LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY

Early Work By Student Researchers

SPARK

ISSN 2050-4187

Issue 12: Dis/Ability on Screen, June 2019

Spark

Issue 12: Special Issue: Dis/Ability on Screen, June 2019

ISSN 2050-4187

Publication date: 25/06/2019

Published by: **Liverpool John Moores University**, Faculty of Education, Health and Community, IM Marsh Campus, Barkhill Road, Aigburth, Liverpool, L17 6BD.

Contents

Editorial

Welcome to Issue 12 - a special issue of **SPARK**. Here, we bring together an excellent collection of work written by student interns on the Curriculum Enhancement Internship Project Dis/Ability on Screen. Building on the success of last year's School of Education-initiated Curriculum Enhancement Student Internship project called Film Freaks, Dis/Ability on Screen was a collaborative partnership with the School of Education and the Liverpool Screen School aimed at unleashing students' creative potential in facilitating synergies between film, disability and education as interest fields. The project connects with similar Film Freaks initiatives held previously, among other places, at the University of Leuven (Verstraete, Van Hooste, Thyssen and Catteeuw, 2004). These seminars went on to develop into a widely attended public Disability Film Festival (http://www.disabilityfilmfestival.be) in the city of Leuven. During the internship project, four students worked collaboratively with staff to hold four film seminars offering a creative space to discuss and debate contemporary and historical views of children, young people and adults with so-called 'special -' or 'additional needs', consider education as an enabling/disabling project and dis/ability as different from and/or similar to 'freakery'. This issue is a collection of reports from these seminars combining both discussions and individual analysis. We hope you find this special issue interesting and welcome any feedback you may have.

Ella Dalton, Gareth Davies, Nathanial Eker and Hannah Morris
(Student editors)

Please let us know what you think of this issue of Spark. If you are interested in publishing in Spark please go to our online journal space at http://openjournals.ljmu.ac.uk/spark Create a login and upload your work for consideration by the student staff editorial team.

If this issue of SPARK has inspired you to submit your own work to be published or if you would like to join the editing team, please feel free to contact us at: SPARK@ljmu.ac.uk.

Staff editors: Clara Kassem and Geert Thyssen

Dis/Ability on Screen

As part of the LJMU Curriculum Enhancement Internship Project Dis/Ability on Screen, student interns and staff worked collaboratively to establish a film seminar series that aimed to denaturalise some of the present views on children, young people and adults with 'special-' or 'additional needs', education as an enabling/disabling project and 'disability' as different from or similar to 'freakery' (cf. Bogdan, 1990; Shakespeare, 1994; Garland-Thomson, 1996; Verstraete, 2012; Richardson, 2018). As this was a collaborative project between the School of Education and Liverpool Screen School, it also sought to develop a sense of community between and across both Schools building on shared interests (e.g. audiovisual media and technologies of learning) through different lenses to film, education and dis/ability.

Four film seminars ran from 28th March to 8th April 2019, attracting broad and diverse audiences, some members of whom were not affiliated with LJMU. Firstly, each student intern selected a film in discussion with project leaders and collaborators with the aim of denaturalising 'mindsets' through 'visual imagery' (cf. Aitken, 2018). One of the interns (Ella Dalton) then created artwork (including beautifully crafted posters) to advertise the seminar featuring each film, and another intern (Nathanial Eker) skilfully set up a Facebook event page to disseminate the film screenings as widely as possible. Each intern then drafted a short introduction to contextualise their film on the basis of one key question, each of which was chosen collaboratively by the student-staff project team. Hannah Morris (Education Studies and Special and Inclusive Needs) analysed the film *Unbreakable* (2000, M. Night Shyamalan) in relation to the question 'do we vilify people who are different?'; Nathanial Eker (Creative Writing and Film Studies) explored *The Theory of Everything* (2014, James Marsh) through the question 'should able-bodied actors play disabled characters?'; Ella Dalton (Creative Writing) in turn analysed *Edward Scissorhands* (1990, Tim

Burton) by considering ‘how does disability affect communities?’; and finally Gareth Davies (Education Studies and Special and Inclusive Needs) explored the film *Wonder* (2017, James Marsh) based on the question ‘is disability a relationship?’. Films were shown to staff, students as well as members from the wider Liverpool community (including one member of the Deaf community), after which discussion was prompted by each student intern. Discussion points were subsequently interwoven with introductions to produce four reports featured on the Dis/Ability on Screen website (https://disabilityonscreen.home.blog/) and in this special issue. All four reports centre on the overarching theme of ‘’relationships’ - identified collaboratively by students and staff upon completion of the film screenings.

Relationships were at the heart of the project from the outset through its very design, which sought to bring into dialogue aspects concerning film-making, education and dis/ability and related knowledge gathered in the fields of education, film studies, creative writing and disability studies. The interrelations between these fields of study have long been explored and connections well-established thus for instance in disability studies increasing attention has been devoted to representations of disability in various media (Biklen and Bogdan, 1977; Barnes, 1992; Darke, 1999, 2004; Shakespeare, 1994; Ross, 2001; Mitchell and Snyder, 2001; Allan, 2013; Ellis and Goggin, 2015; Barker and Murray, 2018; Houston, 2019). Similarly, in education, there is a growing body of literature analysing culturally shaped re/presentations through media from literary fiction to film and documentary (Silberman-Keller et al, 2008; Dalton, 2010; Sealey, 2008; Renwick, 2018; Aitken, 2018), occasionally within a dis/ability lens (Bolt, 2018). Finally, film studies have likewise developed an interest in ways that audiences have been educated about people with disabilities and the extent to which this has enabled fruitful relationships between disabled and non-disabled

people (Sancho, 2003; Haller, 2010; Happer and Philo, 2013). These mutual interests are reflected in the curricula of both the School of Education and Liverpool Screen School as became evident at the 2018 Liverpool John Moores University Teaching and Learning Conference. This provided the direct inspiration for the Dis/Ability on Screen project and the publications in this special issue.

Student interns each in their way touched upon the centrality of relationships in the very picturing or con/figuring of dis/ability. Hannah Morris, for example, whilst focussing on the complex interrelationships between hero and villain, overcoming and tragedy, abnormal strength and fragility, and parents and offspring actually exposes a deeper reflection of the film *Unbreakable* on the key polar opposites of the superhuman (i.e. unbreakable) and subhuman (cf. Weinstock, 2010; Kirby, 2014). This is a pervasive narrative in both fiction (cf. Kirby, 2014) but also more recently non-fiction (e.g. reporting of the Paralympics – cf. Crow, 2014). These narratives serve to reinforce difference rather than commonality. Classically, the superhuman can be found in the mythological tales of Hercules who demonstrated simultaneously a 'quintessential humanness' as well as extraordinary strength (Kirby, 2013, p.82). In *Unbreakable*, the character David is portrayed as a superhero, which is a particular type of superhuman (Kirby, 2013). The general characteristics of a superhero usually include a clear mission to save or help people (e.g. the individual behaves in an exceptionally brave and protective manner), specific powers (e.g. enhanced strength) and a protected identity (e.g. wears a costume – here: David's green overcoat) (Kirby, 2014, p.82). In contrast, the character Elijah ends up being portrayed problematically as a person who is a 'dangerous, subhuman, monster' (Longmore, 2003, p.123). Yet it is the symmetry between their characters that restores 'equilibrium' and confirms the 'non-absurdity of the world' (Burdeau, 2010, p.94). It is through David and Elijah that the film holds a mirror to viewers and asks them to

consider the middle ground, which is the more mundane 'human'. In other words, *Unbreakable* asks viewers to consider what constitutes 'normal' human existence. As Morris argues, it raises questions about what defines someone as 'able' and qualifies another as 'disabled', that is: about the unstable relationship embedded within the very concept of disability.

