

Writing from the Groin by Sandra Alland; Transcript

0:02 San AD: A title appears in white letters: Writing From the Groin. By Sandra Alland.

0:08 Title Cards: Voice: That's me. Friends call me San. I'll read my essay while others translate it to British Sign Language (BSL).

00:15 Title Card: Yvonne Strain.

San AD: Cut to a white woman with long brown hair. She signs:

00:19 Yvonne:

Hi. I'm Yvonne, the BSL interpreter for San's essay:

00:24 Title Cards: Writing From The Groin. Or/and: How Non-disabled CisHet Monied White People Lock Themselves into Mediocrity.

00:35 San AD: Cut to a white deaf person wearing a black t-shirt that says "Footnote" in bright orange letters. He signs:

00:42 Ciaran:

I'm Ciaran. In this BSL version of San's essay, I represent San's footnotes, in the flesh. So you can call me Footnote. Footnotes, or asides, are information and explanations at the bottom or side of English texts.

01:03 San AD: An image appears. It's my bad sketch, "How Footnotes Usually Work". I've drawn the main text of a book. A number "1" next to a word matches up with footnote #1 lower down, described as "super-tiny and crammed at the bottom of the page".

01:19 San/Yvonne:

Don't worry, no more drawings by me (San) will appear in this essay. Back to you, Footnote.

01:27 San AD: He signs:

Ciaran:

San's essay has multimedia footnotes that are hopefully more useful and fun than usual footnotes. When I appear and address you, I'm San's thoughts. Or I introduce video footnotes from other disabled and Deaf writers. See you soon!

1:49 San AD: We cut back to the BSL interpreter, who signs:

1:52 Yvonne:

I'm also speaking as San, but I'll be translating San's main essay text. I'll begin now.

2:01 Title Card 'Introduction'.

2:03 San/Yvonne:

With this essay I offer imaginative alternatives, in both content and form, to the limitations of mainstream / non-disabled writing and publishing.

For those reading the essay text, the creative footnotes appear as they read, providing multimedia examples such as drawings and video quotes from disabled and Deaf writers. There are also summaries of my ideas in plainer language.

While some people are reading the text silently in their heads, I'm reading it aloud in this video. While others are listening, some people are following in BSL. You might not use the audio. You might not read the plainer language. But I'd like to remind you these things are happening – and ideally they'd always be happening.

For those reading, or watching in BSL, my voice is of medium pitch. People have described it as 'soothing', which isn't so useful when getting a point across, haha. In the UK, folk tend to say my voice sounds 'Canadian maybe?', while people on Turtle Island say it's 'kinda Scottish', which I find complimentary but hilarious.

03:25 San AD: Footnote jumps into frame and signs:

03:28 San/Ciaran:

It's Footnote Time! This is where the first footnote appears in the online essay. Text in a box reads: "For geographical clarity, I mention well-known place-names in the United States and Canada. A reminder that these settler cities are on the stolen Indigenous lands of Turtle Island." Back to the main text!

03:57 San/Yvonne:

If I were visible in the video or text, some people might notice these things: I have black glasses and arm tattoos, one of which says 'sing'. I'm white and in my 40s. My aura is something like: 'Sad, tired, and fluctuating between too chill and too anxious. But bursting with queer disabled hope'.

04:25 Title Card: 'The Guts ("scratch that out") The Groin of the Essay.'

04:32 San/Yvonne:

Normative writing creates multi-pronged exclusion. A part of the bodymind this relates to is the groin.

04:41 San AD: Footnote jumps into frame and signs:

04:44 San/Ciaran:

It's Footnote time! San writes: Aye, I'm writing about crotches, haha. I'm writing *to* your crotches in fact, addressing them. Why favour the eyes all the time? But speaking of visuals, my longish hair covers one of my eyes. I still don't feel safe cutting it because of

COVID and our governments' abysmal failures to protect us. But behind the hair I'm winking, because the word 'crotch' is silly. It's also because, although much of what I'm writing is super-serious, I want to remember laughter as a form of resistance. As the late bell hooks said, "We cannot have a meaningful revolution without humour." Back to the main text!

05:45 San/Yvonne:

Disabled people are often desexualised, while low-income, racialised, trans and queer people are hyper-sexualised. Some of us live at the intersections of these opposing stereotypes, where multiply-marginalised people are othered in many ways at once. Society labels us sexually strange, and reduces us to mis-genders or un-genders which are then used to erase our stories.

So, most publishing and book events, and particularly the Scottish literary scene, are 'locked' – not only in terms of ableism, but also through connected classism, white supremacy, (trans)misogyny and anti-queerness. Some people think words and the publishing of them are equally available to everyone. But depending on who your parents are, and how and where you were born, and if some people don't want you to be born at all, your words might be ignored or unfairly judged. What's popular in literature has literal connections to eugenics.

