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Your Body Is a Masterpiece of Tissue Engineering **On Enby Disability: A Practice-Based Poetics** **of Collaboration**

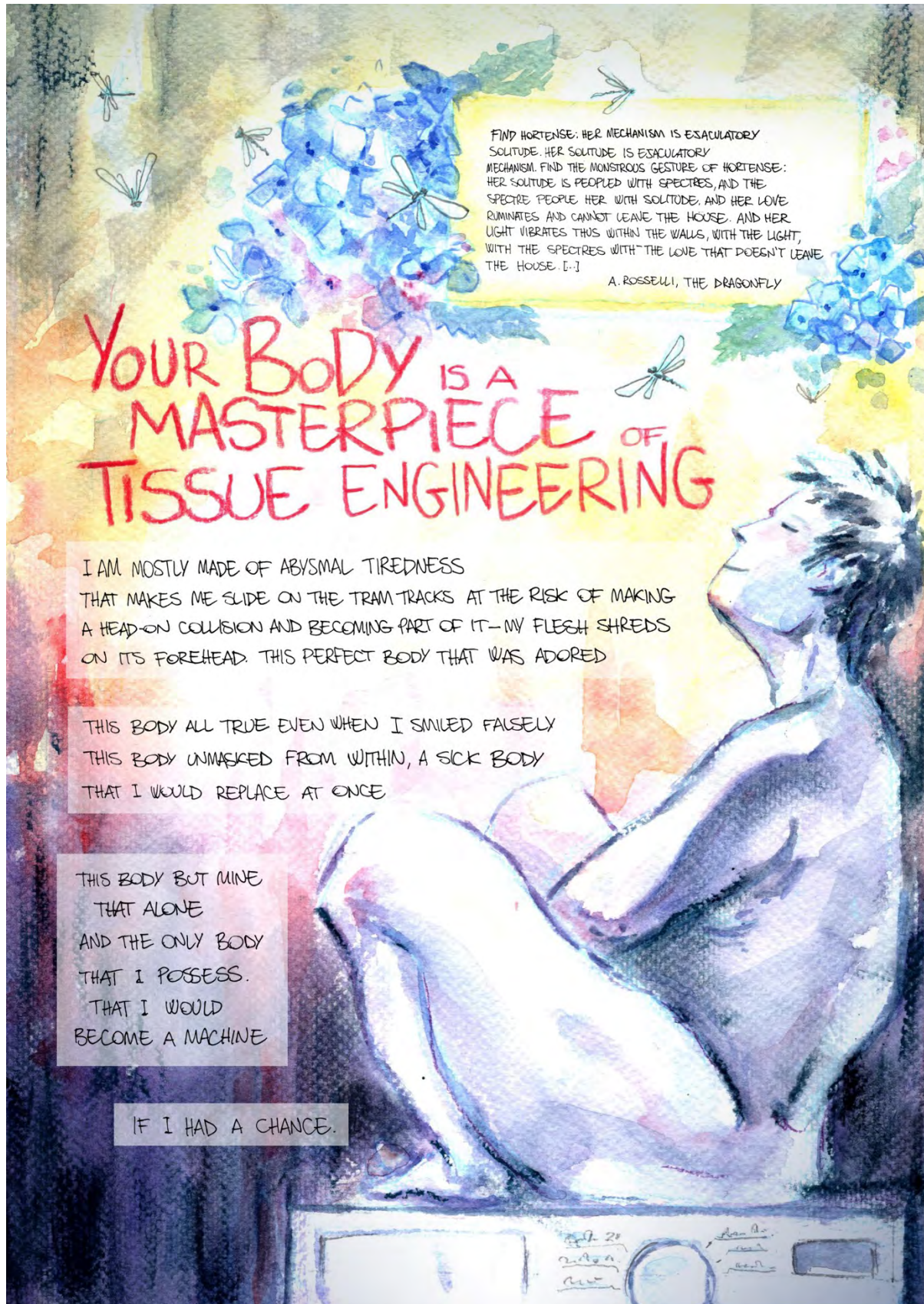
Marzia D'Amico

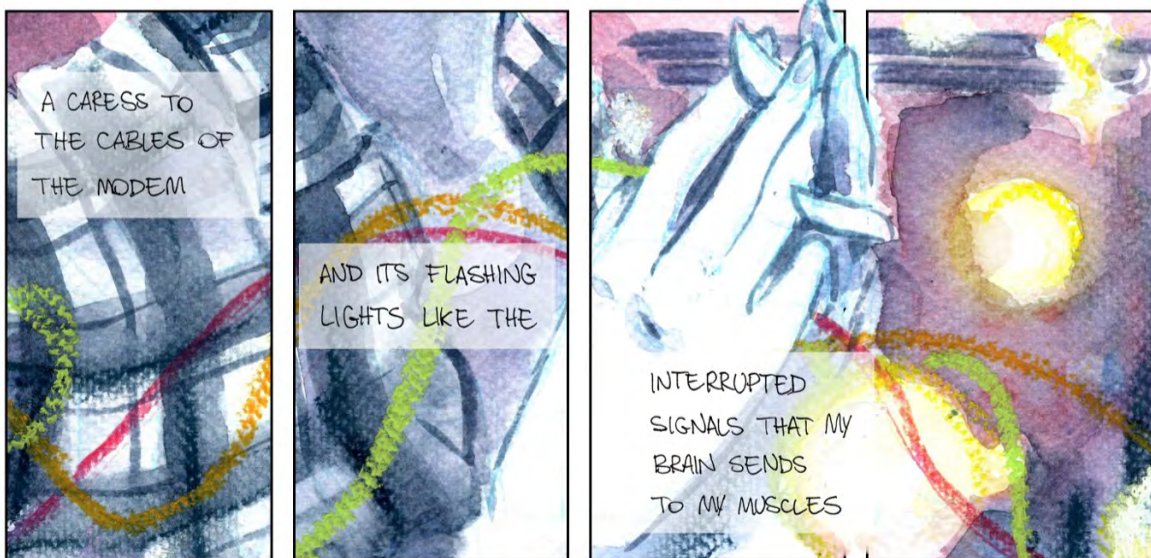