Nathanial Eker in his piece on *The Theory of Everything* brought to the fore the contentious dynamics between the disabled and non-disabled acting communities in relation to the recent debates surrounding 'cripping up'. 'Cripping up' refers to the practice of non-disabled actors portraying disabled characters. Eker identifies historically shaped representation (and employment) patterns in the context of Hollywood – but with broader relevance for film-making environments internationally – by highlighting what terms a 'disability' characterising how the film industry and the disabled community relate to each other. In so doing, he points to complex, hidden power dynamics and issues of equity at play around disability. It could be argued that the film while raising questions about non-disabled actors and disabled characters also reveals a preoccupation on the part of the film industry and non-disabled audiences with disabled people's interpersonal relationships including sexual ones. Disability and sex are often seen as incompatible (O'Toole and Bregnate, 1992) to the extent that within ableist accounts the terms sex and disability tend to mutually exclude or 'disable' each other (Mollow and McRuer, 2012, p.23). As Tepper (2000, p.285) argues sex is seen as

> 'a privilege of the white, heterosexual, young, single and non-disabled… sexual portrayals of people who are older, who are larger, who are darker, who are gayer, who are mentally or physically disabled, or who just do not fit the targeted market profile have been conspicuously absent in mainstream media'.

If sexuality is considered, disabled men are often portrayed as either asexual or hypersexualised. This polarisation is used to further feelings of pity or fear respectively towards disabled people (Mollow

and McRuer, 2012). Esmail et al. (2010) argue that current attitudes and perceptions of disabled people's sexuality are driven by inadequate sex education classes, the media, as well as a lack of social conversations about sexuality and disability. Misinformation and prejudice around disability and sexuality ensue from this and in turn this may cause some disabled people's sexual self-concept to become distorted and their confidence negatively affected (Esmail et al, 2010, p.1148).

Ella Dalton examines the relationship between disability and community in the film *Edward Scissorhands*. 'Community' is shaped by the every-day, often repeated interactions that an individual has – these may be real, imaginary, and in/direct (Kelly, 2001). A central motif in most Tim Burton films is that of an individual at war with their community (Bassil-Morozow, 2011). This often results in a somewhat melodramatic stand-off between the individual and their community (Ibid.). This clearly applies to *Edward Scissorhands* as the character Edward tries to 'fit' into 'bland suburbia' but ends up retreating back to the castle he came from, never to return (Ibid.). Community, then, is the place where disability is both constructed and experienced (Kelly, 2001). Disability is actively brought about by communities in social and cultural contexts that reinforce ability and disability; communities and societies in general are 'social bodies' (Herman, Priem and Thyssen, 2017) that enable but also disable members, individual or collective. The notion of disabling societies – sometimes termed 'communities of communities', which may unhelpfully accentuate ethnic and other differences between imagined groups of people (Myers 2015) – ties in closely with the so-called social model of disability, which locates any dysfunctions perceived in the relationship between society and some of its members in society itself rather than in these members as people supposedly having 'impairments' or 'disabilities' (Clogston, 1990). These latter attributes are rather conceived of as the effects of the exclusion of particular

groups of people ‘from participation in the mainstream of social activities’ (UPIAS, 1976, cited in Oliver, 2009, p. 42). The disabling and enabling processes co-constitutive of society, and practices of inclusion and exclusion inherent to it, draw attention to the fact that societies or ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson 2006) are themselves relationships, continuously requiring the drawing of boundaries, both real and imaginary. Interestingly, a relationship or boundary that is also explored in *Edward Scissorhands* concerns that between a human and non-human, a man and machine. Encounters of the human and the mechanical in education, science, industry and film – as metaphors for a broad range of social concerns – have been the subject of a number of recent studies (e.g. Petrina 2014; Herman, Priem, Thyssen 2017). Of particular interest here is the con/figuration of such an encounter as a father-son relationship. As with other Tim Burton films, the central focus in *Edwards Scissorhands* is on the father figure. Edward’s father is positioned as the main carer and the one who effectively gives birth to Edward (Bassil-Morozow, 2001).

The father-son relationship is also a relationship explored in the last film analysed by Gareth Davies. Davies indeed places a particular range of relationships at the centre of the debate about representations of dis/ability in film and similar media by purposely choosing to analyse the film *Wonder*. This motion picture offers a decentred understanding of dis/ability in shifting the focus from a disabled character, a boy called Auggie, to that character’s family and peer and social networks. *Wonder* shows how disability, rather than just being given (and occasionally, as with the character Auggie, mitigated in operating theatres), performatively materialises at the junctions and interstices of everyday interactions. Like many others, the film thus complicates a common-sense view of disability, but in drawing particular attention to parents and siblings, it also raises concerns for disability scholarship. Indeed, the main focus of research conducted on families and disability has tended to focus on

families with (a) disabled child(ren) rather than disabled parents (e.g. Ferguson, 2001; McLaughlin, 2012). Similarly to McLaughlin (2012), Davies argues that not just the child but the family as a whole lives and experiences disability. Yet, there is often more focus on the non-disabled family members in this relationship, and their trials and tribulations take centre stage which positions the disabled child as an 'other', disconnected from their family (Ferguson, 2001). In terms of connections and disconnections, it could be argued that another key relationship *Wonder* brings into the limelight is that with oneself as another other. Revealing scenes in this regard are those which see Auggie disguised for a Halloween school party blending in, seemingly connected with fellow pupils (particularly one wearing the same mask as he does), until sadly his ordinarily unmasked self is reflected back to him through the eyes and disparaging comments of his classmates, including his best friend. It throws the young disabled character back onto himself – an 'other' from which he had briefly allowed himself to become estranged but with whom he is forced to re- *and* disconnect.

Film-making processes, including storytelling, lighting, colour and music setting, camera operating, and editing, offer a privileged window onto the kind of processes involved in understanding and researching something like disability. With the quantum physics-inspired queer feminist theorist Karen Barad (2007), disability can be seen as a 'phenomenon': as a congealing of what is observed or the 'object of observation' as well as the 'agencies of observation'. Disability never *is,* it is ever becoming in ongoing processes whereby its identification as such depends on the *tools* with which it is identified (anything from genetic screening tools, to operating devices, to everyday concepts – in Barad's (2007) terms, 'apparatuses of bodily production'). In other words, disability, as a phenomenon iteratively co-emerges or 'intra-acts' with certain incisions being made, that is: it requires on-going boundary-drawing practices, or that which Barad (2007) has termed 'agential cuts'. These boundary-

drawing practices or cuts *matter* both in terms of meaning and substance because they co-constitute the phenomenon (‘disability’) in question, and ever differentially so. Film-making, then, has the potential of revealing in concrete, audio-visual ways boundary-drawing practices that come also with scholarship on disability, which likewise entails on-going enactments of ‘researcher cuts’ (Goodman, 2017a,b). Baradian thinking about – or rather with –film, dis/ability, and education as ‘intra-acting’ or mutually constitutive becoming opens up a range of avenues for future research. It invites readers of this special issue to accept that they too are already part of such becoming(s) and to consider the differences this makes: to what inclusions and exclusions they contribute. If the contributions that follow further help raise awareness of everyone’s implication in what constitutes dis/ability and how it is allowed to present itself, then we consider the mission of Dis/Ability on Screen accomplished.

Hannah Morris (Education Studies and Special and Inclusive Needs, School of Education)

Unbreakable (2000, M. Night Shyamalan)

I was the first student intern to present a Dis/Ability on Screen film seminar featuring a character with disabilities. The film I selected was *Unbreakable* by Manoj Nelliyattu, or 'M. Night', Shyamalan. The film was well received and provoked plenty of discussion amongst the audience present at its screening. Most audience members thought that the inclusion of a disabled character was a conscious decision and handled sensitively enough so as not to be offensive.