07:10 San AD: Footnote appears and signs:

07:12 San/Ciaran:

Time for another footnote from San. Content note: genocide. Eugenicists are obsessed with groins and 'breeding'. Eugenics is a philosophy of eliminating the so-called 'bad genes' of marginalised people, such as disabled, Indigenous, intersex and / or poor people. Examples of everyday eugenics include: insufficient welfare benefits, housing, clean water and health care; the BMI (body mass index); forced sterilisation and surgeries; targeted policing and incarceration; institutionalisation; assisted dying – and mainstream publishing.

08:15 San AD: Back to the main text.

08:17

San/Yvonne:

Literary eugenics – our erasure from storytelling – is everywhere online, in print, and in person. The majority of publications (and call-outs for those books and magazines) don't offer sign language or audio. In-person readings take place without basics like level access, quiet space or a mic. Live readings of all kinds rarely have live captioning.

Options for remote participation are few. Online events, which were suddenly possible when non-disabled people couldn't go out, have mostly disappeared since 'post-COVID' reopening – underlining the capitalist belief that in-the-flesh entertainment is worth a certain amount of disabled death. Content note for Coronavirus data in this footnote.

09:20 San AD: An image footnote appears, of statistics from coronavirus.data.gov.uk on 2 February, 2022. It shows 534 new deaths in the UK, and a total of 178,488 deaths since the start of the pandemic.

[Onscreen update: "Red text by San gives an update: '218,405 as of 16 February 2023. Disabled people are dying at 1.4 times the rate of non-disabled people, and from complications caused by decreased health and social care, Long Covid, and lack of access to public life.']

09:40 San/Yvonne:

Even when events do have access, they happen in 'real time', and therefore remain closed to a lot of disabled and ill people. This can be because of limited scheduling of accessible performances, or because it's not possible for some of us to maintain attention for three hours – even online. Canadian writer Alex Haagaard brilliantly describes such exclusion in "Notes on Temporal Inaccessibility".

10:16 San AD: A video footnote from a white person with short, messy blonde hair, wearing glasses.

[video] "Hi, I'm Alex. I was gonna wait and record this until after I took a shower and got dressed, but I decided the bedhead and hoodie fit the theme a little bit better. I'm really glad San mentioned access based on time because many people forget about it. In my essay, I write about how having to attend something, even something digital, at a particular and 'live' time can mean many disabled or ill people can't go. You might not feel well enough, or have enough energy. Because it always feels like you're falling behind, you may also feel like there are just other things you need to catch up on instead. Or, if you do go, you might struggle to keep up, need breaks, need to pause or rewind."

11:07 San/Yvonne:

Eugenics locks us out – but the world of mainstream books also locks itself in. It's stuck in its own lack. Despite people in power obsessing over marginalised people's bodily 'failings', our question is not the medical "Can we fix our bodies?", or even "Can we fix a space to partially accommodate our different bodyminds?" Instead, our question is that of the late Scottish poet Callie Gardner: "Can we fix what bodies us?". My answer is: Not really. These institutions and practices might be beyond fixing.

Maybe we don't *want* keys to the locked world of the establishment. Maybe non-disabled cis het middle- / upper-class white people have confined themselves to making mediocre and stagnant artworks. Mainstream writing navel-gazes and groin-gazes at the endlessly-reproduced viewpoints of the powerful as 'high art', while deeming the rest of our work inferior. We're labelled Personal Identity Narratives. We fill a Diversity Quota.

Under this unimaginative framework, digital writing is just a page reproduced on a screen. It could be so much more.

Forced outside the mainstream, multiply-marginalised disabled, Deaf, ill, Mad and neurodivergent artists have been reinventing form and genre with creatively-embedded access for decades. Literature is behind the performing arts in embracing this exciting work, but disabled writers are definitely out there making it.

13:22 Title Card: The Idea of Access.

13:25 San/Yvonne:

I'll take a moment to write about what access *is not*.

13:30 San AD: Footnote jumps into frame and signs:

13:33 San/Ciaran:

Me again! San says: I'm writing this essay to disabled people directly, and I'm aware some of you might already know most of what I'm saying. But even disabled people can fail at access that doesn't involve our own requirements – or get drawn into individualist thinking about what access means.

13:59 San AD: Back to the main text.

14:01 San/Yvonne:

Many non-disabled, neurotypical and hearing people, including those on arts councils, have just become aware of The Idea of Access. Their impressions are typically disappointing. They think access is something you chuck on at the end of a project, just before the audience / reader bit. They often hire random unqualified workers, or spend more resources on taking pictures of access than on making sure it's suitable.

