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/ KALEKOWANIE SZTUK PERFORMATYWNYCH

Intersectionality and Geopathic Place in Disability Dramaturgy: A Case of ‘All of Us’ by Francesca Martinez (2022)

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Abstract: The aim of this article is to investigate the influence of intersectional politics of recent disability drama on the conceptualization of place. My point of departure is Una Chaudhuri’s concept of geopathic place and its discussion within the context of dramaturgy of disability by Victoria Ann Lewis. In her *Staging Place: The Geography of Modern Drama*, Una Chaudhuri claims that ‘the geopathic paradigm underlying realist drama … supports a certain construction of identity: identity as a negotiation with – and on occasion a heroic overcoming of – the power of place’ (1997, p. 56). Victoria Ann Lewis in her 2004 article argues that artists with disabilities often ‘re-code’ identity and place as well as ‘disrupt the liberal dichotomies of individual freedom vs. confinement/prison and the related hierarchical oppositions of movement over stasis, and time over place.’ In my discussion of *All of Us* by Francesca Martinez, I will focus on very recent redefinitions of these

oppositions and dichotomies enabled by intersectional constructions of characters and spaces. I will also trace how in exploring the relation between these two categories and human embodiment, *All of Us* promotes the notions of human variety and shared humanity, which prevent potential stigmatizations of characters with disabilities.

Keywords: disability drama; geopathic place; intersectionality; complex embodiment

Introduction

The aim of this article is to investigate the impact of intersectional politics of recent disability drama on the conceptualization of place in its various manifestations from architectural barriers to social isolation and institutionalization of people with disabilities. My point of departure is Una Chaudhuri's concept of 'geopathic place' (1997) and its discussion within the context of dramaturgy of disability by Victoria Ann Lewis (2004). The major premise of this discussion is that drama by playwrights with disabilities questions and challenges the modern understanding of place as generating a sense of entrapment and isolation that is to be overcome by a protagonist. In this way, such drama tends to abandon the narrative structure characteristic of the story of overcoming and to reject its use as a narrative prosthesis or symbolic reintegration into 'normal' society. It also complicates the significance of place in social theories of disability with their focus on the constructedness of disability based on physical, social, and cultural restrictions, limitations, and exclusions. By examining a very recent play *All of Us* by Francesca Martinez (2022), which problematizes the characters' relation to space and mobility, I intend to suggest that this questioning of the pathology of place takes a complex form largely rooted in the intersectional understanding of disability and embodiment. In order to do so, I will draw upon the approaches of critical and social disability studies, as well as the concepts of intersectionality and complex embodiment.

Geopathology, Intersectionality, and Disability Drama

The term geopathology was coined by Una Chaudhuri in her book on *Staging Place: The Geography of Modern Drama* to name a tendency in modern drama to present 'place as problem' (1997, p. 56), which is realized in two principles: 'a victimage of location' and 'the heroism of departure' (p. xii). The former defines a character's perception of place as restrictive or oppressive, while the latter refers to their recognition of the necessity to escape. These principles result in 'a series of ruptures and displacements in various orders of location, from micro- to macrospatial' (p. 55), which affect both individual characters and their relationships and the whole dramatic 'structure that suffers from geopathic disorders' (pp. 56-58). The dislocations and disruptions related to place, as Chaudhuri further argues, 'are given their meaning from the geopathic paradigm underlying realist drama, which also supports a certain construction of identity: identity as a negotiation with – and on occasion a heroic overcoming of – the power of place' (p. 56). The overcoming narrative can take the form of 'psychoanalysis performed' by the characters and 'embedded within what is for the audience a "geoanalysis," a comprehensive evocation and exposure of the meaning, in human terms, of place' (p. 59). Part of the conflict encapsulated by modern drama is, according to Chaudhuri, between a wish to create 'a stable container for identity – a home' and 'the desire to deterritorialize the self' (p. 59). In this context, like in the case of Ibsen's Nora, 'the experience of displacement' undergoes reevaluation and is actually realized as 'her heroic departure' (p. 61). For many characters the heroic departure takes a different shape, as they might be 'forced to resolve the problem of location through the mechanism of pseudotragedy, suicide' (p. 62). Thus, in general

