readers: differences such as having only limited fingers available for typing, or using one's mouth to hold a pen, or being able to look at screens for only an hour per day, or processing written information better than aural or the other way around—all of these differences from the presumed norm mean that disabled academics have always done the same work as our peers in profoundly different temporalities.

With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, suddenly US academics and other white-collar workers who had previously resided in the sheltered space of the norm were thrust into the time-consuming, often frustrating space of crip time. They found themselves grappling with Zoom and other video chat technologies, struggling to balance exigencies of groceries and childcare with expectations of professional performance, running out of hours in the day and energy in their bodyminds to keep up. They remarked on social media that it was taking much longer to get anything accomplished, that they could not focus, that unstructured days indoors were strangely tiring, that instructional technologies themselves produced strange effects on their energy and motivation.[3] In the time of COVID-19, those who had lived previously with the privilege of normative ability began to learn what sick and disabled people have known forever: that crip time isn't easy, it isn't fair, it cannot be reasoned with.

But at the same time that disabled people see nondisabled people now contending with a cripped workplace, we also see approaches to work and

study long denied to us as "unreasonable" accommodations—too expensive, too burdensome, not the way it's done—suddenly implemented quickly, universally, and with total social acceptance.[4] Not only did universities and colleges suddenly supply to some or all of their faculty en masse the technologies, flexibility with deadlines, and professional clock extensions often denied to disabled people, but also, at the time of this writing, all public universities and colleges in the United States, as well as private ones with fewer than five hundred employees, are required to comply with the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act that expands paid leave time.[5] These are technological, medical, and financial accommodations that many colleges and universities have not previously extended to their disabled and/or chronically ill faculty with any consistency. Furthermore, in the time of COVID-19, many academic institutions have advised or mandated accommodations for students, such as pass/fail grading and flexibility with due dates and attendance policies, that are ordinarily extended only to students with learning disabilities or other cognitive diagnoses and unevenly adhered to by nondisabled faculty (Burke 2020). Finally, there has been widespread acknowledgment and destigmatization of (though not necessarily help for) the emotional distress of faculty and students, whereas mentally disabled members of academe have generally stayed closeted about their condition or have been forced to leave their campus if it becomes unmanageable (Price 2011; see also Cepeda, this issue).

Many of these newly extended accommodations for the nondisabled or for the suddenly disabled—slowdowns, flexibility, time to care for others, the right to paid time away from work to heal, acknowledgment of grief and trauma—implicitly acknowledge that most workers and students are now living crip temporality. The contributions to this issue, on the other hand, come from people for whom crip temporality is nothing new. In conceiving this special issue, we felt it was vitally important to put the existing and crucial work on crip temporality by disability scholars and artists into conversation with writing from new or underrepresented perspectives in order to challenge and expand the range of "crip temporalities" in scholarly thought and creative practice. In particular, we wanted to explore the affects of living in crip time and with crip temporalities, affects including but not limited to alienation, grief, anger, and exhaustion. The notion of crip time as flex time—as what Alison Kafer (2013: 27) has eloquently called "flex time not just expanded but exploded"—has been vitally important for disabled people finding ways to survive, to wedge our nonnormative bodyminds into the apparatus of capitalist production far enough to keep a roof over our heads.

But the danger of equating crip time with flex time, as Margaret Price notes in her contribution to this issue, is that it suggests a kind of freedom, an ease, a metaphoric stretching of the limbs. Rather than only calling for this kind of relief from capitalist temporality, we also wanted to explore the freedoms offered by the positive experiences of crip life and crip temporality, such as exultance, solidarity, grace, the simple rhythm of the breath. The stories of disabled people, as Price and others in this issue show, reveal crip time as paradoxically both liberating and confining, because it breaks open rigid socioeconomic structures of time and affords others, and because that breaking is not a choice but a necessity, an enforcement issued by the physical and mental strictures of the crip bodymind.