14:41 San AD: A video footnote in BSL of a white person with short brown hair and glasses.

[video] "Hi, I'm Deaf performer Brooklyn Melvin. San was groaning when they wrote this, and I'm groaning now too. It's true, hearing people love taking pictures of sign language! They declare 'It's so beautiful!' no matter what we're actually saying, like I might be cursing horribly because I've just seen Boris Johnson talking about COVID without an interpreter AGAIN. Trust me, that isn't beautiful. Speaking of interpreters, hearing people rarely check if interpreters are understood by Deaf audiences, or capable of translating things like poetry on the spot."

[Onscreen update: "Despite two changes in prime minister, as of 2023 the Tories still don't provide BSL at emergency briefings."]

15:53 San/Yvonne:

The Idea of Access frames inclusion as expensive, something to be booked 'on demand' instead of always available. The Idea of Access is non-disabled and hearing people making inaccessible work, then desperately trying to 'make it accessible' because their funding will get reduced if they don't. Or because some rude disabled person complained.

16:25 San AD: Footnote runs into frame as if late and signs:

16:29 San/Ciaran:

Footnote! I'm rolling my eyes sarcastically as I dictate words into crappy speech-to-text software. The imaginary disabled person might have been rude, and was probably justified

if they were. But more likely they simply said, "Hey I couldn't get into your event or hear you." But, as Sara Ahmed writes, "When you expose a problem you pose a problem." Which basically means people hate being told what they're doing sucks, so they'll try to blame you for noticing.

17:14 San AD: Back to the main text.

17:17 San/Yvonne:

The Idea of Access makes disabled people into a burden, an afterthought. When faced with this attitude, many of us would rather not experience some artworks at all. DeafBlind U.S. poet John Lee Clark captures this idea wonderfully in his recent essay "Against Access". He describes how non-disabled or hearing artists like to think they're 'helping': "Why is it about their including or not including us? Why is it never about *us* and whether or not we include *them*?" He questions the one-way direction of access, and whether such art can even speak to us.

Clark's ideas are echoed in the U.S. project "Alt Text as Poetry". Disabled artists and activists Shannon Finnegan and Bojana Coklyat want to increase image description and web accessibility for blind and low-vision people. To this end, they suggest using ideas of poetry and translation, like conciseness and clarity, to make descriptive text not only 'better' but more enjoyable.

18:45 San AD: A video footnote of two still photos with voice-over by Shannon Finnegan. First is the website Alt Text as Poetry, showing text and audio options. Then Bojana Coklyat and Shannon present to a workshop group.

[video] "Instead of focusing on compliance and doing the minimum, what if we approach access creatively and generously, centring disability culture? How do we make spaces and experiences that disabled people not only can access but want to access?"

19:13 San/Yvonne:

Most importantly, The Idea of Access ignores disability justice. Disability justice (DJ) is not 'justice for disabled people', as in a single-issue civil rights struggle that ends when there are ramps everywhere. Rooted in cross-disability and cross-movement solidarity, DJ is an evolving intersectional movement. It was formed by people of colour, queer, and gender-nonconforming people, including the founders of the U.S. performance project Sins Invalid.

19:59 San AD: A video footnote of a brown light-skinned woman with dark brown hair and brown eyes.

[video] "Hi. I'm Maria Palacios. I'm a long-time artist and collaborator with Sins Invalid. Here's a quote about disability justice from the Sins Invalid website: 'The histories of white supremacy and ableism are inextricably entwined, created in the context of colonial conquest and capitalist domination. One cannot look at the history of US slavery, the stealing of Indigenous lands, and US imperialism without seeing the way that white supremacy uses ableism to create a lesser/'other' group of people that is deemed less worthy/abled/smart/capable.'"

20:50 San/Yvonne:

Disability literature without DJ is... well, individualist regurgitation of the harmful status quo. But much disabled literature forefronts disability justice, along with creatively-embedded access, as essential and form-altering.

21:13 Title Card: CripLit Screens

San AD: spelled capital C, r-i-p, no space, capital L, i-t.

21:21 San/Yvonne:

Short for Crip Literature.

Deaf people can be extremely excluded from mainstream society, especially if they don't speak, read or write. Poetry in print is valued over performance-based poetry – and audism means that the most-celebrated Deaf poets are bilingual or don't use sign language at all. When sign language poets do get published, they end up being read 'once-removed' in translation.

Pennsylvania-based poet Meg Day attempts to capture American Sign Language (ASL) on the page, but acknowledges the failures of these attempts and how hearing people read them. Day addresses the limits of translation and text itself in "Unfit to Print: Refusing the Page in Deaf Poetics". Paper cannot accommodate Deaf poets writing in English, Day argues.

