Crippling the “Undercommons”: Improvisational Relations of Race, Nation, and Madness in the Fiction of Victor LaValle

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Monday October 12, 5:00 – 6:15pm, 127 Memorial

Several of Victor LaValle’s novels feature psychiatric disability, from mind-body experience and affect to the social geographies of madness. Gendered bodynorms, nationality, ethnicity, and cultural constructions of blackness and whiteness are central concerns in his works. Against the backdrop of current racialized police violence, I discuss LaValle’s semi-autobiographical *The Ecstatic* (2003), his more recent *The Devil in Silver* (2012), and a prequel to that novel, *Lucretia and the Kroons* (2012) to trace the ways racialized constructs of disability and madness interconnect with renewed demands for racial justice. I use Stefano Harney’s and Fred Moten’s term, the “undercommons,” as a productive framework to explore madness and blackness/whiteness together. Described as a space that accepts “brokenness” without seeking repair, a space that “looks crazy,” as a “wild” space “beyond the beyond,” the undercommons both invokes disability and invites a more critical engagement with disability and mad studies.

Michelle Jarman is an associate professor of disability studies at the Wyoming Institute for Disabilities. She is also adjunct faculty in Gender and Women’s Studies. She direct the undergraduate Minor in Disability Studies. Her broad research interests include 20th century U.S. literature, and intersecting cultural representations of disability, gender, and race. She is currently working on a book manuscript titled *Crip Entanglements: Rifts and Relations of Disability*.

This event is free and open to the public. We ask that attendees avoid wearing strong scents or perfumes. Sign language interpreting will be provided, and all of the buildings and rooms are wheelchair-accessible. If you have questions about parking or other accommodations for this event, please contact the Vice Provost for Diversity at vpd@udel.edu or Stephanie Kerschbaum at kersch@udel.edu. The organizers wish to acknowledge the generous support of the Interdisciplinary Humanities Research Center, the Vice Provost for Diversity, the Center for Disabilities Studies, the School of Education, the Department of English, and the Center for the Study of Diversity.