Released on the 23rd of December 2000 (IMDb, n.d.), *Unbreakable* focuses on the lives of David Dunn and Elijah Price. Dunn, played by Bruce Willis, is a security guard who survives a horrific train crash, killing everyone onboard, with no injuries (Bradshaw, 2000). The main character I focused on was Elijah Price, played by Samuel L Jackson. He was born in 1961, with Osteogenesis Imperfecta, also known as Brittle Bone Syndrome. Brittle Bone Syndrome, according to the NHS website, is where fractures are caused by minimal impact due to a lack of collagen, which is the protein 'responsible for bone structure' (NHS, 2019a). The film closely follows Elijah and how he believes that his physical impairment and Dunn's invulnerability are signs that they are connected (Cineworld, n.d). The reason I chose this film is because so far it has not been the subject of much academic research and its characters have admirable depth. *The Guardian* film critic Peter Bradshaw in 2000 stated that M. Night Shyamalan is a remarkable film-maker and that in every sense his films are to be considered 'deeply strange' (Bradshaw, 2000). *Unbreakable* is known for creating a mood or 'atmosphere' because of different themes explored; for example, the mood is tense when Elijah tells a

customer to leave his art shop, as he feels insulted by the suggestion that comic books are ‘childish’.

The main question guiding my seminar was: ‘Do we vilify people who are different?’. I chose this question because I wanted to explore the relationships that were established involving the villain character with a disability, Elijah. More particularly, I was interested in analysing to what extent Elijah was positioned as a villain because of his actions or by his condition.

There are several relationships that feature prominently in the film. Elijah’s disability in the film helps to create a familial and nurturing relationship with his mother, who was his main carer throughout his childhood. One of the audience members watching the film felt that the attention devoted to this mother-son relationship made Elijah seem more like a child rather than an adult with a disability. However, another audience member suggested the relation between mother and son was more about kindness than about infantilising. Bill Hughes has argued that disabled people are often positioned as requiring sympathy from others, which affects disabled people’s senses of self (Hughes, 2002). His views support the point made by the first audience member, namely: that the character of Elijah, through his disability, is at times used to generate pity. In other words, Elijah seems to be viewed differently from the rest of the characters precisely because of his disability. Another common stereotype in the media is that of the ‘super cripple’ (Barnes, 1992; Harnett, 2000), which implies that if a disabled person performs an ordinary task, they should be praised for it. This is prominent in the scene where Elijah receives a comic book as a reward for going outside as a child on a playground presenting numerous risks in view of his disability. The reward for being brave enough to go outside, which is, of course, a fairly common task for able-bodied characters, affirms the ‘super-cripple’ stereotype.

When discussing camera angles and colours highlighting the connection between David and Elijah, a member of the audience described how Elijah only ever wore clothes in the colour purple and David only wore green- or grey-coloured clothing. The main purpose of this use of colour was to express that David as a hero wearing green was connected in some way to Elijah, an eccentric villain as evident from his obsession with the colour purple (Acuna, 2019). Members of the audience suggested that the use of colour in this way was a ‘comic book’ style, with purple having been used to show villains such as the Joker and Magneto, and remarked that the colours green and purple were intertwined as they were constantly made to appear together. This supported by Totaro, who points to one scene, in David’s house, where on the green wardrobe there appeared a purple mirror (Totaro, 2003). This suggests M. Night Shyamalan uses the two colours together as a forewarning of a future relationship. One audience member noted that the longest camera shots of the whole film are those introducing the characters, for instance, the opening shot following Dunn on a train about to derail and crash. This scene in fact contains nine single shots together making up the longest shot of the film (Totaro, 2003). It is also the scene where Elijah’s bones break whilst being born, and this indicates how the characters are opposites, for example, Elijah being born with a ‘weak’ body and David having supernatural strength.

I asked the audience attending the film screening how we are positioned to feel about Elijah, to which one audience member responded that we were made to like the character because of his charisma and his ability to deal with a ‘debilitating’ disability. However, another audience member disputed this point, saying that throughout the film it was hinted at Elijah being evil. Barnes (1992) has inferred that people with disabilities have often been portrayed as being sinister or evil. This may link back to medieval times, where people with disabilities were thought to have disabilities because God

punished them for previous sins committed, the link with sin implying they themselves were evil (Tracey, 2013). One audience member argued that the film may vilify him for being different; for example, he has a severe disability which causest him to be so sinister. However, another audience member suggested that the film tries to make us feel sympathetic towards Elijah and almost justify his actions. In my opinion, this may be seen in the scene where Elijah falls down the stairs because he was trying to prove to David that he has a gift for sensing danger. It seems, at the time, that Elijah is trying to help David realise his potential and mentor him to be the best superhero he can be, and as he fell down the stairs he felt punished for attempting to do something good.

To conclude, there was much debate about the film and Elijah's disability. Some felt Elijah's disability contributed to his committing of evil acts, but others thought that it did not in itself explain, let alone excuse, his actions. It is worth considering that positioning Elijah's disability as the reason for his actions may help vilify other people who have the same condition. One audience member felt that Elijah was vilified for being different, as he was excluded as a child due to his disability. Most of the audience thought that Elijah's actions were the reason he was vilified and that his murdering of civilians could not be brought back to his condition. The audience seemed to agree that Shyamalan used Brittle Bone Syndrome to help create a complete opposition to David. However, some may argue it is important to remain conscious about tastefully or accurately representing people with disabilities in the media; Haller (2010) in this context stresses that some people do not have ample balanced personal experience with 'disability'. Therefore, one may argue *Unbreakable* vilifies people who have Brittle Bone Syndrome, for some people may only ever encounter the condition through the film and may assume that everyone with such a disability bears a grudge against able-bodied people. The film also constitutes a

commentary on how we view disabled people, as Elijah has a physical disability but is far more intelligent than David, as evident from his organising of several high-profile mass killings as well as manipulating David throughout the film. Ultimately, this raises questions about what defines someone as ‘able’ and qualifies another as ‘disabled’, that is: about the unstable relationship embedded within the very concept of disability.

Nathanial Eker (Creative Writing and Film Studies, Liverpool Screen School)

The Theory of Everything (James Marsh, 2015)

The second Dis/Ability on Screen film seminar, for which I was responsible, focused on the question: 'Should non-disabled actors play disabled characters?', in relation to *The Theory of Everything* (2015, James Marsh).

'The social model of disability is first and foremost, a focus on the environmental and social barriers which exclude people with perceived impairments from mainstream society' (Barnes et al, 1999, p.78). Disabled people are marginalised constantly by society, and the film and television industries show no exception. The discussion around non-disabled actors portraying disabled characters on screen as an issue of misrepresentation and questionable ethicality has brewed within the disabled acting community for some time, though publicly it has risen as a topic for debate in the past five years. In the UK, The Guardian has notably written multiple articles on the issue, including one by Frances Ryan (2015) donning the term 'cripping up.' Ryan compares able-bodied actors who take on disabled roles to those who undertake the universally panned practice of 'blacking up' to physically accommodate an imaginary race of African descent, often as a caricature: 'While blacking up is now rightly greeted with outrage, 'cripping up' is still greeted with awards' (Ryan, 2015). Ryan's article was written in direct response to the casting of Eddie Redmayne as Professor Stephen Hawking, and thus served as a key facet of the film screening for which I was responsible. Very similarly to Ryan, Barnes (1992) already noted when discussing My Left Foot (1989, Jim Sheridan) that the title character in this film too was played by non-disabled actor. 'Unfortunately,' he wrote, 'this is common policy in the film world and partly due to the fact that most drama schools and colleges have not recruited disabled students for

the acting profession' (Barnes, 1992, p.8-9). This shows a disconnect between the way the film industry treats the disabled acting community, and a breakdown of a relationship between them, due to studios taking parts that could be suitable for disabled people away from them, marginalising them in the process. More recently, Ellis noted in agreement with Barnes (1992) that a key critique of the film and television industries comes from a lack of appropriate representation: 'The media – and television in particular – is consistently criticised for its representation of disability. Critiques concentrate on underrepresentation, negative portrayals and inaccurate portrayals of normalisation' (Ellis, 2015, p.82).