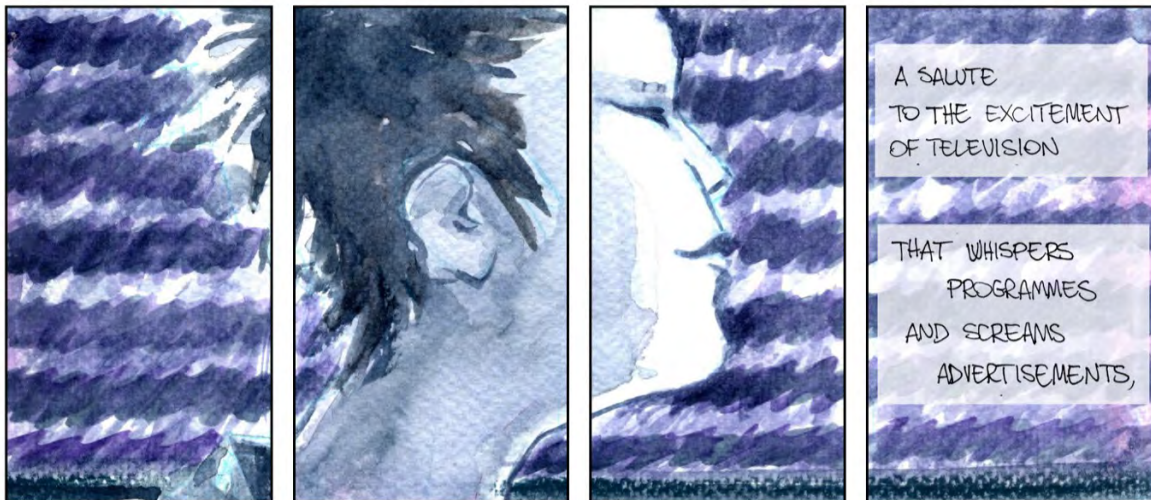
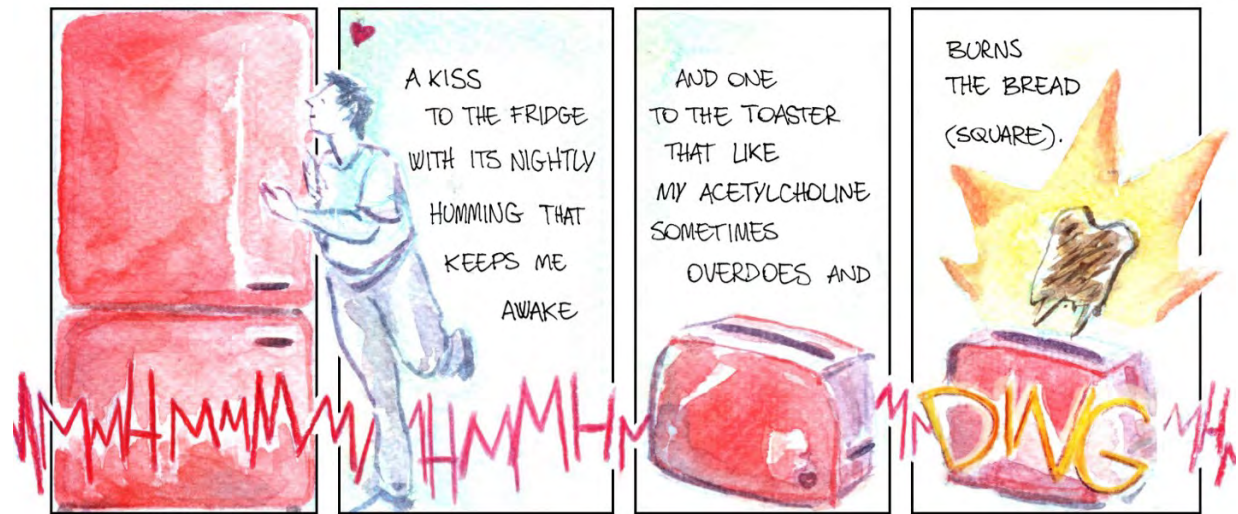
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