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Unsmoothing the Cyborg: Technology and the Body in Integrated Dance

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Abstract

Contemporary cyborg theory tends to approach the integration of human bodies and technology innovations as if the cyborg were a unified whole. And, because of the potential of the cyborg body to help ameliorate disability, the cyborg has been suggested as a way to restore function to individuals living with disabilities. We investigate the deployment of the cyborg integrated dance company using theoretical concepts provided by Gilles Deleuze. Rather than observing a smoothly integrated whole, our ethnographic research reveals tensions within the cyborg body. Our analysis revealed three types of creative/reactive forces. Each of these forces comes from the effects/functions of the three striations of the cyborg body: (1) the effects/functions from the machine stria; (2) those from the human stria; and (3) those from the animal stria. Although together these striae constitute the assemblage of the cyborg, as each one takes on greater intensity such that the others are of decreased intensity, the hybridized whole of the cyborg

becomes less functional as one is becoming-machine, becoming-human, or becoming-animal.

Introduction

The Dancing Wheels (DW) Company & School, located in Cleveland, OH, is a professional modern dance company for people with and without disabilities. DW was founded in 1980 by Mary Verdi-Fletcher. Verdi-Fletcher was born with spina bifida and spends her life in a wheelchair even though she dreamed of being a professional dancer. She wanted to make space for dancers with disabilities in the professional dance world. In their fully accessible studio, DW provides community dance classes, summer dance workshops, theater arts camps, and teacher training workshops. Through these innovative programs, which integrate arts and recreational activities with career opportunities and training, DW is committed to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the arts and broader communities. Through dance, the studio challenges cultural norms about the body and institutional patterns and practices that fail to acknowledge different bodies (Quinlan & Bates, 2008; 2009; 2010; 2012; Quinlan & Harter, 2010). There is, in the choreography, an attempt to efface or erase the difference between able-bodied and disabled-bodied dancers. *Integration* and *difference* are central to DWs' organizing practices; indeed, DW characterizes itself as smoothing out differences between these two kinds of dancers.

DW seeks to smooth out the distinction of those who rely on mechanic assemblages and those who do not. To explore this attempt to smooth out or integrate difference, to make a whole out of these parts, the first author spent 18 months with DW and engaged in in-depth interviews, participant observations, and document analyses (see Quinlan & Harter, 2010, for a full review of the methodology). One of the many themes that emerged from the first author's experiences with DW was their focus on the smooth integration of human and technology and the new opportunities that emerge for dance, as well as reminding us of the benefits and difficulties of incorporating the human, mechanical and animal. At DW, a space is created in which dancers can make this cyborg move.

Cyborg, Technology and the Body

The focus of the integration of the mechanical and the human in DW's work calls to mind the works of the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze. Deleuze, alone and in his collaborations with the psychotherapist Felix Guattari, discussed the integration of machines and biological bodies in an attempt to eliminate the distinction between the real and the immaterial. Building on the work of Foucault, Deleuze (1995) was interested in the reorganization of society to subvert systems of power and control. Deleuze's (1995) concept of the "disciplinary society" and "control society" unveil the multiple forces of discipline, control, liberation, and resistance operating in the realms of human behavior (pp. 177-178).

As such, Deleuze follows Foucault in their shared understanding of institutions (e.g., the family, prisons, armies, schools, hospitals) as technologies to control the biological body. Although Foucault himself never talked about information technology or the transformation of human beings by communication technology, Deleuze (1988) speculated on the new relations between humans and the "third generation of machines, cybernetics and information technology" (p. 131). Because of this interest in "third-generation" machines, and Deleuze's (1987) concepts of "machinic assemblages" (p. 71) and "desiring machines" (Deleuze & Guattari, 2003, p. 36), some scholars have chosen to see Deleuze as an early cyborg theorist.