In light of these comments, following the screening of the film, the first and most important question that the audience was asked was: 'is this a role that could have been performed (at least in part) by a disabled actor?' The response to this question at first was uniformly negative. Most participants rightly pointed to the narrative of the film being driven by the progression of Hawking's amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS, or Motor Neuron disease), thus the role fundamentally required an able-bodied actor to show the degeneration of Hawking's physical state over decades. ALS 'refers to a group of progressive diseases that cause dysfunction in the nerves that cause muscle movement' (McIntosh, 2017) and as such often eventually causes the sufferer to lose the ability to walk, move their limbs, and limits their speech. It was suggested by one audience member that to offer a disabled actor a 'half role' where they only played the character in the 'disabled years' would be disrespectful and would devalue the agency of the actor. Notably, however, 'we do not know how disabled people themselves feel about their marginalisation from some of the most powerful and influential mass media forms such as television' (Ross, 1997, p.1).

The audience was also asked the question of whether they viewed 'cripping up' as an issue of exclusion and misrepresentation.

This proved to be a more divided issue. One audience member insisted that it is an actor's job to take on another identity, regardless of their gender, impairment, or sexuality. He concluded that if we disallow actors from taking on disabled character roles, particularly when representing invisible disabilities such as deafness, we will fundamentally shift what it means to be an actor. However, it is clear that the relationship with the industry is equally tumultuous for other marginalised groups such as the trans community, who lose trans roles to cisgender actors. Though there are exceptions, such as Pose which 'features the largest cast of transgender actors in television history' (Pollard, 2019), these works are the exception to the rule. It is important to note the similarities to the disconnected relationship of the disabled acting community that are often coequal in scope of rejection. Much of the audience found 'cripping up' to be an issue that takes work away from an already marginalised group, citing popular films that chose to cast able bodied actors in disabled roles. Indeed, Barnes describes My Left Foot as 'an excellent opportunity for a disabled actor' in the same way that Ryan describes the role of Hawking.

My research into activism by the disabled community led me to discover Adam Pearson, a UK based actor who has neurofibromatosis. He has tumours across 90% of his face. Pearson spoke out against 'cripping up' saying that it was a culture of exclusion that 'is a systematic problem' (Ryan, 2018). Adam was not offered an audition for the BBC's upcoming television adaptation of The Elephant Man, with the role going to able-bodied actor Charlie Heaton, despite Pearson's appropriate mainstream acting credentials, appearing in Under the Skin (2013, Johnathan Glazer) opposite Scarlett Johansson. As Goodley and Van Hove (2005, p.22) note, 'disabled people are rarely afforded a leading role in such cultural pastimes [as film] … [and] disabling discourses prevail'. The audience members' perceptions of the disabled community being

marginalised were fuelled by Pearson's public personal rejection, pointing to the fact that members of the disabled community who have ALS themselves, could have given a more authentic performance as Hawking, concurrently exploring a subtext of how the condition affects real people. This opinion was retorted by another audience member, who noted that ALS has many different expressions, so that no one person with the condition will be identical to another. To properly portray Hawking's life, one would need an able-bodied actor to mimic his specific condition precisely.

The vocal majority who agreed that 'actors should be allowed to act' suggested that limiting the repertoire of characters that an actor is allowed to portray damages the industry. One person pointed to a recent controversy surrounding the casting of the straight actor and comedian Jack Whitehall as 'the first openly gay character in a Disney film' (Staples, 2018). The petitioners suggested that only a homosexual man would truly be able to portray the character accurately. Thus, the audience member suggested that by theoretically disallowing Eddie Redmayne the role of Stephen Hawking, we would head down a slippery slope, that prevents actors from being allowed to act. It was further noted that the industry is founded on the public perception and recognition of famous faces. Recognisable, celebrity actors are what draw crowds and often play a part in the film's commercial and critical success. *The Theory of Everything* made five times its initial budget at the box office, in addition to Redmayne winning the film's sole academy award, for best actor.

This led to the discussion that actors take on disabled roles as 'Oscar bait.' Frances Ryan opens her article discussing the issue; 'If you do a film about the holocaust, you're guaranteed an Oscar; or so goes the famous Kate Winslet joke in Extras. The same can be said for an actor doing a film about disability. Unless you're a disabled actor, that is. Then you're lucky to even get the part' (Ryan, 2015;

see also Kermode, 2019). It was agreed that there is a clear cause and effect with able-bodied actors who take disabled character parts and subsequent academy recognition. John Hurt in The Elephant Man (1980, David Lynch), Daniel Day Lewis in My Left Foot (1989, Jim Sheridan), and more recently Sally Hawkins in The Shape of Water (2017, Guillermo del Toro) are all examples. The correlation became clear; sentimental performances about disability by able-bodied actors win Oscars (Kermode, 2019). Indeed, already in 1992 Barnes noted that ‘of fourteen actors in the category of best actors / actresses won by films dealing with disability, only one winner, Marlee Martin in 'Children of a Lesser God' - a film about a deaf woman's relationship with a non-disabled teacher in a school for deaf people -had experience of the impairment [sic] portrayed’ (Barnes, 1992, p.9). It is also relevant to add that many critics at the time considered Martin’s win a ‘pity vote,’ something Kirstie Mitchell touched on. Mitchell notes that ‘this contradicts the need for authentic representation, therefore overlooking acting ability based on actors being Deaf or having a disability’ (Mitchell, 2018, p.26).

The discussion led most participants to agree that a middle ground needs to be reached. This idea is embodied by disabled theatre actor Mat Fraser, who played ‘crippled Richard III.’ He said [of the theatre industry, though it remains relevant to film] ‘ideally, anybody should be able to play anybody, but only when there is a truly level playing field of opportunity’ (Pepper, 2019). What was clear from my research and the film seminar, is that it is far from a level playing field. The BBC pledged in 2014 that they would quadruple the number of disabled actors on screen by 2017 (Singh, 2014). While the likes of disabled actor Liz Carr in Silent Witness have emerged during this time, no official statistics have been released. In light of this, the pledge cannot be taken as anything more than hyperbolised self-promotion, for goodwill PR with the disabled community. Ultimately, the audience concurred that it is the industry that needs to

change, not the actors. If the industry becomes more accommodating to marginalised communities, and gives them a fair opportunity to audition, the friction felt towards the way films and television programmes are currently cast, could be significantly eased.

To conclude, my research allowed me to ascertain that there is a disability in the relationship between the film industry and the disabled community that they misrepresent and further marginalise, by casting non-disabled actors. This is due to an uneven playing field, facilitated by film studios that almost always prefer to cast an actor giving an imitation of disability, rather an actor with that disability. While some studios profess to attempt an increased diversity by casting more disabled actors (Singh, 2014), there is little proof that this has been actioned, and it can feel like a tick-box exercise. Throughout the seminar and my research, portrayals of people of marginalised sexuality, ethnicity, and gender all appear to suffer from this same disconnect. The relationship between these acting communities and the mainstream studio system is equally disengaged, leading to further marginalisation by a system that nearly always favours a straight white impersonation, as opposed to casting someone who has the same attribute as the character. Though there are arguments to be made in favour of casting non-disabled actors (chiefly in promotion and PR and to accurately present the physical deterioration of a person with a degenerative condition), it is clear that the relationship between the industry and the disabled acting community is fractured, and that the playing field must become more even, in order to establish true equality.

Ella Dalton (Creative Writing, Liverpool Screen School)

Edward Scissorhands (1990, Tim Burton)

For the films chosen to screen to an audience in the frame of the Dis/Ability on Screen project, I selected Tim Burton's *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) and set out to analyse the interrelations between film, disability and education based on the question: 'How does disability affect communities?'.