22:31 San AD: A voiced-over ASL video footnote of a white, Deaf transmasculine person with short blonde hair.

[video] "This is, after all, the lie of disability poetics. It's about us and by us, but not for us. Hi, I'm Meg Day, and that was a quote from my essay Unfit to Print. Another quote: What is the English text of a Deaf poet but printed media that references something else, something larger, that might—if used as such—expand the reach of such making?"

23:25 San/Yvonne:

In contrast to the non-accommodation of text-based publishing, film-poems by Deaf poets often have captioning, whether the creator speaks or signs the poem. Some sign language poets additionally provide audio. And vice-versa – a good number of Deaf poets who speak their poems choose to translate to sign language, even if they don't use it themselves. Deaf poets working in film win hands-down as leaders of embedded access, pun intended.

24:00 San AD: Footnote jumps into frame and signs:

24:05 San/Ciaran:

Miss me? San writes: 'I'm not sure if this expression, "hands down", exists in BSL. So now Ciaran is having to try to translate this joke, which will likely make it more un-funny than it already was.' True, San, it's pretty awful. But the idea translates roughly as 'Deaf people are way better at integrated access than hearing people'.

24:40 San/Yvonne:

Integrating multiple kinds of access can be practical for Deaf people, but goes beyond self-interest. Many Deaf poets centre linguistic justice, in solidarity with people who experience deafness in ways different to them, including those who use other sign languages, lipread, have cochlear implants, and / or are DeafBlind. It's also cross-disability solidarity with disabled hearing people who need audio or captions.

In the film-poem "Dear Hearing World", deaf London writer Raymond Antrobus speaks aloud, but doesn't appear on-screen. Antrobus is known because he's a text-based poet, but makes the community-minded decision to instead feature a BSL performance by Deaf actor Vilma Jackson. Antrobus's film-poem goes further than 'access'. Experimental captions fade and dance around the images. Spoken words and music distort as form connects with content – passionately demonstrating deaf resistance to audism.

26:03 San AD: A film clip footnote of Jackson, a Black Deaf woman, performing poetry into the camera in BSL. She walks around London on a cool night, translating Antrobus's spoken words.

[film] "I mulled over long paragraphs/ because I didn't know/ what a natural break sounded like/ you erased what could have always been poetry/ strike/ that/ out/ you erased what could have always been poetry/ you taught me I was inferior to standard English expression/ I was a broken speaker/ you were never a broken interpreter/ taught me my speech was dry/ for someone who should sound like they are underwater/ and it took years to talk with a straight spine."

26:49 San/Yvonne:

Such use of integrated elements re-invents the film-poem, each layer of access adding a layer of meaning. Bristol poet DL Williams's "Bilingual Poet's Dilemma" similarly weaves in colourful captions, as well as audio description. Williams appears as various versions of themselves in comical BSL 'thought bubbles' as they try, and fail, to translate their own English poetry.

27:25 San AD: A voiced-over film clip footnote of Williams, a white Deaf person signing poetry in BSL. Their expressions are often comedic as they get tired of trying to translate.

[film] "I can wave my hands in the air, but that's not a rhyming pair, And that's before I consider... iambic... pentameter?" Audio description: DL finger-spells iambic pentameter. Brightly-coloured English translations appear as DL tries various signs for this English poetic rhythm: 'Shakespeare-style poetry? iambic word rhythm?' DL puts their hands on their hips and sighs. Cut to DL holding a small clay skull with hat and sunglasses, which they contemplate grimly in the manner of Shakespeare's Hamlet.

28:18 San/Yvonne:

Dyslexic poets can be found playing in the embedded access sandbox, too. Londoner Talia Randall makes her film-poem, "Household", more accessible to some dyslexic readers by providing only one visual: bright pink and green capital letters on a black background. Animated by EYESONTHEWALL, the text aids readers as it moves to the rhythm of Randall's recorded voice.

28:50 San AD: A film clip footnote of bright words on a black screen, dancing to the rhythm of Randall's spoken words.

[film] "The stray cat visits and eats tuna off the posh china. Father calls the cat Jeremy. Father sees himself in Jeremy. Sister sees herself in Brother. Brother sees himself in the TV. Mother realises she left herself in the old country. On the night they get cable, they invite the neighbours round for a séance."

29:25 San/Yvonne:

Deaf performer Mia Ward's BSL version, which follows the text, takes six minutes longer than the English – showing the challenges of 'in time' sign language translation. Randall's choice of two versions also highlights that having many things on-screen can be confusing for dyslexic, learning-disabled and neurodivergent people – complicating notions of what access means.