The trends that inspired Deleuze have since accelerated. We now experience a post-industrial, high-tech culture that pushes us to challenge the interminglings (which are made to appear seamless) of body and technology. There is no longer clear distinction between who makes and who is made in connections among the animal (organic), human (emotive/intellectual) and technological (machinic). In light of these trends, Haraway (1991), through the metaphor of the cyborg, challenged us to think beyond the dualisms of organic and inorganic, of machine and flesh (see also Currier, 2003). In doing so, she encourages us to think beyond the existence of a whole or complete body. Haraway (1991) asks:

> Why should our bodies end at the skin?… For us in imagination, and in other practices, machines can be prosthetic devices, intimate components, friendly selves. We don't need organic holism to give impermeable whole-ness, the total woman and her feminist variants (mutants?) (p. 178)

After asking this question, Haraway (1991) provisionally defines a cyborg as a "cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (p. 181). For Haraway, we have all become cyborgs blurring the boundary of human and machine. In contrast, or perhaps better in distinction, Deleuze and Guattari (DG) (1987) believed the human and nonhuman world were not machine + organism but, rather, both machine and organism and their combined effects. Following Deleuze, for purposes of this analysis, we define a cyborg as an assemblage of animal, human, and mechanical components that form an assembled body with equal intensities.

Drawing on DG, Haraway's student Hayles (1999) noted that cybernetics shares affinities with post-structural philosophy insofar as both challenge the centrality of the liberal notions of human agency. Once there is a cyborg, there is no longer a self that "is free from the will of others" or technology (Hayles, 1999, pp. 3-4). However, unlike Haraway, Deleuze did not consider our evolution as heading towards becoming cyborg. Rather, we already are and already have been cybogs. Deleuze considers the world to be composed of "machinic" assemblages. He uses the term 'machinic' as distinct from machine in order to highlight the fact that a machinic assemblage may also include human and nonhuman components. Moreover, the concept of machinic is not only subject to multiple interpretations, depending upon where you are in relation to the assemblage, it also serves to

transform the way that the assemblage functions in the world. In other words, an assemblage has agency and is consequently political.

From a communication standpoint, DG called the human body—and all of its effects — an "assemblage." They (1987) characterized it as a "constellation of singularities and traits deducted from the flow—selected, organized, stratified—in such a way as to converge (consistency) artificially and naturally" (p. 406). DG offers a different way of understanding the body in its connection with other bodies. As connected systems, organs/biological processes relate to material objects in ways that exceed the humans acting upon these objects or objects influencing human action; Deleuze calls upon us to remove our focus from putative wholes and to focus on movements and linkage and connection among components of the assemblage (Currier, 2003; Grosz, 1994). In thinking of bodies as assemblages, Deleuze moves past the idea that the body is a unity; for him the flesh is a multiplicity through which organic materials, processes, energies, and capacities are ordered and constrained (see Currier, 2003). Deleuze wanted us to go beyond the idea of a unified body to a body without organs in which multiplicities intersect with other multiplicities. Technology does not meet a body—instead matters, flows, forces and intensities of the corporeal link and its connections with technology and machine and nature can no longer be seen. Instead, as Grosz (1994) says, "assemblages are the provisional linkages of elements, fragments, flows, of disparate status and substance: ideas, things-human, animate, inanimate" (p. 164).

Under this conception of the wheelchair dancer as cyborg, the dancers at DW are not simply human bodies that happen to sit in wheelchairs. Rather than seeing a wheelchair/machine and a dancer/human, we should see the wheelchair dancer as an assemblage of machinic, human, and animal parts. To consider the same design in Deleuzian terms opens up infinite possibilities, possibilities that transform something (the wheelchair and the human) into something different (the wheelchair dancer), which, in turn can be transformed into something different yet again and again as the linkages and connections ebb and flow. There is no optimum finite solution because there are no problems to be solved: there are only multiple possibilities resulting in the potential for multiple transformations. Rather than asking what this wheelchair dancer is, it is better to ask "what a body is capable of…and what forces belong to [and extend from] it" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 292).

