

Bob Guter and John R. Killacky (Eds). *Queer Crips: Disabled Gay Men and Their Stories*. New York: Harrington Park Press, 2003. 225pp.

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Queer Crips is primarily comprised of reprinted material, most of which originally appeared in Guter's online periodical *BENT: A Journal of Cripgay Voices*. The overarching aim of that journal, and by extension this text, might be found in Samuel Lurie's essay "Loving You Loving Me," wherein Lurie asks, "How do we create a language to normalize who we are? Just how do we take hold of our unique bodies, reframe a lifetime of shame into one of comfort and pride? How do we actively love and celebrate, not just accept, our unique selves?" (86). The questionable discourse of normalization (read: the coded desire to appear and/or be "normal," however that is defined) notwithstanding, Lurie is onto something and it is that something that *Queer Crips* tries to define and examine.

The intersection this text speaks to—the ontology of disabled gay subjectivities—is an important one that has, to date, been left out of the literature about, respectively, gay and disabled subjects. That said, this reviewer is perplexed by the overemphasis on sexual activity in the text. One reason for this focus might be to prove that disabled men have sex lives, but the emphasis also has the attendant effect of reinforcing stereotypes about gay male promiscuity. Representations of sexual activity are always already complicated, yet the editors have overstepped in their attempt to celebrate the sex lives of disabled gay men.

The stories in *Queer Crips* are a mixed bag: some sparkle, while others fizzle. The opener, Greg Walloch's "Two Performance Pieces," does not translate well onto the page. The pieces are better experienced in a visual medium, e.g. in the films "Crip Shots" and "Fuck the Disabled." In contrast, a particularly striking piece is Carmelo Gonzalez's "Rolling On," in which Gonzalez recalls his repeated sexual violation as a boy by an adult figure. The text becomes mired in tedium with two interviews, "How to Find Love with a Fetishist: Bob Guter Interviews Alan Sable" and "Dancing Toward the Light: Bob Guter Interviews Thomas Metz and Michael Perrault." The fact that Sable does not identify as disabled immediately causes the reader to question his inclusion in the anthology. It also doesn't help that Sable speaks clinically (as the psychotherapist he is) as well as Socratically. The reader has the impression that this interview is a replication of a Platonic dialogue, with Guter filling the unenviable role of the dupe

forced to respond to Socrates' (in this case, Sable's) all-knowing interrogatories. Metz and Perrault do identify as disabled gay men. The problem with their interview is that the reader feels compelled to be in the interview space in order to grasp the entirety of the exchange. Indeed, throughout the interview, Guter interrupts the two to ask why they are sharing laughter and exchanging glances. He frequently points out to them that he will have difficulty translating the importance of their interactions to the reader. He is correct. It is instructive to contrast these interviews with the lively "Nasty Habits: Bob Guter Interviews Gordon Elkins." Elkins (aka Sister Anal Receptive, a member of the (in)famous Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, Inc., a cadre of socially-active drag queens) engages in a dialogue that is witty and engaging in contradistinction to an exercise in didacticism (Sable) and/or confusion (Metz and Perrault).

As previously stated, *Queer Crips* is unique because of the identity intersection it speaks to. It is interesting how often racial identity becomes imbricated into this intersection as well, although the editors do very little to parse it. For instance, in "A Meeting with George Dureau," Max Verga describes Dureau's photography: "In one, an African-American man uses a stick to maintain his balance while crossing his stump over his undamaged leg" (89). Verga begins the next paragraph by noting "The same holds true for George's image of Wally Sherwood. Wally is a man with a strong, beautiful face; his arms and legs defy ordinary proportions and thus say 'dwarf'" (ibid). It is worth considering that Wally is "a man" while the other unnamed (tellingly) individual is marked as "an African-American man." That Verga does not speak to this disconnect in representation is significant, evidentiary of an awareness of (albeit an unwillingness to consider) the racialized subject. In fact, there are numerous echoes and reverberations of racialized identities in *Queer Crips*, especially African-American subjectivities. A case in point is the final story, Guter's own "Destination *Bent*," in which he hyperbolically asserts, "I was the crip equivalent of the House Nigger, the Tom" (223). Such a comparison is necessarily questionable, and causes the reader to wonder why there is such a palpable dearth of stories by disabled gay men of color in the collection.

Queer Crips is a problematic text. In addition to the fraught presence of the racialized subject (a presence predicated on the fact that this subject is written about but rarely gets to represent itself), there is the presence of an absence insofar as non-physical or "hidden" disabilities. The overwhelming majority of the contributors have physical disabilities, which marginalizes those individuals with cognitive disabilities. Ultimately, *Queer Crips* does not represent the myriad

voices within this putative community of disabled gay men. Writing in the Preface, Guter observes, “This is a book full of characters, drama, conflict, narrative—in short, a book of stories” (xvii). Taking into account the absences in the text, the stories that comprise *Queer Crips* are inexplicably, inexcusably, incomplete.

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