terms, geopathic drama emphasizes a sense of entrapment within place and a need to liberate oneself through departure, a conflict that affects not only one's location and belonging but also identity and existence. The irresolubility of this problem can lead to personal or collective crisis that can only be resolved symbolically through death or may lead to other forms of escape, such as insanity or derealization (or addiction, as Chaudhuri suggests on p. 16). Needless to say, these ways of seeing place as a problem and the slippage of micro-spatial categories into macro-space and vice versa are potentially present in many narratives featuring disability, especially the ones that focus on overcoming or personal tragedies. They seem to rely to a large extent on the parallel drives towards homeliness and mobility, complicated by the often contradictory implications of home, community, and interiority/exteriority for people with disabilities.

In her 2004 article entitled 'The Theatrical Landscape of Disability,' Victoria Ann Lewis makes an important comment on the redefinition of geopathic space in disability drama. Lewis argues that disabled playwrights have contributed 'to the reclamation of space, immanence and home in post-modern drama,' challenging 'the "geopathology" of modern drama structured, as has already been said, on "the victimage of location" and the "heroism of departure"' (2004). As a starting point of her discussion, Lewis takes an example of a suicide committed by an elderly man who chose to jump from a bridge rather than spend his life in an institution. What the scholar points to is that this act was interpreted either as an act of courage in which the man decided to die rather than live a life not worth living or 'a moral parable about the terrors [of] institutional life.' The crucial point that Lewis is making is that the story yields to neither of these interpretations. The choice that the man was considering was between institution and prison where he was not allowed to return, not between institution and freedom.

The whole story effectively refuses to be read in terms of simple and predictable dichotomies and illustrates a tendency to appropriate individual stories to represent the geopathological paradigm. Lewis claims that 'disabled artists have a […] potential to dislocate the figure of "home"' (2004) and, as she notices in several plays that she examines, 're-code the value of home and belonging and disrupt the liberal dichotomies of individual freedom vs. confinement/prison and the related hierarchical oppositions of movement over stasis, and time over place' (2004). In relation to American theatre, she sees 'the location of the re-imagination of the disabled/impaired theatrical body […] within the project of decentralization and multiculturalism' (Lewis, 2004), already noticed by Chaudhuri. I would like to argue that more recently this process has been realized primarily by reconfiguring place in relation to intersectionality and its implications for individuals and communities. In a sense, it continues what Chaudhuri has written about postmodern drama (*Angels in America* in particular) – and Lewis has later redirected to refer to disability drama – claiming that

> it decisively overthrows this oppositional structure ['conflict between home and exile, belonging and alienation'] on which geopathology was based and sketches out an alternative, heterotopic ideal, a vision of place as combining the local and the global, habitation and deviation, roots and routes (Chaudhuri, 1997, p. 259).

The idealism of heterotopia does not imply the idealism of place and its structure but makes it impossible to define place in ultimate and oppositional ways and to impose ways of understanding place on other characters. To Lewis, drama/theatre of disability 'reasserts the role of space

in human experience and challenges the modernist privileging of transcendence over immanence, time over space, and spirit over body,' at the same time clearly exposing the extent to which '[t]he lived experience of disability is bound to questions of home and belonging' (2004). Thus, while affirming the importance of place, disability drama questions its determining power and focuses on its lived experience instead.

One of the ways of challenging the privileged categories mentioned by Lewis is to consider the relation between disability and place in terms of intersectionality and complex embodiment. Situated between medical and social models, the theory of complex embodiment, as Tobin Siebers argues, increases the 'awareness of the effects of disabling environments on people's lived experience of the body' on the one hand, but also emphasizes the fact that 'some factors affecting disability, such as chronic pain […] and aging, derive from the body' (2008, p. 25). The 'spectrum of human variation' embraces both 'variability between individuals' and 'variability within [one's] life cycle' (p. 25). Being highly reliant on the process of complex embodiment, intersectionality implies that identities 'are not merely standpoints,' but they 'construct one another reciprocally;' within the ideology of ability, as Siebers argues, 'the language of pathology [is employed] to justify labelling some identities as inferior to others' (p. 28). Intersectionality, as scholars declare, does not mean a process of adding or accumulating various forms of marginalization or discrimination based on difference (Siebers, 2008, p. 28; Yuval-Davis, 2011; Erevelles and Minear, 2017, pp. 384-385) – the so-called additive approach. As Nira Yuval-Davis suggests,