This focus on the effects of the body (be the effects organic, mechanical, or some other kind) should be of great interest to scholars of disability. Rather than asking what limits the body, or how communication/social construction dominates the body in ways that prevent it from doing that which is done by able-bodied individuals, Deleuze asks us not to ask what the body is, but what the body can do. Deleuze (1992) asks, "Of what is the body capable? Of what affections, passive as well as active? How far does its power extend?" (p. 256). He does not reject the power of thought or of communication but instead suggests that if we do not yet know the power of the body, we also do not yet know the power of thought or communication, but are beyond consciousness (Frohmann, 2007).

In this focus, Deleuze encourages us to look at the body (be it able-bodied or disabled) as an active, creative force rather than a reactive force. Deleuze distinguishes between active creative forces, which can act of their own accord, and reactive forces, which operate only by limiting and resisting the creative potential of other forces (Deleuze, 2006). He attributes value to active forces that permit transformations and creativity, and, thereby, the development of new values and new ways of living. According to Deleuze (1988),

> If you define bodies and thoughts as capacities for affecting and being affected, many things change. You will define an animal, or a human being, not by its form, its organs, and its functions, and not as a subject either; you will define it by the affects of which it is capable. (p. 124)

Most disability studies research examines the individual living with disabilities as either mere body (what devices does it need; what piece is missing, malformed, or mutilated) or as simple subject (what is the political or intellectual motivation of the disabled person who is speaking) (Barnes, Mercer, & Shakespeare, 1999; Corbett, 1997; Corker & French, 1999; Gill, 1997; Hedlund, 2000; Linton, 1998; Paterson & Hughes, 1997; Stacey, 1992). To fix the individual living with disability either as body or as subject locks us into the consideration of an unchanging form. But, as Deleuze established, society also is not defined by unchanging forms; our social structures are assembled into different segments (e.g., class, race, gender, etc.), including the myriad of institutions and cultural formations that organize, regulate and give meaning to social existence (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). And to investigate the bodies, the segments, and the institutional and cultural formations of social existence, it is necessary for us to examine how the different components of the human assemblage become more and less intensified as the animal, the human, and the machine emerge in the practice of life.

Analysis

Analysis of ethnographic research of an integrated dance company highlights tensions with cyborg bodies. Our analysis revealed three types of creative/reactive forces. Each of these forces comes from the affects/functions of the three striations of the cyborg body: (1) the effects/functions from the machine stria; (2) those from the human stria; and (3) those from the animal stria. Although together these striae constitute the assemblage of the cyborg, as each one takes on greater intensity such that the others are of decreased intensity, the hybridized whole of the cyborg becomes less functional.

Becoming-Machine

> *"The machinic indexes are the signs of an assemblage that has not yet been established or dismantled because one knows only the individual pieces that go into making it up, but not how they go together."*

—Deleuze & Guattari, 1986, p. 47

In this stria, we see the ways in which individuals involved in an integrated dance view are "becoming-machine." When dancers characterize the wheelchair as a prop or a tool, they articulate the wheelchair as external to the individual. Dezare, a stand-up dancer at DW, discussed the chair as a "prop." "Sit-down dancers, that's very different [from in other dance companies]. You can use props… people [dance companies] use props all the time… they use… wheels mainly or tools or chairs, things like that." Similarly, Sara, also a stand-up dancer at DW, discussed wheelchairs as making DW distinct from most other dance companies. She said, "We're unlike other companies because integrated dance makes us something else to watch. I kind of refer to the chair to like a prop…that is used for those dancers that no other companies can use."

When Dezare and Sara label a wheelchair a "prop," they are emphasizing that it is separable from the dancer's body. Indeed, at DW wheelchairs are used not only by individuals with disabilities, they are used by able-bodied dancers as well. The choreographers will have whichever dancer they believe needs to have the opportunities or the constraints use the wheelchair. The choreographer may choose to have an able-bodied dancer use the wheelchair because the dancer can roll across the stage just as well in the wheelchair, whether she has a disability or not.