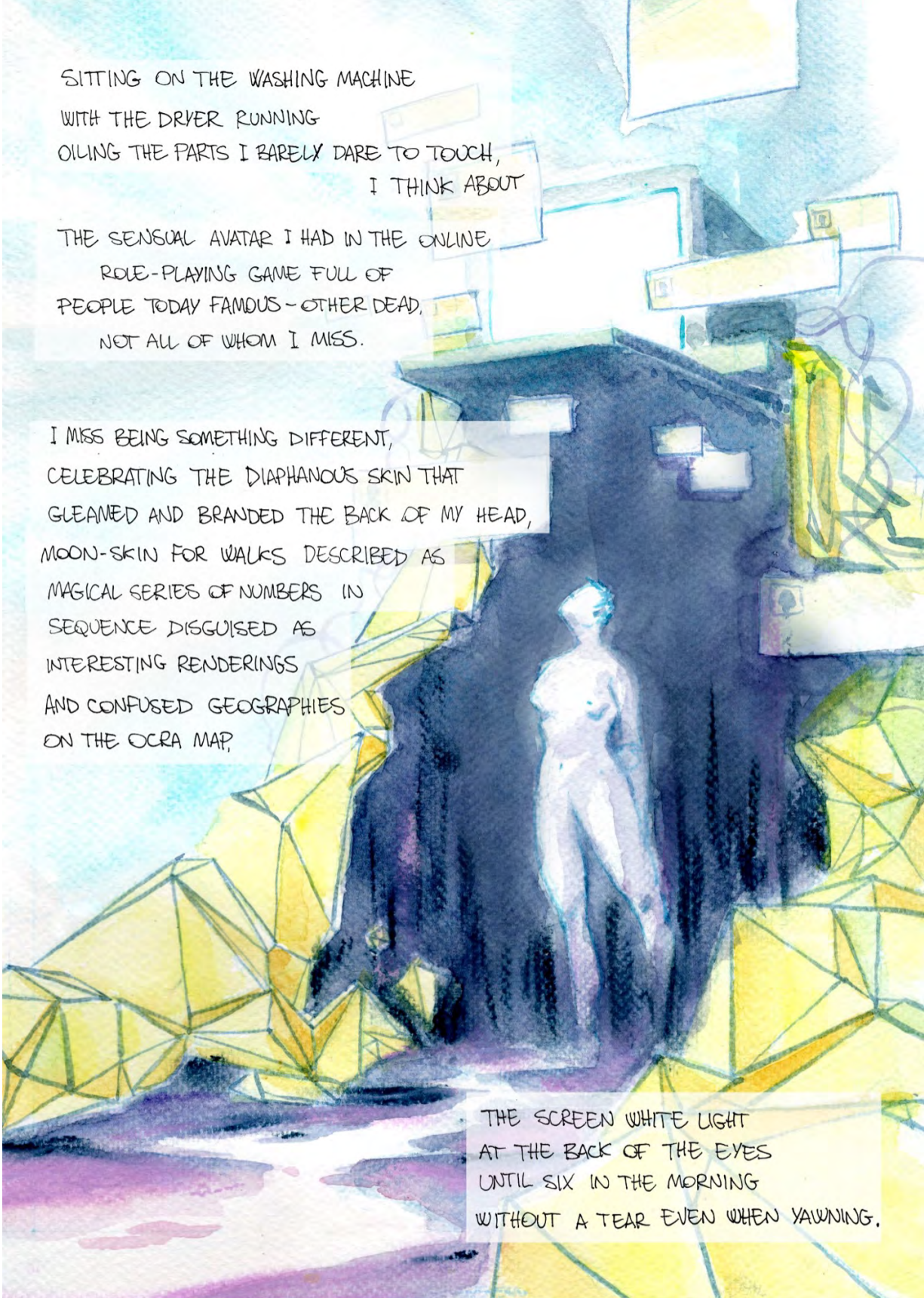
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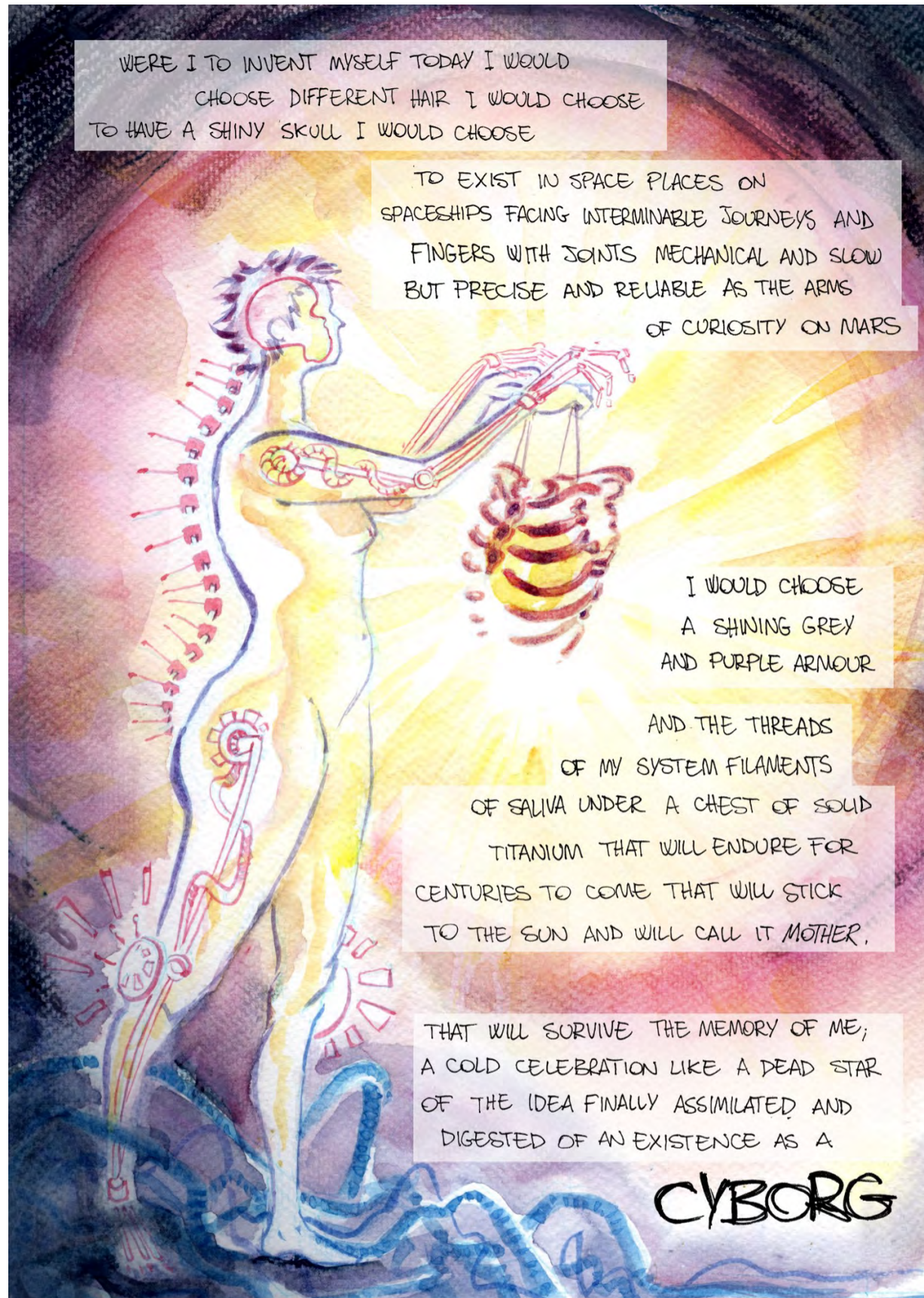