30:00 Title Card: CripLit Sounds

30:04 San/Yvonne:

Much disabled literature honours oral and performance traditions, such as spoken word and storytelling. It also pushes against conventions of 'acceptable' audio, embracing writers who stammer, stutter, slur, speak in atypical ways, don't speak, and / or take longer to get to the point. But sound-based disabled writers struggle to gain audiences in a medium that's less valued than the page.

Leroy F. Moore Jr. is a poet and M.C. with CP (cerebral palsy) who primarily presents his work aloud, including on stellar CDs like *The Black Kripple Delivers*.

San AD: Kripple spelled with a K.

31:00 San/Yvonne: Since founding Krip-Hop Nation,

San AD: Again with a K.

31:04 San/Yvonne:

in Berkeley in 2007, Moore has promoted the work of disabled hip-hop artists internationally. His focus on disabled voices is everything; it's extremely rare for those with unusual or slower speech to take the mic.

31:25 San AD: A film clip footnote of a black and white close-up of Moore, an African American man with short greying hair and beard, reading into a silver mic.

[film] "In a rocking chair he sees the cycle/ cute, overcome, pity, then invisible/ black disabled newborn boys/ in one room next to where he is, the hospice/ Yeah Ralph Ellison, I understand/ Take my hand and pull me in, two thousand and blah blah/ still going through fingers like sand."

32:13 San/Yvonne: In his book *Blerf*,

San AD: B-l-e-r-t.

32:19 San/Yvonne:

Canadian poet Jordan Scott writes with deliberately challenging and obscure language. The text 'trips up' the reader's brain in order to make them feel a difficulty similar to Scott's when speaking. While many of his written poems highlight speech interruption in such subtle ways, Scott's live readings fully honour the embodied stutter.

32:44 San AD: A film clip footnote of Scott, a white man with short hair, reading into a mic.

[film] "F-f-Fable. The gaps between the s-s-s-syllables are filled by the f-frivolous guesses and surmises of birds."

33:14 San/Yvonne:

Sound both aids and excludes text-based writers who can't use pens or keyboards. Londoner Natalie Joelle's dictated essay, "radical gleaning: Doing Prac Crip" artfully demonstrates that speech-to-text software is insufficient as crip expression – or as a solution to the capitalist workplace. Poetry-dictation collaborations from the 2010s, like my *Naturally Speaking* and Fleur Adcock's *Dragon Talk*, engage the frustrating, funny and ableist failures of technology meant to assist with physical impairments.

The writing of atypical speakers and composers is hardly ever published, and its creators are featured even less often on stages or podcasts. When books do happen, the unusual voice or process is made 'normal' and palatable. It's evoked on paper yet contained and smoothed for the non-disabled reader. This is done by the non-disabled publisher – who doesn't think to make an audiobook.

34:40 Title Card: CripLit Pages

34:43 San/Yvonne:

In terms of access on / to the page, mostly what we get in mainstream publishing is too-small fonts with hard-to-read serifs. Many websites and e-versions are incompatible with screen readers. And very few disabled writers get published.

Only recently have publishers (mostly large ones) started to consider The Idea of Access. When researching book access for Disability Arts International in 2020, I was pretty saddened by the state of things. The extent of literary access is usually various 'versions': an audiobook, or a plain language book, or an e-book, or a Braille book. Always 'or'. Rarely 'and'.

And as Meg Day asks of print literature trying to represent sign language: "Where is the body, its handshapes & movements & lived negotiations of space?"

There's not one 'right' way to approach (almost) universal design. Having separate versions isn't necessarily crap, and in some cases different kinds of access at once can be overwhelming. But I can't help thinking about how e-books and online publishing could offer us more than they do. Again, why do we ask, "How can non-disabled people boringly adapt this inaccessible thing?". I'd prefer to ask, "What can we make differently that can be enjoyed in specific crip ways?"

U.S. literary journal *The Deaf Poets Society* burst online in 2016. Their founding Manifesto celebrates the revolutionary potential of disabled, ill, neurodivergent and Deaf writing. One fab thing they say is, "We're here to right literature". And that's not a typo, it's r-i-g-h-t, to make literature right.

37:15 San AD: A video footnote of a white woman with long dark brown hair and glasses, in English with some ASL.

[video] "Hi, I'm Sarah, one of the co-founders of The Deaf Poets Society. Here's a quote from our Manifesto: We aim to create a literature of a society with a different center, where the writer with a disability is not literally seated on the floor of the writing workshop while others are seated at the seminar table, where the writer with a disability does not spend years telling stories that make others comfortable, and themselves invisible."