Edward Scissorhands follows the story of a man who is created by a scientist in an attempt to have a son. While the creation, dubbed Edward, is a kind and naïve soul, his creator passes away before his form can be fully finished, leaving him with frightening scissors in place of hands. One day, a woman selling Avon products happens upon the ruins of Edward's home, and takes it upon herself to bring an isolated Edward into suburban society. The film, as a project, mattered personally to many of the people who worked on it, such as Caroline Thompson, who worked for Burton as the film's screenwriter. In a 2015 interview with Variety (Chernov, 2015), she was quoted saying: 'everyone feels like an outsider. That's the story we were telling, and that's the story people still respond to.' Burton himself has openly admitted the film is heavily based on his feelings of isolation and being unable to communicate to people in the context of his suburban upbringing. On the topic of his childhood, Burton stated that he was often alone and had trouble maintaining relationships; when asked for further clarification, his response was: 'I get the feeling people just got this urge to want to leave me alone for some reason, I don't know exactly why' (Manderfield 2013, n.p.). These emotions led him, in his teenage years, to sketch a character that would evolve into one we now know as Edward: a thin, solemn man with long, sharp blades for fingers (White, 2011).

While the film is generally known as a classic today (Arabian, 2017), Johnny Depp, who plays Edward, said in the aforementioned Variety interview with Matthew Chernov (2015, n.p.) that ‘it took a long time to gain traction’, debuting third in the box office after its limited release, fairing far worse financially than other films out at the time such as ‘Home Alone’ and ‘Bird on a Wire’. In spite of this, the film gained a cult following that eventually earned it nominations for awards by the American Film Institute and even a theatrical ballet adaptation. The film was positively received by critics upon release and is still discussed in reviews to this day. Journalist Alex Arabian (2017, n.p.), writing for Film Inquiry, called the movie’s narrative ‘a story filled with both simplicity and complexity and an intangible element of wizardry that stands the test of time’. For Empire Online, Jo Berry (2015, n.p.) wrote: ‘Tim Burton's modern-day fable succeeds beautifully as sharp comedy and achingly sad romance’. The film has found a home in its recognition for having a protagonist with a clear physical disability. It made it to number six on Disability Horizons’ list of their top 10 films featuring disability (Blackwell, 2015), and many people with Asperger Syndrome feel that Edward displays traits of the condition, a reoccurring comparison in Burton’s films (Sampson, 2010).

The film has many defenders; however, there have also been opposing arguments brought forward over the years regarding how Edward and disability in general are depicted in the film. Though many critics, such as Owen Gleiberman (1990), Rita Kempley (1990) and Marc Lee (2014) enjoyed and appreciated Edward’s personality and role as a tragic character, others feel that he is portrayed as being creepy, played for comic relief and even depicted as reprehensible. Writing for the blog Sociology 2275, Hannah Jane (2016, n.p.) argues that the film ‘reinforces the stereotype that intellectually disabled individuals are evil and violent’. While mentioning that the movie presented ‘one of the first times the main

character carried a major mainstream film with a handicap [sic]', disability activist Sha-Myra (2018) believes it nonetheless used harmful stereotypes to make the audience sympathise with its protagonist, pointing to his depiction as a 'burden or tragedy' (Sha-Myra, 2018) – a common stereotype in media representations of disabled people, identified in similar fashion by Colin Barnes (1992), Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (1996), David Church (2006), and Katie Ellis and Gerard Goggin (2015), among many others.

With this in mind, I considered *Edward Scissorhands* an interesting film to discuss with an audience of diverse backgrounds. I asked that they consider how the film depicts disability and its relationship with communities, as well as what the film says about how society should treat people with visible and invisible disabilities. When I asked the audience how the character Edward impacts the community he enters in the film, they unanimously agreed that while, at first, he seems liked and valued, this is only superficial, his disability being used for the entertainment and practical needs of the townspeople. He is then abandoned as soon as he makes a mistake. As an audience member captured succinctly, 'he firstly is seen as a freak, then as a commodity and finally as a monster.' This is not a coincidence, as disability has often been depicted as a monstrosity in various media: Dylan Holdsworth (2018, p.192), for instance, in this context has suggested that 'the freak and the monster occupy a socio-cultural space that both rails against and reiterates what the normative body should be and do'.

Of particular interest to me, particularly in view of the topic of communication between a disabled character and a specific community, was the hypothesis of the character Edward Scissorhands being on the autism spectrum. Most of the audience disagreed with the idea, pointing to Edward's lack of social interactions to explain his strange behaviour. As said by one person, 'Edward could be linked with the autism spectrum, but almost all

neuro-typical people could. Edward didn't have a normal childhood and he could be classed as under-developed.' While most of the audience disagreed with their last point, highlighting Edward's ability to understand to spot toxicity in relationships and his empathy with animals, they still did not accept the hypothesis. Even when I mentioned the fact that little was known about autism during the production of the film (to the extent that the concept of an 'autism spectrum' was not yet recognised as such), the audience was firm on dismissing the hypothesis. Although I see how one could be tempted to support it, I am in agreement with the audience that it was not Burton's intention for Edward to be perceived as being a character with autism.

Finally, the audience reacted strongly to the featuring of religion and its relationship with disability in the film. While most of the audience felt that the depiction of religion was stereotypical and goofy, one person was vocal about her own experiences. She said 'it's accurate how they have depicted religion and its relationship with disability because some who are religious think that they (a person with disabilities) ended up like that because the person or their family aren't good.' Her cultural upbringing allowed her to experience the film in a different way, an indicator that *Edward Scissorhands* means a lot to people of various backgrounds.

The audience and I greatly enjoyed watching the film together, and we agreed that its long-lasting positive reputation and impact is well deserved. The audience believed that *Edward Scissorhands* presents an interesting portrayal of a disabled character entering a suburban environment and noticed the use of a disabled character's eccentric (and hence potentially frightening) appearance to elicit the kind of complex cultural responses that Holdsworth has framed in terms of negotiations regarding the boundaries between the 'normative and non-normative', 'self/Other' etc. which are ultimately revealed as 'precarious' (Holdsworth 2018, p. 194). 'Disability', then,

it may be argued – like the historical performances of ‘freakery’ and ‘monstrosity’ – has the potential to question the boundaries that make up any given ‘imagined’ community (Anderson, 2006), positioning those who belong and those who do not.

Gareth Davies (Education Studies and Special and Inclusive Needs, School of Education)

Wonder (2017, Stephen Chbosky)

For my part of the Dis/Ability on Screen project I chose the film *Wonder*, with particular consideration of the question: 'Is disability a relationship?'. The intention here was to explore the impacts that disability has on interactions among individuals within the family and the wider community.

Wonder is a 2017 comedy drama based on the 2012 novel by R.J. [Raquel Jaramillo] Palacio, starring Julia Roberts and Owen Wilson as parents to Auggie Pullman, who is played by Jacob Tremblay. The film, directed by Stephen Chbosky, follows Auggie and his family on his first-time enrolment into mainstream schooling, while also showing the perspectives of multiple familial characters throughout. Auggie has a genetic disorder called Treacher Collins syndrome that affects an individual's vision, hearing and breathing and can require multiple surgeries adding to congenital facial disfigurement (NHS, 2019b). The film shares Auggie's difficulties adjusting to school, partly from the perspective of family members and close friends, and explores how they too are affected. 'Is disability a relationship?' was very much a question left to the audience to interpret in their own ways. Yet, it connects at least partly with the notion that disability affects more than the disabled individual and that being (or being viewed and 'effected' as) disabled requires social context with interaction imminent in the everyday life-world; a view that is aligned with the 'social model' of disability (Kelly, 2001).