> The point of intersectional analysis is not to find 'several identities under one.' […] This would reinscribe the fragmented, additive

> model of oppression and essentialize specific social identities. Instead the point is to analyse the differential ways by which social divisions are concretely enmeshed and constructed by each other and how they relate to subjective constructions of identities (qtd. in Erevelles and Minear, 2017, pp. 384-385).

In her book on *The Politics of Belonging*, Yuval-Davis refers to the metaphorical implication of the term as ‘a road intersection’ or ‘flowing interweaving threads’ (2011, p. 6). Nevertheless, what perhaps explains the complexity of this notion best are two types of relationships: inter- and intra-categorial frameworks. Inter-categorial approaches examine intersections between various configurations and cross-influences between categories, whereas intra-categorial ones involve the exploration of ‘the meaning and boundaries of the categories themselves’ (p. 6). McCall explains that intra-categorial frameworks are centred upon ‘particular social groups at neglected points of intersection of multiple master categories’ (qtd. in Erevelles and Minear, 2017, p. 384). These multiple dimensions in which various categories are considered make it impossible to see place in oppositional and dichotomic ways, but rather as points of intersection presenting dynamic and changeable configurations. These configurations, as Alison Kafer and Eunjung Kim suggest, are meant to be incomplete and relational (2018, p. 136).

In what follows, I intend to approach the recent play by Francesca Martinez *All of Us* from the perspectives of both geopathology and intersectionality, taking into consideration also the implications of complex embodiment for disability studies. *All of Us* is a particularly interesting example to consider in this perspective as it contains a conspicuous pattern of heroic suicide, yet it avoids freezing the characters in geopathic structures. My main focus will

be on how various identities enter into complex relations with place, exploding geopathological dichotomies and destabilizing intra-categorial boundaries as well as inter-categorial relationships. In doing so, the play can be argued to self-consciously define the paradigm of disability drama/theatre. Additionally, drawing on critical disability studies, one of my aims will be to examine how various presentations and conceptualizations of spatiality uphold or perhaps subvert or cancel geopathic place seen as confinement, isolation, and im/mobilization. I will also trace how in exploring the relation between characters and places, *All of Us* promotes the notions of human variety and shared humanity, which question dichotomies that could potentially stigmatize characters with disabilities and are responsible for discrimination. I will also briefly comment on place and geopathology in the context of the post/pandemic redefinition of space to which the play alludes.

Disability Drama and the Pandemic as an Intersecting Context in *All of Us*

All of Us by Francesca Martinez is a debut play from the author with cerebral palsy, who has been known primarily as a comedian, writer, activist, and actress. It presents the consequences of disability reassessment conducted by a private company representing the local authorities. The official purpose of the procedure is to redirect funds where they are most needed. Because of funding cuts and assessment errors, the characters' daily routines are destabilized and their chances of independent living considerably lowered or blocked. As a result, the characters resolve to take action and protest against the authorities' incompetent and unjust decisions during public meetings with the local politician, Mr. Hargreaves. Ultimately, in the last scene, they also occupy his office, wherefrom they are removed by

