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Logan Smilges' short academic text *Crip Negativity* (2023) is about the nexus of difference, desire, and survival in the right now. It is a love letter to the ways that disabled people steal access and strike from the demands of a life not conducive to flourishing, all while welcoming to pause with their "bad crip feelings" (p. 8). It is also a necessary critique of uncritical applications of 'disability' and 'access,' and the bad feelings that come with such critique. Resisting the urge to alleviate such bad feelings, readers are asked to sit with them. *Crip Negativity* is a refreshing escape from disability writing that is focused on progressing beyond bad feelings associated with disability, such as 'I am coming to terms with my disability' or 'I have grown as a person because of my disability.' *Crip Negativity* is about stillness, pausing in negative affects associated with disability to see what is at work behind them and what they make possible.

Unsurprisingly for a scholar of rhetoric, Smilges uses language very precisely in this book, bringing new meanings to 'disability' and 'negativity.' Similar to Smilges' previous book *Queer Silence: On Disability and Rhetorical Absence* (Minnesota UP, 2022), which advocates for the liberatory potential of silence, in *Crip Negativity*, Smilges seeks to re-evaluate the power of negativity and the process by which the category of disability is created and applied. Another example of careful language use is the chosen phrasing of "nonnormatively embodyminded people," which Smilges uses to draw readers' attention to people with mental and physical differences from the norm who are outside the category of disability but yet shape the category. At times, it is difficult to follow all the uses of crip, cripply, crippy, bad, negative, and disability,

but it is in the spirit of the book to embrace the varied, simultaneous, and sometimes conflicting associations of words.

The first chapter presents the multifaceted phenomenon of 'crip negativity,' otherwise referred to as "bad crip feelings felt cripply" (p. 8). Crip negativity refers to multiple things at once, including the bad feelings felt by disabled people and otherwise "nonnormatively embodyminded people" (p. 8) and how they feel those feelings, such as "sleeplessly, suicidally, hungrily" (p. 8). Alongside this more literal understanding of crip negativity—negative crips—are the negative feelings, largely skepticism, around the category of disability and how it is understood and deployed, especially in regard to "the language of access" (p. 8).

Via crip negativity and in conversations with discussions of 'the human' in Black studies, Smilges prods at what desires and ideologies underscore efforts to define disability and what, or rather who, is lost in trying to draw firm contours around the category. Along with this, Smilges insists that crip can do something "disability cannot," and then proceeds to explore that something by cripping the category of disability. Smilges offers a crip negative definition of disability as a "regulatory mechanism by which humanity can be distributed or withheld" (p. 9) citing ongoing histories of the category of disability working in concert with projects of anti-Blackness, cisheteronormativity, and white supremacy. To crip the category is to confront how political recognition of disabled people often requires a taming of the category, a trimming of it down into a subject position that is desirable in the eyes of the state. This taming is inherently violent and often aligns with ideals of reproductive futurism, channeling disabled people in the future that many of disabled people do not want.

Smilges' dissatisfaction with the ways that the category of disability is used for regulatory capture is directly linked to their critique of uncritical approaches to access, particularly those that equate disabled liberation with access. All too often, the calls for access are calls for "integrative access" (p. 4) where disabled people are assimilated into existing structures and institutions. They build on personal experiences of targeted ableist and homophobic bullying they received in high school to demonstrate the risks of simply assimilating disabled and otherwise marginalized people into structures and institutions built on cissexism, racism, and ableism. In the case of Smilges' high school experience, "access didn't eliminate ableism; it enabled ableism to bare its teeth" (p. 4). This aspect of the chapter leaves readers with important questions of exactly disabled people want access to and why.

By challenging the category of disability itself and integrative access through bad crip feelings, Smilges unsettles the boring, pure images of what we might call the frequently homogenized 'disability community' as a hub of harmonious politics. Reading this chapter kept the haunting, ironic image of Republican Texas Governor and wheelchair user Greg Abbott in the forefront of my mind. Smilges finally provides a framework for thinking through where to place such figures without just blaming internalized ableism.

Beyond bad feelings, the use of 'negative' is manifold. Primarily, Smilges draws from the famous futurity and antisocial thesis debate in queer theory, namely Lee Edelman's book *No Future*: a polemical argument that asserts queers must reject the social and futurity in order to be liberated by reproductive futurism and ultimately heteronormativity. Smilges compellingly

contends that the antisocial thesis asks a question of queers that *Crip Negativity* asks of disability people: do they want "assimilation or liberation" (p. 21)?

Mindful to the racism and ableism embedded in common deployments of the antisocial thesis, Smilges asks us how we can utilize it differently as a "failure worth knowing" (p. 26), quoting Jose Esteban Munoz. What the antisocial thesis offers differently is "the permission to be crippled by bad crip feelings, including those felt toward the model of anti-future futurism that it offers" (p. 26). With that, Smilges argues that crip negativity, while not wholly rejecting the future or the social, finds potential in pressing pause on the future. Abiding by crip and critical race perspectives on *No Future*, Smilges contends that we "more futures" (p. 24). This offers a strong starting point for thinking more deeply about what queer theory can offer disability studies and vice versa. While some may take issue with Smilges recuperation of the antisocial thesis, they do offer a strong model of how to work with scholarship that shores up some of the same bad feelings that the book strives to re-value.