Many of the contributions in this issue, in some way or another, discuss crip temporality in terms of confinement. For example, Price's article extends her earlier work, which centered on mental and cognitive disability in her analysis of temporality in the academy, to foreground slowness as a key feature of academic crip time. In her article, María Elena Cepeda draws on Price's work as she offers *testimonio* of her experience as a mentally disabled Latina academic negotiating dynamics of power and passing in both academic and psychiatric institutions. Similarly, Mimi Khúc describes the process of creating *Open in Emergency*, a multimedia project centered on Asian American mental health, as enacting a temporality of unwellness that at once exposes and seeks to repair deep fissures of distress in her communities. And Jasbir K. Puar's article on "slow life" discusses how, in addition to maiming rather than killing Palestinians, the Israeli military has "create[d] an entire population with mobility impairments," holding Palestinians' time hostage through checkpoints, roadblocks, walls, and segregated highways that reinforce the suspended state of fearful waiting for death and destruction in which this population lives. These articles, like all contributions in this collection, proceed from a deeply intersectional understanding of crip temporality in which race, colonialism, gender, and sexuality entwine with disability to produce compelling particular temporal landscapes.

But crip time is also a time of survival and even of world making, and several of the articles in this issue offer both strategies for surviving the normative violences of capitalist time and, in the key of liberation, strategies for inventing new models of work, sociability, and being. Moya Bailey, for example, offers the "ethics of pace" as a strategy for multiply marginalized subjects, particularly sick and disabled women of color, to navigate the academy without succumbing to the death drive of productivity that has too often claimed their health and even their lives. Jake Pyne's article articulates a

model of trans autistic temporality in which neurodivergence and gender nonconformity intertwine to shape new ways of being and responding to the world. In their coauthored article, Jina B. Kim and Sami Schalk discuss self-care as a temporal practice for people of color, reconceiving crip time through a crip-of-color critique that follows the foundational work of Audre Lorde to center care as a "taking of time" for community and personal survival while rejecting neoliberal notions of "self-care" in service of maintaining or restoring productivity. Alison Kafer explores the possibility that crip time, rather than just being an extension of normative time ("more"), might unfold into new solidarities and forms of relationality, obviating the "before" and "after" time of disability.

Even as crip time is a space of frustration and often of loss, then, it is also a space that offers new kinds of connections and presence that are fundamental to imagining a new world into being. The artwork and poetry that we include in this issue profoundly engage with that project. In his powerful invocational poem "May Day, 2020," Eli Clare weaves together the voices of many disabled and precarious lives affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, insisting on both survival and imagination—indeed, on imagination as key to survival. This is a powerful and necessary reminder in these times of bare-bones utilitarian thinking, as is the poem's resistance to the destructive logics of capital. Similarly, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's text for the tarot card *The Crip* calls and challenges us to "dream disabled dreams," to "consider how you are finding and claiming your power," while Matt Huynh's visuals work a constant tension between power and vulnerability, envisioning kneeling as both a position of rest and of launching to action, swords as both destructive and constructive tools. Finn Enke's four drawings also work a tension, in this case more abstractly, between bodies, gender, vulnerability, and empowerment, circling around the concept of dysphoria as their blockish figures negotiate comic frames that both open and foreclose possible bodily arrangements—visually performing the "square peg in the round hole" misfitting of gender and disability also echoed in the narratives of trans autistic authors discussed by Pyne. In their cover art for this issue, *Man in the Mirror,* Enke explores through watercolor another version of this tension, in this case between the body and the natural world, acknowledging that those boundaries are far more porous than either capitalism or materialist politics often acknowledges.

Moving further into this phenomenological realm, Christine Sun Kim's series *Six Types of Waiting in Berlin* synesthetically merges the visual, textual, and musical in its minimalistic display of the tedium of waiting that is central to the crip experience of chronic illness, located in Berlin to fore-

ground how cultural differences in temporality shape subjective experience. Like Sun Kim's visual art, Michael Snediker's four poems make use of both text and the white space left in between to enact embodiment as a kind of music or dance, with the spacing of words, line breaks, and enjambment evoking the sense of a body quivering at the edge of a cliff, "the body's / pendulum" marking time, not with the contained pulse of a metronome but like a ballerina or circus acrobat ecstatic in motion.