The film has been met with positive reviews from movie critic Mark Hadley with regard to the acknowledgment and awareness of the greater impacts that a child with a disability has on family life and

the wider community. Hadley who has a son with a disability said in an interview with Hope 103.2, ‘when one person in the family has disability we are embracing that disability in one way or another in our lives’ (Hope 103.2, 2017). It was this that inspired my decision to choose this film. Family films that have disabled characters, often make said characters the focal point with the story structured around their struggles in day-to-day situations, highlighting barriers they are often to overcome. While this may be the case, as is suggested in *Wonder*, this film addresses above all the effects a child with a disability may have on a sibling, with parts of the film being told through the perspective of Via, Auggie’s elder sister, played by Izabela Vidovic. The issue of disability affecting sibling and family relationships is an area that has been researched in great depth (Bingham et al., 2012; Gibbons and Gibbons, 2016; Meltzer and Kramer, 2016), with Harris (2008) having found that the change in routine and additional required support in caring for a child with a disability can cost up to three times more than a typical child, putting pressure on family members to cope. This theme emerges even from the *Wonder* film poster, as Auggie is seen to walk in between his parents, hand-in-hand, while Via is pictured in the background, behind the three of them. On many occasions, Via explains through narrations how she has accepted her role in the family, coming in second place behind Auggie in terms of attention received from their parents. She initiates a relationship with Justin, a black fellow student and only child, leading him to believe that she too is an only child, possibly to escape from being the ‘forgotten’ child. The film stresses that each character’s diversity is the catalyst of the development or break down of a relationship, but never so that a ‘disabled’ relationship cannot be rebuilt.

One side to the question of whether disability is a relationship can be explored particularly through the decision by Auggie’s classmate Jack Will to accept the role of mentoring Auggie only

under pressure from his mother, as she explains to him who Auggie is by evoking the reaction he provoked in Jack's younger brother when they accidentally met in an ice cream parlour. While the relationship between the two classmates is seen to blossom, Jack ends up mocking and deeply upsetting Auggie behind his back in an effort to gain acceptance and status among his peers as a student enrolled on a scholarship. Jack's decision to give into peer pressure is interesting, as regardless of his actual views and thoughts of Auggie as a person, he feels he has to conform to the beliefs of his longer-term able-bodied friends. The latter, at that point in the film, have yet to take the time to get to know Auggie beyond his appearance. Another relationship that is seen to positively attribute to the film is that of Via and Justin. The film shows Via's relationship with her long-term friend Miranda break down for reasons unbeknownst to her, involving strains put on Miranda's home life by her parents' separation and ensuing alcoholism on the part of her mother. Via herself experiences growing constraints in terms of lack of attention from her parents as a result of Auggie's journey of enrolment into school. Despite her relationship with Justin being initiated with her lying to him, as mentioned, it evidently grows as a result of Via being the recipient of some much-needed attention.

As a part of my introduction I asked the audience, when watching the film, to consider how Auggie's condition affects those around him directly and indirectly, as well as his parents' relationship with each other and any potential sacrifices they make to support Auggie. Barnes (1992) has stated that within media, disabled people are often represented as in need of assistance of a non-disabled family member or carer to pursue what is considered a 'normal life'. Film director Steven Chbosky follows this trend, with emphasis on Julia Roberts's character home-schooling Auggie until she feels it is the right time for him to enter mainstream education. It has been broadcasted in the United Kingdom with the Children's

Commissioner stating that the number of disabled children choosing to be home-schooled has increased with their needs not being met and schools failing to be inclusive (Children's Commissioner, 2019). Barnes (1992) has also argued this can greatly impact the livelihood or personal growth of the primary carer, something that is very evident again through the character played by Julia Roberts, who is seen to have put her studies on hold in order to support Auggie's development. This decision on the part of Auggie's mother can be said to mark the shift from the 'medical model' of disability to the 'social model of disability', the former seeing disability as the individual's problem and as requiring treatment or cure, while the social model sees society to be the issue in regards of the acceptance of disability (Bolt, 2014). Mr Tuschman, Auggie's school principal, highlights in a meeting with the parents of Auggie's main school bully, Julian, when addressing the bullying that has come to light: 'Auggie can't change the way he looks; maybe we can change the way we see'. Interestingly, during my discussion, I asked the audience 'in what way does the film embody the common message do not judge a book by its cover?', with responses recognising that other characters have their own issues, evidently with Julian and his actions at school being a result of his stringent and strict upbringing, with his parents disregarding disability in the same meeting.

To conclude, the film *Wonder* is a success story based on the 2012 novel by R.J. Palacio, following Auggie's journey of enrolment into mainstream schooling, with particular insight into the impacts that this adjustment has on each family member and in particular the effects the disability of child can have on siblings. The film addresses these issues well, with much of the audience's discussion after the film highlighting a sense of relatedness to key events in the movie and relationships Auggie encounters, suggesting that inclusion in some cases may be difficult but is nonetheless realistic and ultimately imperative with a view to social justice. An interesting note

on which to finish in relation to the key question engaged with by Nathaniel Eker, namely: ‘Should able-bodied actors play disabled characters’?, is that *Wonder* was nominated for best makeup and hairstyling in recognition of the efforts of Jacob Tremblay, who does not have Treacher Collins syndrome or any other disability, in playing Auggie’s character realistically. *Wonder*, then, is yet another example of a huge Hollywood movie on disability in which the lead is played by an able-bodied actor, making one wonder whether a deeper understanding of disability as a relationship has the potential of changing mind-sets.

Conclusion

All four reports touched on the central theme of relationships. Hannah Morris examined complex interrelations surrounding dis/ability and specifically sought to unpick what defines someone as 'able' and what qualifies another as 'disabled' through the film *Unbreakable*. Nathanial Eker engaged with the contentious dynamics between the disabled and non-disabled acting communities in relation to the recent debates surrounding 'cripping up' through the casting of Eddie Redmayne in the film *The Theory of Everything*. Ella Dalton analysed the relationship between disability and communities and the effects that each has on the other through the film *Edward Scissorhands*. Finally, Gareth Davies asked the question 'is disability a relationship?' and explored the impacts that disability has on interactions among individuals within the family, the wider community and also the self. The internship itself also sought to bring together and further develop interrelations between film-making, education and dis/ability and related knowledge gathered in the fields of education, film studies, creative writing and disability studies through its collaboration between staff and students in the School of Education, Liverpool Screen School as well as members of wider communities. The reports are based on these connections and informed by the rich discussion at the film seminars which were often attended by 25-30 people.

Students found the internship to be extremely enjoyable and valuable. One student discussed how they felt the internship had allowed them to go beyond module content and pursue their own questions, which enabled them to look at some familiar topics anew. Students also highlighted how supported they felt during the internship by both project leaders and fellow interns. In relation to this collaboration, one student stated that they found working alongside project leaders and collaborators from both schools and other interns to be 'eye-opening' and they learnt things about their own choice of

film they were not even expecting. Most students also talked about how the internship would support their future career aspirations. One student is hoping to become a teacher and they felt the internship had been very beneficial for practising speaking to larger audiences, which had helped them to become a more confident public speaker. Another student intern is thinking of continuing onto a Master's programme and felt the chance to present at the Teaching and Learning Conference and to publish in this SPARK issue were great opportunities to develop their research profile. All students would encourage fellow students to take up the opportunity of an internship project like Dis/Ability on Screen, as they have gained valuable experience and developed new skills.

Students throughout have enhanced their digital competencies not only through advertising the internship project via social media but also by creating their own four-part series of podcasts elaborating further on key themes that emerged from each of their film seminars. Finally, together with the project leaders, a website has been created to make materials more accessible to an even wider audience. The website is available at: https://disabilityonscreen.home.blog and we encourage readers to have a listen to the associated podcasts which are available here under each film title. It is hoped this will keep alive the on-going debates about dis/ability and representation, film and education, communities and in-/exclusion, to name but a few of the topics Dis/Ability on Screen has endeavoured to explore. In the future we hope to expand Dis/Ability on Screen (and its predecessor Film Freaks) in a different direction by exploring gender diversity in film through a new project provisionally entitled Trans-cis-ions: Queering Difference Within.