SITTING ON THE WASHING MACHINE
WITH THE DRYER RUNNING
OILING THE PARTS I BARELY DARE TO TOUCH,
I THINK ABOUT

THE SENSUAL AVATAR I HAD IN THE ONLINE
ROLE-PLAYING GAME FULL OF
PEOPLE TODAY FAMOUS - OTHER DEAD,
NOT ALL OF WHOM I MISS.

I MISS BEING SOMETHING DIFFERENT,
CELEBRATING THE DIAPHANOUS SKIN THAT
GLEAMED AND BRANDED THE BACK OF MY HEAD,
MOON-SKIN FOR WALKS DESCRIBED AS
MAGICAL SERIES OF NUMBERS IN
SEQUENCE DISGUISED AS
INTERESTING RENDERINGS
AND CONFUSED GEOGRAPHIES
ON THE OCRA MAP,

THE SCREEN WHITE LIGHT
AT THE BACK OF THE EYES
UNTIL SIX IN THE MORNING
WITHOUT A TEAR EVEN WHEN YAWNING.



WERE I TO INVENT MYSELF TODAY I WOULD
CHOOSE DIFFERENT HAIR I WOULD CHOOSE
TO HAVE A SHINY SKULL I WOULD CHOOSE

TO EXIST IN SPACE PLACES ON
SPACESHIPS FACING INTERMINABLE JOURNEYS AND
FINGERS WITH JOINTS MECHANICAL AND SLOW
BUT PRECISE AND RELIABLE AS THE ARMS
OF CURIOSITY ON MARS

I WOULD CHOOSE
A SHINING GREY
AND PURPLE ARMOUR

AND THE THREADS
OF MY SYSTEM FILAMENTS
OF SALIVA UNDER A CHEST OF SOLID
TITANIUM THAT WILL ENDURE FOR
CENTURIES TO COME THAT WILL STICK
TO THE SUN AND WILL CALL IT MOTHER,

THAT WILL SURVIVE THE MEMORY OF ME;
A COLD CELEBRATION LIKE A DEAD STAR
OF THE IDEA FINALLY ASSIMILATED AND
DIGESTED OF AN EXISTENCE AS A

CYBORG

Your Body Is a Masterpiece of Tissue Engineering

*Find Hortense: her mechanism is ejaculatory
solitude. Her solitude is an ejaculatory
mechanism. Find the monstrous gesture of Hortense:
her solitude is peopled with spectres, and the
spectres people her with solitude. And her love
ruminates and cannot leave the house. And her
light vibrates thus within the walls, with the light,
with the spectres, with the love that doesn't leave
the house.*

—A. Rosselli, *The Dragonfly*¹

I am mostly made of an abysmal tiredness
that makes me slide on the tram tracks at the risk of making
a head-on collision and becoming part of it—my flesh shreds
on its forehead. This perfect body that was adored
this body all true even when I smiled falsely
this body unmasked from within, a sick body
that I would replace at once this body but mine that alone
and the only body I possess. That I would become a machine
if I had a chance.

A kiss to the fridge with its nightly humming
that keeps me awake and one to the toaster that like my
acetylcholine sometimes overdoes it and burns the bread

¹ Amelia Rosselli, *The Dragonfly: A Selection of Poems, 1953–1981*, trans. Roberta Antognini and Deborah Woodard (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

(square).