Obviously, the dancers who experience physical disabilities may be seen as "needing" to use the wheelchair, but, even for these dancers, the wheelchair can be separated from the body. This possibility is outlined by Bob, a member of DW's governing board. Like many audience members, Bob, an able-bodied individual, reported that he felt uncomfortable when dancers with disabilities were out of the chairs. He said:

> It makes me really uncomfortable when… the wheelchair people are out of their wheelchairs and it says something more about me than the dance company. I am afraid that they might get hurt or whatever. It does bother me… I feel sorta scared. (*Laughter*). It makes me uncomfortable… the vulnerability… I hate to say this but sometimes the wheelchair dancers cannot sometimes physically perform like the able-bodied dancers.

In some of DW's productions, the individuals who use wheelchairs as part of their everyday life dance outside their chairs. They may be carried by other members of the troupe, crawl on the floor, or pull themselves in and out of the chair as necessary for the dance's choreography. For Bob, there is a separation between the human and the machinic components when he watches the different dances. He grows uncomfortable knowing that an individual with a disability is separated from the machine that frees their movement. Similarly, Dezare focuses on the vulnerability experienced by the wheelchair dancer when the machine component functions poorly. She says,

"Let's say a wheel has popped. That would be an extremely vulnerable state because, their wheelchair is their accessibility… they don't walk and crawling is also very vulnerable. Taking them out of the chair is taking them away from their accessibility space." Here, the misalignment of the wheel of the wheelchair does not merely cause the wheelchair to function sub-optimally; the actual wheelchair dancer ceases to function properly. The wheel is necessary for the wheelchair to work, and the wheelchair is what gives the wheelchair dancer his or her access to dance. By emphasizing that the wheelchair is a machine separate from the human body, Bob and Dezare each create an additional intensity on the machine component of the cyborg. When each considered the wheelchair dancer, here intensified by the machine, the reliance on the machine for the wheelchair dancer becomes something that disqualifies the person from being a dancer.

Although Haraway and Gray (1995) emphasized a seamless transition between the biological and the mechanical in forming the cyborg, Deleuze's argument that there is no distinction between the material and immaterial does not mean that there is a smooth integration of the machinic and the human. DG (1983) recognized that "machines attach themselves to the body without organs as so many points of disjunction" (p. 12); the wheelchair-machine and the human-body attach themselves to the body without organs to form the assemblage we call the wheelchair dancer. These attachments are not only points of convergence, but also points of separation and breakdown. At DW, the easy glide in the wheelchair is evidence that the body itself is integrated with technology or in DG's terms, this is the mechanizing of the human body, which looks as if it is an organically-integrated part of the fluid movement of dance, thus creating for the audience a unified organism. In DG's organelle terms, we do not have any singular body, but we get a dancer's body by attaching the human body to the wheelchair, and thus the attached body becomes a dancer at DW. For the dancers at DW, to be a unified cyborg, one needs to acknowledge the multiple flows of meaning (machinic assembly) as well the multiple interchangeable parts. The wheelchair, in the DW studio, becomes more than an adaptive device; it is in and of itself, communication. The separation of human and mechanical makes people uncomfortable. When the machine is over-intensified, the animal and the human become under-intensified; becoming-machine leaves out being animal and being human. Becoming-machine is not the only possible over-intensification: one can also be becoming-too-human. When the wheelchair emphasizes its machinic intensity, it is becoming-machine and, thus, becoming separate from the wheelchair dancer.

Becoming-Human

> *"Nothing obscure lives in us because we have a body, but we must have a body because there is an obscure object in us…. We must have a body because our mind possesses a favored — clear and distinct — zone of expression."*

—Deleuze, 1993, p. 85

In a Deleuzian sense, wheelchair dancers are becoming-human when there is an over-intensification of the human stria of the cyborg. At DW, there is a focus on the seamless transition between human and machine. Becoming a cyborg at DW implies a process of blending the human and the mechanical, but as with any blend if there is too much of any one component, that component becomes dominant at the expense of the other pieces. Although a wheelchair may be an extension, it is an extension that may become unused when dancer's desires, be they intellectual or emotional, place the needs of the human above the needs of the machine.