References

Acuna, K. (2019) 12 Details you Probably Missed in 'Unbreakable' and 'Split' that Hint at the Plot of 'Glass'. *Business Insider Australia*. [online] Available at: https://www.businessinsider.com.au/unbreakable-split-references-to-glass-2019-1 [Accessed 10 May 2019].

Aitkin, S. (ed.) (2018) *Using Film to understand Childhood and Practice*. London: Bloomsbury.

Allan, K. (ed.) (2013) *Disability in Science Fiction: Representations of Technology as Cure*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Anderson, B. (2006) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. London/New York: Verso.

Arabian, A. (2017) *Edward Scissorhands: Tim Burton's Timeless Masterpiece*. [online] Available at: https://www.filminquiry.com/edward-scissorhands-1990-review/ [Accessed 5 June 2019].

Barad, K. (2007) *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. London: Duke University Press.

Barker, C. and Murray, S. (eds) (2018) *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and Disability*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Barnes, C. (1992) *Disabling Imagery and the Media: An Exploration of the Principles for Media Representations of Disabled People*. Halifax: British Council of Organizations of Disabled People.

Barnes, C. Mercer, G. and Shakespeare, T. (1999) *Exploring Disability: A Sociological Introduction*. London: Polity Press.

Bassil-Morozow, H. (2011) The Individual and Society in the Films of Tim Burton. In: C. Hauke and L. Hockley (eds.) *Jung and Film II: The Return: Further Post-Jungian takes on the Moving Image*, pp. 206-225. New York: Routledge.

Berry, J. (2019) *Edward Scissorhands*. [online] Available at: https://www.empireonline.com/movies/edward-scissorhands/review/ [Accessed 5 June 2019].

Bingham, A., Correa, V. and Huber, J. (2012) Mothers' Voices: Coping with their Children's Initial Disability Diagnosis. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 33(4): 372-385.

Biklen, D. and Bogdan, R. (1977). Media Portrayals of Disabled People: A Study in Stereotypes. *Interracial Books Child, Bull*, 8: 6-7.

Bogdan, R. (1990). *Freak show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bolt, D. (2014) *Changing Social Attitudes toward Disability: Perspectives from Historical, Cultural, and Educational Studies*. London: Routledge.

Bolt, D. (2018) *Cultural Disability Studies in Education: Interdisciplinary Navigations of the Normative Divide*. Oxon: Routledge.

Bradshaw, P. (2000) Unbreakable. *The Guardian*. [online]. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/film/2000/dec/29/culture.peterbradshaw [Accessed 11 May 2019].

Burdeau, E. (2010) The Night Book, or The Mirror and the Page. In: J. Weinstock (ed.) *Critical Approaches to the Films of M. Night Shyamalan: Spoiler Warnings*, pp.89-102. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Children's Commissioner (2019) *Skipping School: Invisible Children - How Children disappear from England's schools*. [online] Available at: https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/cco-skipping-school-invisible-children-feb-2019.pdf [Accessed 5 June 2019].

Church, D. (2006) *Fantastic Films, Fantastic Bodies: Speculations on the Fantastic and Disability Representation – From Freaks to Scissorhands*. [online] Available at: https://offscreen.com/view/fantastic_films_fantastic_bodies [Accessed 5 June 2019].

Cineworld.co.uk. (n.d.) *6 Important Scenes from M. Night Shyamalan's Unbreakable to Prepare you for Glass*. [online] Available at: https://www.cineworld.co.uk/blog/six-scenes-from-unbreakable-to-prepare-you-for-glass [Accessed 25 February 2019].

Blackwell, J. (2015) *Top 10 Films Featuring Disability*. [online] Available at: http://disabilityhorizons.com/2015/10/top-10-films-featuring-disability/ [Accessed 5 June 2019].

Chernov, M. (2019) *'Edward Scissorhands': From Box Office Misfire to Cinema Classic.* [online] Variety. Available at: https://variety.com/2015/film/news/edward-scissorhands-25th-anniversary-johnny-depp-tim-burton-1201653236/ [Accessed 5 June 2019].

Clogston, J. S. (1990) *Disability Coverage in 16 Newspapers.* Louisville, Kentucky: Advocado.

Crow, L. (2014) Scroungers and Superhumans: Images of Disability from the Summer of 2012: *A Visual Inquiry. Journal of Visual Culture* 13(2): 168-181.

Dalton, M. (2010) *The Hollywood Curriculum: Teachers in the Movies*. New York: Peter Lang.

Darke, P.A. (1999) The Elephant Man (David Lynch, EMI Films, 1980): An Analysis from a Disabled Perspective. *Disability & Society* 9(3): 327-342.

Darke, P.A. (2004) The Changing Face of Representations of Disability in the Media. In: J. Swain, S. French, C. Barnes and C. Thomas (eds) *Disabling Barriers, Enabling Environments*, 2nd edn, pp.100-105. London: Sage.

Ellis, K. (2015) *Disability and Popular Culture: Focusing Passion, Creating Community and Expressing Defiance*. Surrey: Routledge.

Ellis, K. and Goggin, G. (2015) *Disability and the Media*. London: Palgrave.

Esmail, S., Darry, K., Walter, A. and Knupp, H. (2010) Attitudes and Perceptions towards Disability and Sexuality. *Disability and Rehabilitation* 32(14): 1148-1155.

Evans, D. (2019) *Honor the Disabilities Act by Enjoying a Showing of Edward Scissorhands*. [online] Available at: https://gawker.com/honor-the-disabilities-act-by-enjoying-a-showing-of-edw-1713462877 [Accessed 5 June 2019].

Ferguson, P.M. (2001) Mapping the Family: Disability Studies and the Exploration of Parental Response to Disability. In: G.L. Albrecht, K. Seelman and M. Bury (eds) *Handbook of Disability Studies*, pp.373-395. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Garland-Thomson, R. (1996) *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*. New York/London: New York University Press.

Gibbons, H. and Gibbons, C. (2016) Siblings with Disabilities: a Duoethnography on the Intersections between a Sibling Relationship and Disability. *Disability & Society*, 31(6): 820-837.

Giroux, H.A. (2010) *Breaking into the Movies: Film and the Culture of Politics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Gleiberman, O. (1990) *'Edward Scissorhands'*. [online] Available at: https://ew.com/article/1990/12/07/edward-scissorhands-3/ [Accessed 5 June 2019].

Goodley, D. and Van Hove, G. (2005) Disability Studies, People with Learning Difficulties and Inclusion. In: D. Goodley and Van Hove

(eds) *Another Disability Studies Reader?: People with Learning Difficulties and a Disabling World*, pp.13-26. Antwerp: Garant.

Goodman, J. (2017a) Circulating Objects and (Vernacular) Cosmopolitan Subjectivities. *Bildungsgeschichte: International Journal for the Historiography of Education* 7 (1): 115-126.

Goodman, J. (2017b) Thinking through Sonorities in Histories of Schooling. *Bildungsgeschichte: International Journal for the Historiography of Education* 7 (2): 277-288.

Haller, B.A. (2010) *Representing Disability in an Ableist World: Essays on Mass Media*. Louisville, KY: Avocado Press.

Happer, C. and Philo, G. (2013) The Role of the Media in the Construction of Public Belief and Social Change. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 1(1): 321-336.

Harris, H. (2008) Meeting the Needs of Disabled Children and their Families: Some Messages from the Literature. *Child Care in Practice*, 14(4): 355-369.

Harnett, A. (2000) Escaping the 'Evil avenger' and the 'Supercrip': Images of Disability in Popular Television. *Irish Communication Review*, 8(1): 21-29.

Herman, F., Priem, K. and Thyssen, G. (2017) Body_Machine? Encounters of the Human and the Mechanical in Education, Industry and Science. *History of Education* 46(1): 108-127.

Holdsworth, D. (2018) Conceal, Don't Feel: Disability, Monstrosity, and the Freak in Edward Scissorhands and Frozen. In K. Moruzi, M.J., Smith and E. Bullen (Eds.) *Affect, Emotion, and Children's Literature,* pp. 192-206. New York: Routledge.