A salute to the excitement of television that whispers programmes
and screams advertisements, a caress to the cables of the modem
and its flashing light like the interrupted signals that my brain sends to
my muscles.

Sitting on the washing machine with the dryer running
oiling the parts I barely dare to touch, I think about
the sensual avatar I had in the online role-playing game full of
people today famous—others dead, not all of whom I miss.
I miss being something different, celebrating the diaphanous skin
that gleamed and branded the back of my head, moon-
skin for walks

described as magical series of numbers in sequence
disguised as interesting renderings and confused geographies
on the *ocra* map, the screen white light at the back of the eyes
until six in the morning without a tear even when yawning.

Were I to invent myself today I would choose different hair I would choose
to have a shiny skull I would choose to exist in space places
on spaceships facing interminable journeys and fingers with joints
mechanical and slow but precise and reliable as the arms of
Curiosity on Mars I would choose a shining grey and purple armour
and the threads of my system filaments of saliva under a chest of
solid titanium that will endure for centuries to come that will stick
to the Sun and will call it mother that will survive the memory
of me; a cold celebration like a dead star of
the idea finally assimilated and digested of an existence as a

C Y B O R G

This contribution offers a first-person reflection² on the current condition of artistic practice for queer and disabled subjects, articulated with as much objectivity as the personal nature of the subject permits. I identify as a non-binary queer individual, socialised as a woman for thirty years and frequently misrecognised as such. My journey toward discovering a gender identity that diverges from my assigned sex at birth coincided with the onset of a physically debilitating chronic illness. The intersection of non-cisgender subjectivity and chronic pain constitutes a significant axis of oppression.³ For me, the intertwining of lived experience and scholarship has become an indispensable framework through which to understand the emergence of a renewed sense of self, a novel mode of self-performance, and a continually evolving negotiation of the possibilities and limitations of the unwell body. This process has also informed a distinctive poetics—one shaped by my positionality through the perversion of gender performance and the attendant themes necessitated by such genre innovation.⁴

Upon initially engaging with poetry—both as an object of study and a form of creative practice—I was immediately drawn to an exuberant passion for verbivocovisual experimentation, a mode of poetic composition that integrates verbal, vocal, and visual elements into a single, interdependent aesthetic experience.⁵ From the outset, I was captivated by the graphic qualities of certain textual experiments. The dynamism of words, fragmented across the white expanse of the page, disrupted the continuity of the Italian lyric tradition, which remains

² This article is jointly authored. While first-person passages recount the lived experience of Marzia D’Amico, the theoretical–practical reflection should be understood as a collaborative contribution by Marzia D’Amico and Marco d’Alessandro.

³ Robert McRuer, *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* (New York: NYU Press, 2006); Eli Clare, *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).

⁴ Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Hélène Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa,” *Signs* 1, no. 4 (1975): 875–93.

⁵ Augusto de Campos, Décio Pignatari, and Haroldo de Campos, *Teoria da poesia concreta: textos críticos e manifestos, 1950–1960* (São Paulo: Edições Invenção, 1965).

dominant in canonical curricula despite notable experimental interventions. This visual fragmentation resonated with the fragmentation of being itself and suggested the possibility of recomposition—not as an imperative but as an option—an anti-cisnormative and anti-patriarchal gesture rooted in a conscious embrace of (un)happiness.⁶

The deliberate use of white space as an essential, non-semantic element in relation to the sign—whether meaningful or nonsensical, depending on the poetic operation—demanded a physical engagement from me as a reader. Unbeknownst to me at the time, this exerted a heightened strain on my body, as diplopia (a symptom of my chronic illness) complicated my visual perception. I wrestled with the text in a corporeal encounter—*corpo a corpus*—which amplified my role as co-creator of meaning and underscored the multifaceted nature of textuality.⁷ I found particular resonance in poetic works that integrated manual and mechanical typographic techniques: Apollinaire's calligrams, Nanni Balestrini's collages, Patrizia Vicinelli's *tazebao*, and Ketty La Rocca's photo-video performances. These examples—often realised through a symbiosis of hand and machine, whether via typewriters, scanned and digitised physical collages, or handwritten annotations on photographs—moved me profoundly.