the police. The central character, into whose story we get the deepest insight, is Jess, a thirty-year-old psychotherapist with cerebral palsy. It is through her professional interactions with other characters as a therapist that we are also offered the storylines of two of her patients: Rita – a middle-aged woman diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder, and Aidan – a man in his thirties with an alcohol problem undergoing therapy, who happens to be the son of Mr. Hargreaves, as we find out in the course of the play. Getting to know the local politician also from Aidan's therapy sessions enables a perspective that is crucial for the intersectional structure of the play, as will be discussed further. It is also through Jess's carer that we are introduced to the character of Poppy, her young and energetic neighbour, a wheelchair-user of restricted growth in her early twenties, who later takes her own life, when her night care is removed. More stories emerge during political meetings and office occupation, presenting a whole range of situations where additional care can make people financially independent and efficient in their jobs or where it is necessary for survival. We also get to know Jess's and Poppy's carer, Nadia, who finds it next to impossible to give sufficient attention to every person in her charge after the reassessment, and Jess's lesbian mixed-race flat-mate, Lottee, who finds remembering things and being on time extremely challenging. While individual interactions between two or three characters form the main body of the play, the reassessment crisis exposes the extent to which members of the community are dependent on one another (e.g. how Jess's decision to end her practice, which is a consequence of her losing her mobility aid, affects Aidan's and Rita's well-being, contributing to the latter's losing her unemployment benefit). The reassessment procedure and funding cuts can be seen as the point of intersection in which the characters representing various groups meet, including the ones representing power centres and its

margins in multiple configurations and positions, questioning traditional power structures.

With its premiere planned for March 2020 but delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic until August 2022, *All of Us* also bridges the gap between pre- and post-pandemic realities with the theme that gains additional validity after the lockdown period. As one of the actors says in the interview, it was an interesting experience to reintroduce the play after two years from its intended premiere – in the time 'when the whole world has realized that everyone can become vulnerable any time' (Mills, 2022). It is in this post-pandemic context that the idea of solidarity and shared experience gains a particular meaning, opening ways for empathy and understanding. For its reception, thus, the play can rely on what was thought to be a chance for positive change, such as the one discussed by Susan Neiman in her article under the telling title 'Corona as Chance: Overcoming the Tyranny of Self-Interest' published in *Democracy in Times of Pandemic: Different Futures Imagined* in 2020. Neiman proposed to see the crisis as an opportunity to rethink and change what we had mistakenly believed to be normal and reject the 'tyranny of self-interest' by becoming sensitive to others. As a context for the play's plot, the pandemic world also serves as a place in which various identities renegotiate their position, providing a kind of 'historical context and structural conditions' (Erevelles and Minear, 2017, p. 385) within which various categories intersect.

Attentiveness to others, which the play could potentially capitalize on for its reception, contrasts ironically with the change of priorities presented therein, brought about by the pandemic crisis. With the budgets exhausted by the pandemic-related expenses, the programme of reassessing disability and needed care presented in the play, serves, according to the character of

the local politician Mr. Hargreaves, to 'tighten our belts where possible' (Martinez, 2022, p. 70) and 'put better rules in place in order to discourage unhealthy welfare dependency' (p. 73). In this context, *All of Us* can be approached as an interventionist play, combining political activism, depicted in the second part of the play, with a sense of humour and comedy of the first part. It shows the dramatic consequences of reducing home care and mobility rates for people with a variety of conditions, including physical disabilities, psychiatric problems, and terminal illnesses. With reference to two characters with physical disabilities in particular – Jess and Poppy, the play explores mainly how cutting support can drastically limit people's independence, agency, and security and radically affect the meaning of life. While the funds-saving programme affects severely all the characters presented in the play, its effect culminates in Poppy's suicide, the event that seems to suggest the old geopathological pattern to be discussed in the next section.

Important intersectional aspects of *All of Us* run parallel to some of the strategies identified by Victoria Ann Lewis as employed in the dramaturgy of disability. These include: 'parallel constructions, whether in character or plot, of disability, gender, and race,' 'multiple disabled characters,' and 'humour' (2000, pp. 97-99).[1] In the present context of questioning geopathic drama, the first two features in particular are of greatest relevance. Francesca Martinez presents a number of characters who either need care or give care to others but most often they are both carers and cared for in relation to other characters. By choosing to make the main character, described as 'wobbly' (having cerebral palsy), a psychologist and therapist with a doctoral degree in psychology, helping patients suffering from depression, addiction, or obsessive-compulsive disorder, the author (a 'wobbly' person herself) rejects the one-directional concept of care that