The possibility of the machine component's needs being placed behind the needs of the human stria may be reflected in the philosophy of DW. The wheelchair is not an independent thing, nor a coequal component; rather, it is assembled for the intellectual needs of the wheelchair dancer. This emerged most clearly for us in a conversation with Sara, a standup dancer. She explained that the wheelchair was not a thing of its own, but merely a symbol.

She continued, "The dance aspect aside, a wheelchair symbolizes mobility." Sara discussed the ways in which DW uses the wheelchair in its repertory. Wheelchairs are part of the body and locomotion of the sit-down dancers, as well as a way to connect with the body of a sit-down dancer. She claims:

> Dancing Wheels uses the wheelchair often as a means of locomotion, as able-bodied dancers are able to use their legs to travel. The wheelchair is used as a prop, not necessarily needed by any of the dancers with or without a physical disability, but as an additional tool to make the dance material interesting. That's why sometimes stand-up dancers perform in wheelchairs, too. I view the wheelchair as another element of the physical body when partnering with sit-down dancers.

Sara acknowledges, briefly, that the wheelchair is an element of the physical body, but, as her statement reveals, the main thrust of her claim is that the wheelchair is simply used by a dancer. The wheelchair, as element of the physical body, is limited to sit-down dancers. The wheelchair is not integrated into the body of the stand-up dancer. Rather, the wheelchair is subservient to the intellectual desires of the choreographer in his or her creation of the piece. The wheelchair is a symbol, not an integrated component of the wheelchair dancer.

Although Sara's statement indicates that the wheelchair is separate from the able-bodied dancer's body, other members of DW indicate that when they consider the need of the human to avoid pain or discomfort, there is a similar separation. The human dancers' rejection of the wheelchair can be seen in the stories reported to us by dancers. Each of these dancers told us that, sometimes, they are unable to perform or rehearse because of pressure sores

from sitting in the wheelchair too long. In a Deluzian sense, becoming-human emerges when the body is hurt. The wheelchair is not completely integrated with the human; the machine rubs against the organic body. As the wheelchair becomes part of the body, it pushes more and more away, often intensifying human sensations such as feelings of pain. Kristen, a stand-up dancer, mentioned that pressure sores are something that happens to people with disabilities that forces them to remove their human body from the wheelchair-machine. She said:

> It's hard with wheelers because of pressure sores. Jenny does not get as many. Mark gets [pressure sores] all the time… Sometimes there will be days when Jenny cannot get out of bed because of pressure sores. I think probably more so the wheelers…you'd just have to understand they're not making it up. If I was on my butt every day, in a wheelchair all day… it would happen to me, and… you can't push that situation.

In Kristen's discussion of Jenny's and Mark's experiences, she indicates that sometimes there is a rejection of the machine component. Although it would be possible for the wheelchair dancer to dance, even under these conditions of discomfort, when the comfort of the human component takes precedence, the machine must sit idle.

It is not mere abandonment of the machine that can characterize the becoming-human. Indeed, in some cases, the needs of the machine are sacrificed to the desires or the want of the human. The clearest example of this is Mark's story of the changes to his body between his first (broke his pelvis) and second motocross accidents (left paralyzed from the waist down). Mark, a sit-down dancer, acknowledges times when he put his emotional intensities over his mechanical needs; this created a rupture in the most extreme case, and his spine disintegrated and was replaced with a metal cage. When Mark was a young man (in the late 1990s), he was in a motocross accident that had left him paralyzed from the waist down. After the paralysis, he modified his bike and continued to ride and did more damage to his body than the accident that left him paralyzed. He had two major surgeries in the summer of 2008. Following the first surgery, Mark's physician warned him that if he were to continue to engage in extreme sports, he would put his spinal health at great risk. The physician encouraged Mark to give up motocross. Mark did not comply. Mark's body also gave him a message that it did not like the way Mark was treating it; bodily sensations such as pain can become a way the physical body seeks to limit the excesses of emotional or cognitive desire and remind the human element of the body of substantive limits on embodied practices (Deleuze, 1991, p. 81-84). In part of our interview, the first author asked, "as soon as your back started to hurt, how did that influence the way you are dancing or the way you are playing basketball?" Mark replied:

> My L2 and my L4 started to curve. And they were rubbing on my L3, and it was wearing my L3 away. So every time I moved and I

> was turning either way, that's when I would feel a pop. It got to the point where every time I actually twisted, it popped. Every time I moved, I popped. It was my lower lumbar. It just got so bad that there were little bone fragments that were starting to form, so that's when they had to do—they found out what it was and they had to do the surgery and everything.

The message from Mark's body was explicit. The pops, the twists, and, ultimately, the bone fragments were all the spine/skeletal structure's attempt to inform Mark that the mechanical component of the body was in pain. Mark ignored these messages. He got back on his motocross bike (now modified for his disability), competed again, and the impact on his body from all the jumping severely reinjured him. The physician then built a metal cage around Mark's spine. Following the second surgery, Mark was not able to dance or play wheelchair basketball for over a year and he will most likely never ride his adapted motocross bike again. Because Mark had chosen to place his desire for the thrill of motocross above the needs of his spine, his spine was harmed to the point at which it could no longer function. To counter this excess of becoming-human, the physician added a metal cage; the physician intensified the machine to balance the over-intensification of the human. In this whole whom we call Mark, once we look at how this cyborg works without organs, we realize that different organelles have different needs; Mark's spine, as an organic-cum-mechanical element and as it is now more integrated with his metal spinal cage, has different needs than "human" (social, emotional, cognitive) Mark. If we are going to fully acknowledge Mark, we need to pay attention to his organic and technological needs. We cannot focus on becoming-human at the expense of being-machine and being-animal.

Becoming-Animal

> *"Man becomes animal, but not without the animal becoming spirit at the same time… It is never a combination of forms, but rather the common fact: the common fact of man and animal."*
>
> —Deleuze, 2003, p. 20

To be clear, in our discussion of becoming-human, we are placing the intellectual and the emotive needs of the cyborg body into the organelles that comprise the human. We separate the emotive/intellectual from the base/biological because we believe that these latter components are more characteristic of becoming-animal. For Deleuze, becoming-animal is not to become inhuman or nonhuman; becoming-animal is to intensify the animalistic zone of the body; to put hunger, thirst, lust, first. These are neither intellectual nor emotive; they are at the base of Maslow's hierarchy of needs; they are for survival.

In becoming-animal we focus on one particular instance. We focus on the wheelchair dancer Jenny. This cyborg is comprised of three parts: the human

component named Jenny, the mechanical component of her wheelchair, and Gabe, a service dog. Gabe is an animal but characterized clearly as becoming-animal in ways that the other cyborgs — Dezare, Mark, Sara, Jenny, Kristen, and Bob — are not. He belongs to Jenny, a sit-down dancer with spina bifida, and came with her to the studio. In order to recognize Jenny as a whole, we need to acknowledge the ways in which Jenny depends on the dog and the ways that the dog relies on her. At the beginning of the story, Gabe was a well-trained service dog: he opened doors for Jenny, picked up things she dropped, and engaged in other tasks that helped her live to the fullest of her ability. Although Gabe received some initial training and thereby could be described as the mechanical descriptions of reliable and patterned, Jenny's failure to account for Gabe's animal needs led to others trying to address them. And, in addressing these animal needs, they broke Gabe's conditioning and training; they stripped away his being-machine as Gabe was becoming-animal. Although accommodations were made for Gabe, according to Verdi-Fletcher,

> The only downside was that [Jenny] did not take care of him so others would have to give him water and take him out on our breaks. He shed a lot too so we would have to vacuum nearly every day as I am allergic. I brought him in dog treats, which he loved, so every time he would see me he would prance about eagerly asking for one. He would come into my office and whine until I gave him at least two or three. In terms of being a guide dog, I think he lost his training along the way. Jenny did not treat him as such, but he was adorable and I loved him very much.