37:59 San/Yvonne:

The Deaf Poets Society gives the chance to read and / or listen, free, to all the poetry and fiction they publish, plus alt text of images (and notably with little to no funding). In 2020, disabled-led *Wordgathering: A Journal of Disability Poetry and Literature* managed to upgrade to a similar text and audio format. This kind of easy-to-do access seems limited to cash-strapped Deaf and disabled publications, and is still not widely available online.

Books have an equally recent and spotty history of inventive or embedded access, again only existing because of the advocacy and / or underpaid labour of disabled editors. But our communities persist despite barriers like higher costs – and we acknowledge that access also means affordability.

In 2017 Khairani Barokka, Daniel Sluman and I co-edited the small-press UK print and e-book anthology, *Stairs and Whispers: D/deaf and Disabled Poets Write Back*.

39:19 San AD: Stairs spelled s-t-a-i-r-s.

39:23 San/Yvonne:

In collaboration with the poets and essayists, we created free online audio descriptions, recordings of writers reading their work, and captioned film-poems in BSL and English. The book's URLs can be typed or dictated into a search engine, or clicked from each page in the e-book.

The following year, San Francisco's community-focused Disability Visibility Project gifted us with more indie inventiveness. Editor Alice Wong published various text formats of her fab e-book, *Resistance and Hope: Essays by Disabled People*. And if you want to listen for free online, you fast-forward to the listed time of each essay in a single track, as opposed to searching individual tracks like in *Stairs and Whispers*.

40:24 San AD: A footnote screengrab of the *Resistance and Hope* Google doc, listing timestamps for the audio track. It shows beginning and end times for each recording. For example, 0 to 37 seconds, Image description of book cover; and 12:09-34:05, "Rebel - Don't Be Palatable" by Lydia X. Z. Brown.

40:46 San/Yvonne:

In 2021, another micro-press labour of love arrived in London. Edited by Sophie Stone and Lisa Kelly, *What Meets the Eye? The Deaf Perspective* offers links to free online videos, featuring BSL translations of its printed poems and stories.

Disabled-led publications are exploding access in ways that establishment literature just isn't. Entities that embed, forefront, or connect to audio-visuals are few but growing.

41:29 Title Card: CripLit Concerns

San/Yvonne:

Non-normative writing is distinct in how it's made, what it's made from (e.g. 'language'), who it's made about and for – and why.

Some disabled writers publish our own literature to avoid the eugenics of what we're 'allowed' to write elsewhere. In "To Hold the Grief & the Growth: On Crip Ecologies", Filipinx-american Kay Ulanday Barrett tenderly examines the damaging stories others demand of us, and how non-disabled poetry is defined in opposition to community.

42:19 San AD: A video footnote of a brown round queer with glasses.

[video] "Our catastrophe must be on display for consumption, and at the same time very little accountability is discussed around the ableism that causes obstacles for disabled people in the first place. No, we are to ultimately be the epic hero and poem, a solo endeavor of plight and woe. These expectations are impossible to fulfill and operate to erase systemic dynamics that plague not just the disabled artists and writers but the ways in which we define poetry."

43:06 San/Yvonne:

"Notes to Other Selves" is a Google doc and audio recording created by Leah Clements, Susanna Davies-Crook, Alice Hattrick and Sophie Hoyle. Collated in London during the first year of COVID-19, the purpose of the work was the conversation between the artists – "a support structure, of which the text is a byproduct". The writers invest in interdependence via a record of "embodiment, sickness, diagnosis, crip-time, grief and queerness", and in that way they approach ideas of disability justice as poetics.

44:02 San AD: A footnote screengrab of the Google Doc. A diagram of a human brain has labels like 'secondary visual area' and 'posterior speech area'. Text reads: "by any other name would smell as sweet, spoken by Juliet." Next is a description of the Broca area's connection to articulate speech. Then: "The leaves grow still. Like most people, I can't be trusted with having a body." There's a footnote: "1. I think about prison time. And sound. And silence. The metallic foley of prison films. The ticking clocks. Waiting for sentence to be passed and justice to be done. Metered. The chronic tick and tock and the." Back to the main text.

44:48 San/Yvonne:

The late Mel Baggs's video "In My Language" shares some of the autistic U.S. blogger's communication methods. In the 'translation' that follows the wordless first half of the piece, Baggs describes how personhood itself is defined by dominant non-disabled language: "It is only when I type something in your language that you refer to me as having

communication."

John Lee Clark references alternative forms of communication when describing how his DeafBlind community created Protactile – the 'first tactile language', led by Jelica Nuccio and aj granda. Clark creates Protactile poetry; poems to be literally felt.