The second chapter, Access Thievery, proposes the crip negative practice of stealing access, which is the act of taking the access we need to survive and flourish. This is something almost all disabled and nondisabled people have done, but perhaps they have done it with shame because stealing is wrong, right? Well, no. Who has not told their boss a little to get a day off to decompress, reset your senses, or simply to sleep? Stealing access from a world that was designed to include your existence, or even designed against your existence, is quite necessary. Extending from the previous chapter's critique of access as the end goal of disability rights, here,

Smilges contends that all too often disabled people need to be asking for more, for what we need to flourish— "we're not settling for survival" (p. 41).

As I said, stealing is supposed to be wrong, and stealing while disabled can be especially risky given that "abled people have been fantasizing about the dangers of evil crips for centuries" (p. 42). These tales have, as Smilges argues, deeply influenced current structural ways that disabled people are cast as untrustworthy, "shaping everything from welfare programs to truancy laws to the definition of citizenship" (p. 42). This opens valuable lines of thought about the scales of access thievery and the varied forms it can take depending on one's proximity to socially desirable norms. For me, this chapter is exciting as it motivates us to explore the realm of crip ethics and the need for more consideration of the survival and flourishing tactics of disabled people who cannot or do not want to access the category of disability.

Chapter Three addresses "the labor of crip life, the work of living with a disability" (p. 53) and proposes "life strike" as a method of reclaiming our lives back from the labor of living— the paperwork, the appointments, the looking for the accessible entrance, the ignoring of stares from nondisabled people, and more. While every person must labor to live, disabled people require even more, not merely because of our different bodyminds but also due to how "ability operates as a structural norm" (p. 4). Despite some pervasive ableist (and often racist) myths that disabled people cannot work or do not want to work, disabled people, in fact, have to work more than most other people, and this is especially true when we disrupt the homogeneous (often rendered white and cis) monolith of "disabled people" to account for how different people differently experience disability.

Life striking is about pressing pause on all non-essential activities and only attending to the very labors that keep us alive. A life strike might include striking from your job, cooking meals, cleaning, going to appointments, and/or communicating. Anyone who has ever laid in bed endlessly or slept to not be tasked with the burden of being alive will deeply resonate with this chapter. Life striking sits somewhere in the affective field of not wanting to die but certainly feeling unable to keep staying 'alive' in the sense that living in a hyper-capitalist society demands so much labor.

Smilges contextualizes the potential radicality of life striking within the wider history of disability and labor in the disability rights movement in the US. Using Tanya Aho's concept of labor-normativity, Smilges calls attention to how, again, issues of access and accommodations at work overshadow the large issue at hand: "the domestication of the disabled citizen through waged work" (p. 57). Simply making it easier for disabled people to gain employment does nothing to challenge the fact that the US equates value with labor productivity and capacity. Life strike starts to get us beyond this violent equation. Smilges also creates more theoretical space to explore the question of what is possible from our beds and to appreciate the ways that disabled people make their own strategies for survival.

The final chapter, Cripping Critique joins debates on disability as a methodology and the critical distinction between a crip analysis and a disability analysis. Building on Jasbir Puar's theory of debility and Julie Avril Minich's discussion of critical disability studies as methodology, Smilges offers a crip negative approach that does not just explicate the structural norms that produce the

category of disability, but the processes by which those norms and the category come into being. In other words, why are some people's traumas, illnesses, and bodymind differences recognized as disabilities or even recognized at all while others are denied such recognition? The proposition of crip negative critique is a firm example of the need for critical disability studies to be further adopted by fields concerned with the ontological, material, and discursive production of physical and mental differences in large-scale sites of disablement—from state-sponsored genocides to the prison industrial complex.

Despite the heavy discussion of ontological and material violence, I cannot help but think about what crip negativity can provide to discussions about the politics of feeling good about belonging and how they mobilize or obscure identification and recognition. We should all be asking what this book asks: Who gets to become socially and politically legible as 'disabled' and what does inclusion in the category actually offer those within it? What feelings accompany the identification of another person or group as disabled and what might those feelings preclude? How can we ethically engage with projects around increasing access to oppressive, yet often socially desirable, institutions such as public schools or government?

This is a book for us crips and the not-yet-crips—the crips-in-emergence. If readers, especially disabled readers, have not yet been radicalized by the systemic claws of ableism, Smilges will gently and lovingly nudge them toward such a realization. Despite my emphasis on crip readership, anyone invested in wrestling scholarship and activist language and values away from liberal and/or capitalism appropriation will benefit from feeling some more cripply bad feelings and asking what lies beneath them.