The downsides identified by Verdi-Fletcher centered on Gabe's animal needs. Gabe needed to urinate; Gabe got hungry. Service dogs, however, are trained so that the accommodation of the dog is a "reasonable accommodation." These dogs are trained to "hold it in" and to perform tasks without a constant need for reward. By acknowledging Gabe's whining by letting him out and feeding him, even when it was not the time to urinate or to eat, the training regimen was erased.

Verdi-Fletcher was not the only one to tell the story of Gabe's becoming-animal. Sara, a stand-up dancer, talked about the positives and negatives of having Gabe in the studio. She said:

> Jenny's dog Gabe had the "aww" effect as any cute and fluffy animal does. He brought a warmth to the studio because every time you'd walk in or out, he'd stand and wag his tail begging for attention. If you acknowledged that behavior, he would even do a little prancing dance in excitement for you.

Gabe's function in the studio became less to assist Jenny, and more to be a mascot for DW. It is his fluffiness and cuteness, his tail wagging in search of attention that attracts the dancers to Gabe. The dancers' interactions with

Gabe emphasize not his training, but his animality. But Gabe is more than cute; he is an animal with bodily functions. Sara told us,

> Jenny neglected this dog. She ignored him, yelled at him, and would not care for him on a normal basis such as providing him fresh water while at the studio and taking him outside on a regular basis. I hated seeing her behavior towards the dog. In that way, I wished that she wouldn't bring him in. Gabe also shed quite a lot. The hair was everywhere and was not kept after.

Sara did not see Gabe helping Jenny; she saw that Jenny neglected Gabe's animal needs. She missed his need for care, food and water, and regular bathing. These gaps may explain why Verdi-Fletcher and the other dancers began to treat Gabe as a pet and not an assistance animal. They saw his need to eat, sleep, be petted, and urinate as the most intense characteristics. And, when they sought to meet these animal needs, they broke his training. Gabe then became too animal to the point at which he could no longer integrate into the cyborg whole of the wheelchair dancer. When this part no longer fit, the cyborg whole broke down.

Discussion and Conclusions

At DW, a unified cyborg is what is presented and what is engaged first by the audience. However, when we push back the disunity, the parts are not fully unified. At DW, the cyborg whole — the wheelchair dancer — is not a smooth, unstriated whole. Rather, we see zones of intensity in which, at different times, the wheelchair dancer begins to break into its components, times when it is becoming-machine, becoming-human, or becoming-animal. When there is a seamless integration of machine, human, and animal, we have a blending of fully functional machine, human, and animal. When there is an over-intensification on any one part of the assemblage, that assemblage begins to break down. When the mechanical wheelchair is intensified, the machinic part of the cyborg allows or prevents the human and animal striae of the wheelchair dancer from dancing. When the intellectual/emotional human is intensified, the human part can destroy the machinic stria or neglect the animal stria. And, when the hungry animal is intensified, the animal stria can dis-integrate from the machinic and human striae in search of its next meal. Thus when a cyborg becomes too machinic, too human or too animalistic, the cyborg does not function. To be a cyborg is an equal intensification of all three components; to be a wheelchair dancer, one must be equally machine, human, and animal in intensity. Contrary to dominant perspectives in disability studies that focus on enabling the human part of the cyborg assemblage to express itself or that focus on accommodating the mechanical parts, we argue that the animal part of the cyborg — be it a service dog or the fleshy body of the wheelchair dancer — must be acknowledged and intensified as well.