So, if pandemic time is crip time for all—even as features such as seemingly interminable waiting, long days indoors, fear of foreshortened mortality, an increase in or sudden loss of hours spent working, and time lost to managing technology are still unevenly distributed—what forms of justice, human connectivity, and pleasure might emerge from it? In her set of meditations on crip temporalities, Alison Kafer suggests that we think less about what crip time *is* and more about what it *does*. Here are some of those "doings" at the time of this writing. Among disabled and nondisabled people alike, pandemic time has brought the systems of mutual aid detailed by scholar-activists such as Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (2018), Dean Spade (2015), and Hi'ilei Julia Kawehipuaakahaopulani Hobart and Tamara Kneese (2020).[6] And sheltering in place, though it has led to a spike in reported mental health difficulties, has also given rise to such virtual-communal forms of generosity and enjoyment as Zoom game nights, 7:00 p.m. neighborhood noisemaking to thank health care workers, social media posts of individuals and households re-creating famous paintings, socially mediated mask-making bees, city sourdough starter giveaways, and online performances by choirs, orchestras, and theater and dance troupes whose members record their parts individually and whose directors combine them into a beautiful whole. Crip temporalities seem to have given broader access, at least for some of us, to the kinds of compassion, empathy, and relationality that have regularly structured disabled communities.[7] These values and the activities they engender, or these activities and the values they engender, depart from what Kafer calls the temporalities of late capitalism, which include "productivity, capacity, self-sufficiency, independence, [and] achievement." They are about neither speed nor slowness, precisely, but about new rhythms, new practices of time, new sociotemporal imaginaries.

These new practices of pandemic time raise intriguing and important questions for the new world we are making. What if we all simply took as much of our time as possible back from late capitalism? What if we developed new forms of punctuality centering on presence, simultaneity, and concurrence: new ways of being together in time—perhaps even ones that valued stasis and the present rather than motion and the future (see Freeman

2019; Baraitser 2017)? What if temporal rhythms and their attached notions of normalcy, productivity, and community were forever cripped, detached from chrononormative capitalist structures and predicated instead on the myriad realities of bodyminds along a spectrum of abilities? These possibilities, these revolutions, are explored in multiple and compelling ways by the contributions in this issue, and so we offer them to all readers, regardless of disability status, as invocations of crip timescapes we all may create and share together.

Notes

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1 A note regarding positionality: one of us (Samuels) identifies as a disabled person; one of us (Freeman) has, as we worked on this project, found herself in an ongoing medical crisis that has necessitated what Sami Schalk (2013) calls "coming to claim crip." In writing this joint introduction, we are using the first-person *we* to refer to disabled people and communities, not only to reflect our own status as disabled people but also to signal our solidarity with disability activism and scholarship. For further discussion of strategic identifications as disabled and crip, see Schalk 2013 and McRuer 2006.

2 Here are a very few examples from the vast online archive of resources for teaching effectively online, from academic professional journals and our own institutions: Darby 2019; Moore and Hodges 2020; Barrett-Fox 2020; and University of California, Davis, n.d.

3 On instructional technologies and fatigue, see, e.g., Sklar 2020. On general pandemic fatigue, see, e.g., Zerbe 2020. On how this fatigue is temporal, see, e.g., Breen 2020.

4 Consider, for example, the University of California's systemwide licensing agreement with Zoom (Trappler 2016). See also articles on adjusting tenure expectations and clocks, such as Connolly 2020. For reflection on these dynamics, see Doyle 2020.

5 The Families First Coronavirus Response Act mandates two weeks of paid sick leave for illness or quarantine; two weeks at two-thirds pay for caretakers of the quarantined or ill and for workers with childcare responsibilities due to the closure of schools and daycare; and an additional ten weeks of paid expanded family and medical leave at two-thirds pay for COVID-19-related reasons. See US Department of Labor, n.d. See also CUPA-HR Knowledge Center 2020.

6 See also *New Inquiry* and Agbebyiyi 2020 on the Disability Justice Mutual Aid Fund.

7 For a beautiful example of these values in action, and their interconnection with social justice, see the film *Crip Camp* (Newnham and LeBrecht 2020).

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