45:46 San AD: A voiced-over film clip footnote of Clark, a smiling white man, performing "The Rebuttal" in Protactile. He touches two seated people, the 'receivers', in rhythmic patterns and at varying speeds, along their heads, arms and torsos. Clark raises their arms with his hands energetically, then clasps their hands with joy.

[film] "Feeling draws heart/ and wildering language/ still without speech to mind./ Philosophy fails to sway/ this future child."

46:31 San/Yvonne:

'Translation' from touch to spoken or written language, and vice versa, opens up many poetic possibilities, as does the refusal of traditional translation altogether. Deaf poet Paul Scott and poet-interpreter Kyra Pollitt created the UK project *Air Poems in the Key of Voice*, a performance with multimedia translations of Scott's Signart into song and rhythmic film-poems.

47:11 San AD: A film clip footnote of Scott performing Signart in front of a screen with moving images. Singer Victoria Punch is off-stage.

[film] Audio description: Kyra Pollitt's sketch of numbered boxes arranged as a score. Then we cut to the performance.

48:09 San/Yvonne:

We deserve the space to tell our stories in specific ways, including taking 'too long'. In "Autistic long form, short form, no form, echotextia: Autistic Poetic Forms", Massachusetts-based Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha gets into the guts of how our differences as disabled and / or neurodivergent people *make our writing different*.

48:46 San AD: A video footnote of Piepzna-Samarasinha, a mid-40s mixed-race Sri Lankan Irish and Roma femme with light-brown skin, purple lipstick, glasses, and curly purple and brown hair on one side.

[video] "By autistic long form, I mean a (not *the*) common autistic communication or literary strategy for some of us of, well, taking the long way home to get to where we're going conversationally or communicatively. We meander. We are like streams or rivers, that wend our way along a course and go our own way doing it. Our communication has its own logic - there are rocks and bumps and deposits to wind around, explore, weave into the communication - and rarely is that logic of a straight line. When you ask us what happened, we have to start at the beginning and stop to have several improvised side note scenes along the way that are part of the story in order to tell it. We have to tell you this bit for context, which reminds us of this other bit. It's a very anti-capitalist writing and storytelling strategy, in a way. It does not emphasize scarcity or 'getting to the point'. Autistic long form is one of the things that gets autistics yelled at a lot, a la 'get to the point' or 'why are you being so annoying?' or we get accused of 'taking up too much space.' I still constantly apologize for my winding river. 'Sorry this is taking so long, sorry, sorry, long

story short, long story longer.' 'I'm so sorry, I'll get to the point soon, I promise.' I've had people get impatient or angry with me for talking or writing this way. I've had editors chop so much of it out, to get to what they say is 'the important bit'. And sometimes there can be a point to this. As I heard a friend say once (I'm paraphrasing): They're aware they speak in a way that is the only way, often, they can speak, and that it's also not a way that is accessible for some people, including other neurodivergent people, because it is a lot of words. And yet: here we are. People might bark 'Get to the point', and there might be a valid point to that ask – spoons, or time, or the sense that we're taking up so much damn space to the limitation of others. But there's often a rage aimed at the way we talk that doesn't have anything to do with those things. So we feel ashamed of it. We get a lot of microaggressions about it. We get told that no-one's gonna read a seven page letter. Or people just don't read it at all. I think that there is a decolonization and a de-capitalization of time when we long form. A sense that the story, and all its bridges and rivers, is the important thing. That it deserves the time it takes to be told completely. That time, actually, is not always money. That there should be enough time to tell the long story that leads to another long story. That there should be enough time for a long story."

51:57 San/Yvonne:

Piepzna-Samarasinha raises important questions about audience, what's considered 'good', and how access can't always be universal. For example, maybe we're writing only to other neurodivergent people who communicate just like us.

Side-tracks and length are also part of ADHD storytelling. Omaha's Dani Donovan explores this in a humorous graphic form, with her "ADHD comics".

52:30 San AD: A footnote of Donovan's colourful diagram on a black background comparing Non-ADHD and ADHD Storytelling. Non-ADHD has two boxes: "Start of Story", then a short arrow to: "End of Story". ADHD Storytelling has lots of boxes. There are detours and complicated paths. Labels include: Pre-story Prologue for 'Context'; Semi-Related Side Story; What Was I Talking About?; Wrap Story Up and Finally Get to the Point; and Apologize. Back to the main text.

53:04 San/Yvonne:

Rooted in a different (crip) time, Florida-based poet The Cyborg Jillian Weise addresses 'cyborg writing'. Communication changes according to "leg on/leg off, lean in/lean posture, in pain/on pain relief". Cy's work explores how formal aspects like grammar and length can be altered by pain, insufficient and abusive medical services, and exhaustion.