The successes and breakdowns of the wheelchair dancer as cyborg reveal that these cyborgs can break down when there is an over-intensification. This does not

mean that we disagree with Cherney's (1999) and Garland-Thompson's (1997) findings that, in much cyborg literature, a person with a disability is considered an inferior form of cyborg. What we note is that a person living with disability is not an inferior form of cyborg because of his or her disability; the inferior form of cyborg emerges when there is an improper intensification of the cyborg elements of a disabled body. After all, we are all cyborgs, and it is this recognition that requires us to "refigure provocatively the relations among specific humans, other organisms, and machines" so that we can engage in "inquiry into what counts as self-acting and as collective empowerment" (Haraway, 1997, p. 52). If any stria of the cyborg — be it the human, animal, or machine — becomes over-intensified, the other striae are neglected. If we forget about the relations among all three striae, we may forget how the cyborg figure can become a trope of empowerment and change. It is not that a person with a disability is an inferior cyborg, it is that the more we dis-integrate the cyborg, the more we focus on the needs of one stria at the expense of the others. For example, when we focus too much on how we will accommodate a wheelchair as a machine, it is easy to forget there is a human in that chair as an intellectual/emotional being who is partially overlapped with the animal, fleshy body in that chair that has biological needs. If we focus too much on the human and its intellectual/emotional needs, the animal's hunger may be neglected and the machine may go unmaintained. And, if we seek to meet the biological needs of the animal only, the human's needs and the machine's needs may go unmet. Rather than privileging the machinic, human, or animal stria above the others, a cyborg analysis suggests that we must seek to intensify all striae equally.

To do this, we must embrace DG's model of the body without organs and the equally intensified egg. If we are going to interact with Mark, not just human Mark, but also mechanical Mark and animal Mark, we must seek to make him fully complete and healthy, robotic and human. In order for Jenny the wheelchair dancing cyborg to be the most complete wheelchair dancer possible, her animal needs, most fully expressed in Gabe the guide dog as an element, are just as important as her human needs. Fragmentation exists and how we encounter the fragmentation both apart and separable has implications. For DG, human/mechanical/animal engage one another in what other elements do and how they operate in public and private. This focus, this partial reintensification of the animal component might make some advocates uncomfortable; they might see it as reducing a person living with disability to their animal being, just as a focus on assistive devices risks reducing a person living with disability to her mechanical being. This discomfort, however, is necessary. We must take seriously all components of the cyborg body because the wheelchair dancer, as a cyborg whole, only becomes expressed when the seemingly disparate elements of the human, the animal, and the machine are assembled into this new wheelchair dancing body.

Equal intensification of the stria of the cyborg body, of the wheelchair dancer, is not easy. We have privileged the human voice in this study: we do not hear Gabe's story from Gabe; the animal is not speaking as fully; we do not hear the spinal cage's or the wheelchair's story; the machine is not speaking as fully. If we are

going to attempt to live as cyborgs, we need to recognize when our cyborg effects function and when they function with limits. We must not see the human pushing against mechanical or biological rejection the mechanical; instead, cyborgs need to look at ruptures in wholes. Rather than seeking to smooth out the cyborg and to intensify the element we are most comfortable interacting with, we need to be able to see how pieces are assembled, more or less smoothly, into the whole with whom we interact. When we encounter a cyborg, we should address not only the human aspect of the other, but the mechanical and animal aspects as well. We may need to speak to those different organelles, to those different becomings, in different ways.

Rethinking modern fantasy that the body is a stable, unified, bounded entity giving a language to the multitude of connections that bodies form with other bodies (human and otherwise), a body (human, animal, social, chemical) has no interior truth or meaning; it exists only through its external connections and affects. For DG (1987), "We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, with affects of another body" (p. 257). A body's function or potential or meaning becomes entirely dependent on which other bodies or machines it forms assemblages with. At DW, the wheelchair, dog, spinal cage, and dancers become expressive affects; they effect and become the wheelchair dancer. Similar to DG, we will not ask what a body with disabilities means or signifies, but rather what effects its assemblages produce: we ask what immaterial material and what material immaterial is in being at Dancing Wheels.

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Return to Top of Page

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