often dominates representations of disability. Such a structure avoids stigmatizing disability and instead builds a complex network of relations and dependencies between various forms of non-normative and normate identities rather than presenting a single disabled character contrasted with the rest of the community. By doing so, the play also strongly advocates the concepts of common humanity and human variation, which, as Garland-Thomson suggests, form the basis of critical disability studies (Garland-Thomson and Ojrzyńska, 2020, p. 19) and which are amplified in the play's title, among other things. Noteworthily, the original performance in the Dorfman auditorium of the National Theatre in London (2022) reflected human variation and inclusiveness also by casting disabled actors and actresses and mixed-colour and immigrant performers in relevant parts. This decision importantly contributed to greater inclusion of disabled and marginalized performers on the stage, but also prevented a tendency to interpret stage representations of disability as metaphorical rather than authentic and experiential.

The 'spectrum of human variation,' as has been argued, involves both variability among or between people and variability of individual embodiment across growth and aging. The titular phrase 'all of us' appears in various contexts in the play, suggesting both intra- and inter-categorial readings, as well as simultaneously inclusive and exclusive implications. First of all, 'all of us' implies solidarity within the underprivileged groups who need support and additional care to function within the community. However, in the final confrontation with the politicians and the police, 'all of us' refers to anyone who becomes a victim of the system, moving beyond definitions of disability. 'All of us' signifies, as Martinez (who also plays the part of Jess, a young woman with cerebral palsy) says, 'a call for us to remember our common humanity. Whatever body we are born to, or

whatever “package” we come in, we all want to be respected and valued as members of our community’ (*Meet the Cast…*, 2022). The title ‘all of us’ is also linked to the idea proposed by Garland-Thomson, who suggests that ‘disability is perhaps the essential characteristic of being human. The body is dynamic, constantly interactive with history and environment. We evolve into disability. Our bodies need care; we all need assistance to live’ (Garland-Thomson, 2002, p. 374). Closely related to complex embodiment, this concept is verbalized towards the end of the play when one of the crucial questions is uttered, pointing to human vulnerability and fragility. The question ‘Can you imagine anything?’ is addressed by a disabled character, a former policeman, to police officers on duty who are ordered to remove the protesters from Mr. Hargreaves’ office, which they occupy. When the policemen handcuff him and drag him away, defenceless, the man tries to persuade them that what they are doing is wrong. He says: ‘Pigs in uniforms! […] I used to be like you. […] You know what happened to me can happen to anyone. You, your kid. Anyone can become sick or disabled at any time! Can you imagine that? […] Can you imagine anything? Didn’t think so’ (Martinez, 2022, p. 107). To the protesters, being able to understand the perspective of people with disabilities means being able to imagine a variety of scenarios in their own and others’ life as well as being able to recognize and accept the needs of others.[2] It is the lack of this kind of imagination – of situated knowledges (cf. Haraway, 1988, pp. 583, 590, 592, 595) as it were, mostly on the part of social workers and politicians, that results in unjust and inconsiderate decisions, based on their belief that they are forever on the safe side of the problem.

Geopathic Place in *All of Us*

As already stated, in some disability narratives, especially the ones focused on the character of an overcomer or achiever, place is constructed as pathological. Its barriers and entrapment create solid obstacles to be discarded or surmounted. The characters' victory often consists in 'heroic overcoming of the power of place' (Chaudhuri, 1997, p. 56). It might almost be expected that the discussion on the insufficient mobility rates and support will be also founded on the oppressiveness of place and a need to move beyond it. Likewise, taking into consideration the experience of isolation in the lockdown caused by the pandemic, one could notice that neutral spaces acquire features of geopathic place also for people who were not subjected to the conflict between themselves and place before. When reading *All of Us* by Francesca Martinez, one might be perplexed by the extent to which place determines the characters' decisions and experiences. It even seems that the two major stories told in the play largely replicate the geopathic paradigm, and this affects both sides of the conflict presented therein: the politicians and people in power, on the one hand, and characters who are marginalized by the system, on the other. In fact, the characters of *All of Us* experience and express anger, frustration, or fear at being unable to manage on their own or function in a community as they used to.