The resulting body of work may be situated within media art histories that emphasise hybrid visual-verbal practices, particularly those emerging from the traditions of experimental comics, digital poetry, and transmedia storytelling. Rather than serving as mere illustration, the hand-drawn and typographically manipulated pages function as poetic interfaces—speculative diagrams that reflect and theorise the entanglement of embodiment, fragmentation, and futurity. This methodology resonates with and extends the legacy of practitioners such as Theresa Hak

⁶ Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

⁷ Robin Nelson, *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

Kyung Cha, Laurie Anderson, and Francesca Woodman, whose cross-disciplinary compositions employ visual, textual, and technological registers to interrogate conditions of voice, visibility, and bodily mediation. By positioning the drawings in dialogue with media aesthetics—as storyboards of corporeal metamorphosis or prosthetic extensions of a disabled poetics—this practice critically examines the page as a space of simultaneous inscription and reconfiguration. Bridging handmade gestures and digital rendering, the visual works participate in a broader lineage of media-based storytelling that challenges representational containment and instead opens onto speculative, denaturalised futures.

By the time I resolved to foreground the visual dimension of my own writing, my illness had advanced to such an extent that even the simple act of holding a pen had become nearly impossible. Today, I compose exclusively on a computer. This necessity has irrevocably altered my spatial relationship to the page; there is no longer a tangible, hand-crafted version of my experiments. While I endeavour to transform this limitation into a fissure for creative possibility, the loss of an artistic practice due to physical disability remains an underexplored and seldom discussed subject. Literature addressing this lived experience is scarce, and poetic-artistic manifestos offering support to experimental poets with disabilities are even rarer.⁸ Within this context, body modification should be understood not simply as thematic content but as a formal and procedural condition of the work itself. The transition from analogue drawing to digital composition—precipitated by the progressive loss of fine motor skills—constitutes a lived body–technology interface: a continuous and embodied negotiation of access, adaptation, and expression. The creative act emerges as a mode of material inscription in which the body is not

⁸ Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); Petra Kuppers, *Disability Culture and Community Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

merely represented but actively reconfigured. Writing becomes incision—a performative cut into language and form—while drawing functions as a form of proprioceptive cartography, mapping not a stable or coherent anatomy but a continuously shifting, fragmented, and mechanically entangled corporeality.⁹ The tools of production—screen, keyboard, stylus, software—mark a prosthetic entwinement in which the disabled body is not only modified but reassembled through the act of creation. This constitutes an instance of technogenesis: the mutual transformation of human and tool.¹⁰ Here, the interface operates not simply as a medium of mediation but as a site of ontological modification.

Central to this evolving practice is my collaboration with the artist and semiotician Marco d'Alessandro, whose visual reframing of my poetic fragments functions as both an extension of and a resolution to the formal fragmentation occasioned by illness. Our joint work embodies a posthumanist and anarchist convergence of gender nonconformity (in its monstrous residue) and corporeal debility and vulnerability.¹¹ Through this partnership, the poetic “I” is reconfigured—via care and trust as ethical and methodological principles—into a speculative, relational “we.”¹²

We chose to develop the work using traditional drawing techniques (pencils, chalks, watercolours, pens, etc.) and to maintain handwritten lettering. In doing so, we sought to re-ground the loss of artistic practice due to chronic illness, extending the notion of prosthesis (as a computer might function for writing when hands can no longer hold a pen) to a distributed

⁹ Lilian Kroth, *Alignments: Drawing as a Way of Thinking—A Response to the Work of Michel Serres* (n.p.: KrautIn, 2025).

¹⁰ Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

¹¹ Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013); Margrit Shildrick, *Embodying the Monster: Encounters with the Vulnerable Self* (London: Sage, 2002); Jasbir K. Puar, *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).

¹² Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

network of human and non-human agencies that allow room for error and serendipitous discovery.

Framing this practice as a form of media experimentation enables a move away from strict disciplinary boundaries toward a speculative and materially grounded engagement with what might be termed crip media aesthetics. The hybrid poetic-visual compositions arise not from high-tech or futurist tools, but through a low-tech, anti-teleological process characterised by slowness, repetition, and bodily limitation—qualities often pathologised within normative productivity paradigms, yet fundamental to any craft practice. What is presented here is the result of a long series of discarded sketches: pages drawn repeatedly until we reached a point of mutual satisfaction; the same words written so many times that their meaning fades, and the gesture remains. It is an itinerary of discovery through mistakes.