53:46 San AD: A footnote screengrab of a Tweet showing an ad with a person lying down on a heated neck-stretcher traction device. A slanted video follows, of The Cyborg Jillian Weise, a white, disabled Dominatrix with a purple bob. Cy reads the Tweet while propped up on the same device.

[video] "Advertisement: If yr in bed with neck pain, you might like this. I like this very much. I do not use as shown. I use to sit up. Something holds my neck. Heat is good. Pain means short sentences. This is cyborg writing."

54:32 San/Yvonne:

Disabled people, like people from many oppressed groups, are forced to think of our bodies more often. We're arguably more in touch with our bodyminds. And you can't ignore that this can be a sexy thing. Sexy as in body sexy, but also as in brain sexy. Which returns me to the idea of the groin, this time in a more positive light.

We know what we need. We know how, and at what pace, we want stories and poems to happen. Many of us write from our groins, and by this I mean with that kind of energy that isn't just sexual (some of us are asexual and many of us have a lot of other stuff we think about too). Our groin-writing can be a powerful, centred way of knowing. The groin is also where a good curse comes from.

We avoid the saccharine stereotypes of the inspirational heart, and instead choose something deeper: our cores.

55:42 Title Card: Conclusion

55:46 San/Yvonne:

I've touched on ways disabled thinking and embodiment, integrated access, and disability justice can positively alter writing, performance and publication practices. Through this essay's unusual structure/s and the imaginative works of featured writers, I've shown that disabled creations are the expansive future of literature.

Establishment engagement with these ideas just isn't happening, geographically or online. But on top of that, most examples I could find are from the United States, Canada and London. There are zero accessible reading series or publishers here in Scotland. Creative Scotland doesn't have a disability strand. Edinburgh International Book Festival has patchy access, and showcases few disabled writers. Most bookshops, and places like Scottish Poetry Library, don't have reachable shelves and enough space to wheel around (especially at events), never mind accessible toilets or disabled writers on their shelves and staff.

You can replace accessible with racially-inclusive, or inclusive to trans and poor people. Returning to the tenets of disability justice, they're all related.

57:17 San AD: Cut to Footnote already in frame, caught lying on the sofa. He jumps up and signs:

57:24 San/Ciaran:

Oops! Time for a footnote! San writes: I'm sighing.

57:32 San AD: Then he interrupts my thought.

57:34 Ciaran:

Aye, San, as a fellow Scot I'm sighing about the state of things too. I'm going to go lie down and watch all those other amazing Footnote people again to feel better.

57:45 San AD: Back to the main text.

57:47 San/Yvonne:

Despite me dragging Scotland, I need to acknowledge the low population and high poverty here, as well as the fact that I gained much of my crip knowledge from other Scottish disabled people. We are here doing things, we're just not paid attention to or funded, despite our capital city being an official 'City of Literature'. The real point is that no place is doing well – because no nation-state recognises human value beyond profit.

While institutions everywhere remain steeped in the eugenics of imperialism, white supremacy and classism, there can be no disability justice. Applying The Idea of Access to colonial frameworks gives us neither inclusion nor access. But as disabled activist Mia Mingus suggests in "Disability Justice is Simply Another Term for Love", the goal is to build our own tables and beyond-tables, instead of fighting for a seat at super-uncomfortable ones.

59:04 San AD: A video footnote of a Korean person with long dark hair and glasses.

[video] "Hi I'm Mia. This is a quote from my essay. 'I don't just want technical and logistical access. I don't just want inclusion, I want liberatory access and access intimacy. I don't just want us to get a seat at someone else's table, I want us to be able to build something more magnificent than a table, together with our accomplices. I want us to be able to be understood and to be able to take part in principled struggle together—to be able to be human together. Not just placated or politely listened to.'"

59:51 San/Yvonne:

Let's be done with peering into the locked keyholes of power. Let's not squeeze into literary moulds that won't accept our glorious shapes. Instead of clumsily adapting inaccessible work, or hammering away until a reluctant and indifferent literary scene meets even a few of our requirements, we can create entirely different – and more radical – genres and forms. Right now. We can realise our dreams for a better future, filled with exciting, groin-tastic writing.

And let them come to us.

60:38 Credits:

Essay written and read by Sandra Alland

AD & footnotes: San and guest artists

BSL translation: Yvonne Strain

BSL footnote translation: Ciaran Stewart

Captions: Jack Guariento & A.B. Silvera

Yvonne filmed by Conor O'Toole

Thanks: Gloria Dawson, Matson Lawrence, Emilia Beatriz, David Ellington, everyone at Birds of Paradise, all the guest artists.

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End at 61:09