Despite all this, I would like to argue that *All of Us* is not an example of geopathic drama. The first reason for this is that it presents a whole range of dependencies on place and instances of independence or freedom for many characters, including those classified as disabled and those who identify as non-disabled. The second one is that one of the central narratives – a geopathological story of victory over a very materially and corporeally experienced limitation – becomes a counternarrative that is rejected and

compromised at the end of the play. This narrative constructs human identity as self-sufficient, resilient, capable of recovery, and dependent on strong will, suppressing the conflicts and vulnerabilities affecting the characters. Yet, it is at the intersection of these individual stories and the experience of the community that some form of reciprocal understanding is hinted at at the end of the play.

The question of different (in)dependencies is addressed by presenting characters in various relations to one another and to their place in dynamic and changing configurations. First of all, the challenges of the place-time axis[3] make all characters vulnerable: intercategorial space conditioning includes the limitations on space and mobility imposed by the pandemic restrictions, pressure of time, challenges of social space and distance. Place for people with various forms of disabilities is not by definition constricting but becomes such as a result of aid reduction or withdrawal. It is thus possible to state after Kelly Oliver that '[d]ependence and independence, then, are always interconnected and matters of degree rather than kind' (2019, p. 132). Francesca Martinez shows, for example, the problematic nature of mobility with the characters being unable to arrive at various places on time and this refers to a variety of obstacles and characters, both disabled and non-disabled. While the main character, Jess, manages to get to her therapy room on time (with the help of her carer), her patients or clients, who do not experience any physical barriers, find it difficult or next to impossible to leave home and arrive at the therapy room. This is most pronounced in the character of Rita, who cannot leave her flat because of social anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorder. The obsessive repetition of washing her hands or checking the oven before leaving prevents her from walking out for weeks. Jess's flat-mate, Lottie, who, as has already been mentioned, is mixed-race and lesbian (and this feature might be considered

as an instance of additive intersectionality, which, however, does not involve disability), is described by Jess as being 'punctuality-challenged,' as she misses all appointments and forgets about commitments, while the disability assessor and the politician are late for their meetings because of being held up in traffic and attending to other obligations. Initially, the play thus does not cast characters with disabilities as the ones for whom mobility and place are particularly challenging or more problematic than for others. In addition, all of these examples demonstrate how the same space can be seen as a problem to some characters, while to others it will be positive or neutral (for example, for Rita staying indoors is desirable while for a young person with physical disability, like Poppy, it is unbearable).

After part of their care is removed, the characters lose independence and come to rely more on social aid. Jess has to close her practice when she loses her mobility car and as a result, Rita loses her unemployment benefit as she cannot report at the Job Centre because of her phobia. Jess seems to bear quietly her immobilization, even though it affects not only her ability to reach her therapy room for work, but also drastically changes the way she experiences space and distance: for example, she cannot pour milk to eat cereals although she is sitting at the table close to it. Her resolution to do more than writing petitions or appealing decisions is provoked by the death of her neighbour Poppy. Poppy, as already mentioned, is a young woman full of youthful energy, who thrives when given a chance to meet other people. She demands her right to have a night care in order to be able to go to parties (in a wheelchair) and meet young men and go to bed when she wants. Her decision to take her own life when she finally feels threatened with being moved to a care home can be seen as problematic because it is so reminiscent of the narrative of a heroic suicide, which is rooted in the concept of geopathic place. In this context, death is a way of overcoming the

power of place and imprisonment. As such, it could be interpreted as the act of heroic departure – a 'pseudotragedy,' which, according to Chaudhuri, 'could resolve the problem of location' in more traditional drama (1997, p. 62) and reaffirm some of conventional dichotomies. However, I would like to argue that because of the intersectional decentering of characters and relations between them, Poppy's uncompromising belief in a right to enjoy one's life is symbolically taken over by Jess, who now becomes more aware of her power.