In this regard, the work resonates with theories of analog and glitch aesthetics¹³, wherein error, degradation, or interference become sites of affective and epistemic potential. The interface—be it a digital canvas, repurposed software, or hand-drawn fragment—operates as a form of poetic prosthesis: a provisional bridge between sensation and articulation, body and medium. Rather than conceiving media as passive conduits for expression, this practice reclaims mediation itself as a generative terrain for the transmission of meaning—unstable, tactile, recursive—thereby situating the work within experimental media traditions that graft intra-active correlations foregrounding dissonance, material friction, and embodied constraint.¹⁴

¹³ Rosa Menkman, *The Glitch Moment(um)* (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2011).

¹⁴ Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Programmed Visions: Software and Memory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011); Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

The translation of this work into digital form—whether via scanning, photographic documentation, or formatting for online circulation—introduces an additional layer of mediation that is both practical and conceptual. In the digitisation process, certain tactile or material qualities are inevitably diminished; yet this mediation also facilitates new legibility and expanded modes of access. This transformation invites a media-theoretical perspective that reconceptualises disability and fragmentation not as deficits, but as compositional conditions. The interface—whether screen, file, or platform—becomes a prosthetic environment in which the hybrid visual-poetic form circulates not despite its embodied constraints, but precisely because of them.

This piece of artistic research, therefore, investigates what the visual can do that text cannot by functioning as a form of pragmatist visual epistemology.¹⁵ The creative, slow, and iterative practice thus becomes not a mere illustration of an adjacent text, but a mode of inquiry: drawing one's way into understanding complex phenomena such as crip embodiment and machinic becoming, while leaving room for emergent and contingent meaning.

Visual language—and especially comics—is particularly effective when engaging with complex and non-linear concepts, owing to its amphibious nature. Situated between opposing poles—images and words, sequential and simultaneous, hierarchical and rhizomatic—meaning multiplies beyond the sum of its constituent parts.¹⁶ The topological organisation of the page encourages active reader participation, prompting the reconstruction of continuity from a flux of fragments, the activation of causal effects and non-linear relationships, and the composition of a

¹⁵ Chiara Ambrosio, "Drawing as a Pragmatist Visual Epistemology," in *Drawing Processes of Life: Molecules, Cells, Organisms*, ed. Gemma Anderson and John Dupré (Bristol: Intellect, 2023).

¹⁶ Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (Northampton, MA: Kitchen Sink Press, 1993); Nick Sousanis, *Unflattening* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015); Giada Peterle, *Comics as a Research Practice: Drawing Narrative Geographies beyond the Frame* (London: Routledge, 2021).

new space for exploration. This structure is capable of holding complexity and contradiction—fragmentation and wholeness, the organic and the machinic, theory and practice, the individual and the collective. Drawing thus becomes an embodied method for introducing doubt into alternative representations, opening onto new modes of becoming and divergent forms of understanding.¹⁷

Consequently, my poetics now centres on an aspiration toward an unnatural body—one deliberately denaturalised—that, in rejecting the gender and sex assigned at birth, also repudiates the constraints imposed by chronic disability. I envision a cyborg body, radiant and luminous, in which the machine—currently my sole practical instrument—becomes not merely a medium but an extension of my very being, restoring a sense of agency and capability. However, through the anarchic alliance shaped by mutual aid, I now recognise a different possibility—one that refuses isolation. It is the expansion of the self across a multiplicity of shared events, gestures, and creations.

Rather than representing disability or gender transition from a distanced theoretical perspective, the work performs these conditions, inscribing a state of becoming in which form, process, and embodiment are inseparable. This aligns with the assertion that disability aesthetics does not seek to overcome impairment but instead insists upon its centrality to aesthetic production.¹⁸ From this vantage point, impairment is neither an obstacle nor a metaphor, but form itself. Artistic creation becomes a tactile, affective extension of the self in flux—a transcorporeal practice that resists closure and embraces discontinuous identity formation.¹⁹ The

¹⁷ Ambrosio, “Drawing as a Pragmatist Visual Epistemology.”

¹⁸ Tobin Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010).

¹⁹ Amelia Jones, *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts* (London: Routledge, 2012).

resultant poetics of form is thus not concerned with the body per se but enacted through it: a practice in which making and becoming co-occur, each gesture inscribing a body no longer anchored in normativity but expanded across technical, sensorial, and conceptual dimensions.

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