In spatial terms, two processes can be found in *All of Us*: one of invading the private space inhabited by people with disabilities by disability assessors who represent the authorities, and the other of invading the public space (the community centre and the constituency office) by people with disabilities. While the former turns people with disabilities into defenceless and objectified victims who have no influence on how they are going to be assessed, the latter grants protesters power and agency. Particularly, when occupying the office, the protesters use the strategy described by Judith Butler in her essay on 'Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance' – 'marshalling' or 'mobilizing' one's vulnerability as a form of 'asserting existence, claiming the right to public space, equality, and opposing violent police, security, and military actions' (2016, p. 26). In the final protest scene, when Jess is ready to articulate her rights, she appeals to the sense of common humanity rooted in vulnerability and ability to give and receive help:

> Jess: You come into our homes and make us list what we can't do. It's humiliating… You patronise us like we're work-shy teenagers. Being wobbly isn't my problem. It's living in a world that demonises difference. […] And I'm not going to feel guilty any more. Because

> we all have things we can't do and we all need help sometimes. Even you. It's what makes us human. (Martinez, 2022, p. 103)

Again, like in other voices from the protesters mentioned earlier, disability sets the template for understanding fellow humans, echoing Garland-Thomson's argument that 'to understand how disability operates is to understand what it is to be fully human' (2002, p. 378).

All of these individual stories of struggling with space (and time), for a variety of reasons and on different levels, converge with two narratives of overcoming which are related to human fragility and disability. Poppy's story, discussed above, strategically empowers the community and people with various forms of vulnerability. Although potentially problematic in reinforcing dichotomies of freedom vs imprisonment or free will vs dependence, Poppy's death questions other dichotomies that contribute to the erasure of part of humanity from the lives of people with disabilities by denying them a right to entertainment and sexuality.

The other overcoming narrative emerges from Jess's therapy sessions with Aidan, the son of the local politician, Mr. Hargreaves. This story is centred on what could be described as a traumatic kernel in the life of Aidan's father, which he needs to confront to be able to establish emotional contact with his son and understand the effect of his political decisions on other people. Mr. Hargreaves' childhood story is a typical story of 'heroic overcoming' and an almost prototypical example of 'the victimage of location' and the 'heroism of departure' characteristic of a geopathic place. Hargreaves' personality is attributed both by his son and himself to the formative experience of spending weeks of confinement and immobilization in hospital after a horse accident and following his father's advice to prove the doctor wrong by

starting to walk within three months rather than the predicted four. This is also the advice Hargreaves gives to people he meets in his constituency:

> Mr. Hargreaves: I fractured my leg badly in two places. I was lying in my hospital bed feeling sorry for myself. The doctor came by and told me that I wouldn't walk for four months […] My father leaned over me and whispered 'Prove him wrong. Walk in three!' And I did. I was brought up to believe that a positive can-do attitude goes a long way (Martinez, 2022, p. 74).

The wish to prove himself to his father is linked to a deeper conflict that he had suppressed. It is symbolized by the self-portrait he was so proud of as a child, which was torn in half by his father. In the play's finale, the portrait, with the two pieces stuck together, is returned by Aidan to his father, with the hope of reaching beneath the resilient mask that he has built over many years. Thus, at the end of the play, Jess, accompanied by her patient, Aidan, tries to persuade the politician to confront and accept his former identity. To help him notice his mistake and misinterpretation of location and enforced heroism of departure, the characters again appeal to commonality of experience and common humanity by asking: 'Can't you see what this system is doing… To all of us?' (Martinez, 2022, p. 109). Hence, what could be interpreted as Chaudhuri's geoanalysis – a collective psychoanalysis performed on one of the guardians of unjust social structures – is reinscribed into an alternative structure in which the assessment of place proves mistaken and is subject to change. The final resolution thus happens across different social categories in which the power of place is negotiated and variable, revealing the power structures in which Mr. Hargreaves was entangled as a child and which he tried to uphold in relation to other people

in his constituency.

Conclusion

It seems thus that in Martinez' play the geopathic story based on the victimage of location is an important motif on which major counternarratives are built. They discard the dichotomies and contrasts between 'master' and marginalized categories as well as redirect the significance that is attributed to the motif of heroic overcoming of one's limitations. It cannot be denied, however, that the traditional geopathic narratives form the central axis of the play's structure and ironically (or perhaps not) turn the whole social mobilization described in it into a collective healing process originating in individual geopathic tragedies. Social injustice is traced down to the trauma experienced by Mr. Hargreaves that affects himself and other people, both on the personal level (like in the case of his son and his addiction) and the collective one (the whole community). Poppy's suicide mobilizes the whole community and its power to oppose social restrictions. Its traumatizing effect is redirected towards individual agency and political courage. What is important, in both cases the therapeutic process itself reconfigures the intercategorial relationships and positions the underprivileged social group as empowered in relation to local authorities. In this way, within the intracategorial frameworks marginalized groups are brought into 'neglected points of intersection of multiple master categories,' as McCall would perhaps argue (qtd. in Erevelles and Minear, 2017, p. 384).

The other valid intracategorial aspect is closely linked to the 'spectrum of human variation' embracing two forms of variability: the one between individuals and the other 'within [one's] life cycle' (Siebers 2008, p. 25). In the latter case, variability refers to differences across context and time,

presenting characters in varied and changing roles and representations. The same characters can be seen in sometimes contrastive roles, cutting across master categories at different points and in different configurations, often dependent on location and social contexts. Jess can be seen as a professional therapist offering help to others, enabling others to move and act or recover from trauma, while in other contexts she is presented as unable to pour milk to eat cereals or leave home. Similarly, Poppy can be seen immobilized in her bed and wearing a nappy or as a young woman going out in the evenings and dating young men. In relation to master identities represented by the authority, they can be seen as victims and charity cases, dangerous opponents, or help-giving professionals. It is significant that other characters, such as Mr. Hargreaves, change their position, power, and identity, when confronted with their past and other characters. They are also seen in social configurations of power and authority as well as family relations and situations in which their vulnerability is exposed.

Beyond these complex forms of variation, Martinez' play seems to ultimately argue for the unity of the human condition that can only be accessed through and demonstrated by nuanced intersectional relations. The utopian message of the phrase 'all of us' and the vulnerability of the human embodiment, when spoken and appealed to by marginalized characters claiming their rights, offers a possibility of a complex and multidirectional reciprocity and interdependence between characters. This, in turn, enables understanding of the other person's position and perspective, however late it comes in the story. Even though the emphasis put on the unity of the human condition runs the risk of erasing or downplaying diversity and difference, it is crucial that this statement is made by a disabled character and that it helps non-disabled characters understand their limited and mistaken perspective on others and themselves. Although both geopathic narratives

point to their pervasive and destructive influence, clearly structuring reality around them in definite patterns, ultimately, they are questioned and reshuffled in the final part of the play in relation to other positions and identities.

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Footnotes

1. I am referring here to Lewis's article from 2000 because it clearly enumerates and emphasizes the significance of categories that can be directly linked with intersectionality, although I am well aware of more recent publications addressing the question of theatre of disability, such as *Disability and Contemporary Performance: Bodies on Edge* (Kuppers 2003), *Beyond Victims and Villains* (Lewis 2006: Introduction and Afterword); *Drama, Disability and Education* (Kempe 2013); *Disability Theatre and Modern Drama* (Johnston 2016) and many more.
2. For a discussion on the importance of 'imagining otherwise' and its relation to resilience and vulnerability, see Edyta Lorek-Jezińska (2023).
3. Although my main focus in this section is on place and distance, time is an integral aspect of mobility, for both disabled and non-disabled characters in the play. Managing their time

better than others in the case of the characters with disabilities refers only to the pre-reassessment phase and can result from a necessity of strict time management that needs to include other people's schedules, e.g. a carer's tight timetable. After part of care is removed, characters are presented waiting long hours for their carers who either have too many clients to attend to or cannot visit them as frequently as they wish to. In this phase simple actions stretch indefinitely in time, freezing and suspending disabled bodies in space, trapping them in time. Although this aspect represents a significant change that occurs in the play, *All of Us* does not seem to problematize 'crip time' with its various implications beyond hours of stagnation and waiting (cf. Samuels 2017).

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