Hope 103.2 (2017) *Uplifting Film About Disability From a Whole Family's Perspective: 'Wonder'*. [online] Available at: https://hope1032.com.au/stories/culture/movie-reviews/2017/disability-from-the-whole-familys-perspective-a-review-of-wonder/ [Accessed 5 June 2019].

Houston, E. (2019) 'Risky' Representation: The Portrayal of Women with Mobility Impairment in the Twenty-First-Century Advertising. *Disability & Society* 34(5): 704-725.

Hughes, B. (2002) Bauman's Strangers: Impairment and the Invalidation of Disabled People in Modern and Post-Modern Cultures. *Disability & Society*, 17(5): 571-584.

IMDb. (n.d.). Unbreakable (2000) - *IMDb*. [online] Available at: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0217869/ [Accessed 5 June 2019].

Jane, H. (2016) *Better off Dead (Or in Isolation).* [online] Available at: https://sociology2275.wordpress.com/category/edward-scissorhands/ [Accessed 5 June 2019].

Kempley, R. (1990) *Edward Scissorhands*. [online] Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/movies/videos/edwardscissorhandspg13kempley_a0a0bf.htm??noredirect=on [Accessed 5 June 2019].

Kelly, M. (2001) Disability and Community: A Sociological Approach. In G.L. Albrecht, K. Seelman and M. Bury (Eds.). *Handbook of Disability Studies*, pp. 396-411. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Kermode, M. (2019) *Oscar Winners: A Secrets of Cinema Special*. [online] Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0002pfq [Accessed 6 June 2019].

Kirby, D. (2014) *Fantasy and Belief: Alternative Religions, Popular Narratives and Digital Cultures*. Oxon: Routledge.

Lee, M. (2014) *Edward Scissorhands, Review: 'A True Fairytale'*. [online] Available at: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/filmreviews/11298442/Edward-Scissorhands-review-a-true-fairytale.html [Accessed 5 June 2019].

Longmore, P.K. (2003) *Why I burned my Book and Other Essays on Disability*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Manderfield, K. (2013) *Creativity in Hollywood: Film Visionaries on Creative Process and Inspiration.* [online] Available at: https://www.mpaa.org/2013/08/creativity-in-hollywood-film-visionaries-on-creative-process-and-inspiration/ [Accessed 5 June 2019].

McIntosh, J. (2017) *All About Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)*. [online] Available at: https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/281472.php [Accessed 6 June 2019].

McLaughlin, J. (2012) Understanding Disabled Families: Replacing Tales of Burden with Ties of Interdependency. In: N. Watson, A. Roulstone and C. Thomas (eds) *Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies*, pp.402-413. Oxon: Routledge.

Meltzer, A. and Kramer, J. (2016). Siblinghood through Disability Studies Perspectives: Diversifying Discourse and Knowledge about Siblings With and Without Disabilities. *Disability & Society*, 31(1): 17-32.

Mitchell, K. (2018) Children of a Lesser God (1986) (Randa Haines). *SPARK*. Issue 11, August 2018.

Mitchell, D.T. and Snyder, S.L. (2001) *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

Mollow, A. and McRuer, R. (2012) Introduction. In: R. McRuer and A. Mollow (eds) *Sex and Disability*, pp.1-34. London: Duke University Press.

Myers, K. (2015) *Struggles for a Past: Irish and Afro-Caribbean Histories in England, 1951-2000*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

NHS (2019a) *Osteogenesis Imperfecta*. [online] Available at: https://www.gosh.nhs.uk/conditions-and-treatments/conditions-we-treat/osteogenesis-imperfecta [Accessed 5 June 2019].

NHS (2019b) *Treacher-Collins syndrome*. [online] Available at: https://www.gosh.nhs.uk/conditions-and-treatments/conditions-we-treat/treacher-collins-syndrome [Accessed 5 June 2019].

O'Toole, C.J. and Bregante, J.L. (1992) Lesbians with Disabilities. *Sexuality and Disability*, 10(3): 163-172.

Oliver, M. (2009) *Understanding Disability: From Theory to Practice,* 2nd edn. Hampshire: Palgrave.

Pepper, P. (2019) Is It Ever OK for Non-Disabled Actors to Play Disabled Roles? *The Guardian*, 9th January 2019. [online] Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/society/shortcuts/2019/jan/09/is-it-ever-ok-for-non-disabled-actors-to-play-disabled-roles [Accessed 6 June 2019].

Petrina, S. (2014) Postliterate Machineries. In: J.R. Dakers (ed.) *New Frontiers in Technological Literacy Breaking with the Past*, pp. 29-43. New York, NJ: Palgrave Macmillan.

Pollard, A. (2019) Pose: With the Largest Cast of Trans Actors in TV History, Ryan Murphy's Ballroom Drama is a Strut in the Right Direction. *The Independent*, 21st March 2019 [online]. Available at: https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/features/pose-film-review-ryan-murphy-ballroom-drama-movie-video-a8829691.html [Accessed 7 June 2019].

Renwick, D. (2018) *Representing Education in Film: How Hollywood portrays Educational Thought, Settings and Issues*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Richardson, N. (2018). The Invisibles: Disability, Sexuality and New Strategies of Enfreakment. In: C. Smith, F. Attwood and B. McNair (eds.). *The Routledge Companion to Media, Sex and Sexuality*. Oxon: Routledge.

Ross, K. (1997) *But Where's Me In It? Disability, Broadcasting and the Audience*. London: Sage.

Ross, K. (2001) All Ears: Radio, Reception and Discourses of Disability. *Media, Culture & Society* 23(4): 419-437.

Ryan, F. (2015) We Wouldn't Accept Actors Blacking Up, So Why Applaud 'Cripping Up'? *The Guardian*, 13th January 2015. [online] Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jan/13/eddie-redmayne-golden-globe-stephen-hawking-disabled-actors-characters [Accessed 6 June 2019].

Ryan, F. (2018) Why Are Disabled Actors Ignored When It Comes to Roles Like the Elephant Man? *The Guardian*, 2nd September 2018. [online] Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/sep/02/disabled-actors-bbc-elephant-man-normalised-exclusion [Accessed 6 June 2019].

Sampson, C. (2010) *Tim Burton's Edward Scissorhands as a Psychological Allegory*. [online] Available at: http://peoplefirsteducation.blogspot.com/2010/05/tim-burtons-edward-scissorhands-as.html [Accessed 5 June 2019].

Sancho, J. (2003) *Disabling Prejudice, Attitudes towards Disability and its Portrayal on Television*. British Broadcasting Corporation: Broadcasting Standards Commission and Independent Television Commission. Available at: www.bbc.co.uk/info/policies/pdf/**disabling-prejudice**.pdf

Sealey, K.S. (ed.) (2008) *Film, Politics and Education: Cinematic Pedagogy across Disciplines*. New York: Peter Lang.

Shakespeare, T. (1994) Cultural Representation of Disabled People: Dustbins for Disavowal. *Disability & Society* 9(3): 283-299.

Sha-Myra (2018) *An Essay on Edward Scissorhands and Disability Stereotypes*. [online] Available at: https://www.fun4thedisabled.com/an-essay-on-edward-scissorhands-and-disability-stereotypes/ [Accessed 5 June 2019].

Silberman-Keller, D., Bekerman, Z., Giroux, H.A. and Burbules, N. (eds) (2008) *Mirror Images: Popular Culture and Education*. New York: Peter Lang.

Singh, A. (2014) BBC to Quadruple Number of Disabled People on Screen. *The Telegraph*, 17th July 2014. [online] Available at: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/bbc/10971930/BBC-to-quadruple-number-of-disabled-people-on-screen.html [Accessed 7 June 2019].

Staples, L. (2018) The Problem with Disney Casting Jack Whitehall – a Straight Actor – to Play its First Gay Character. *The New Statesman*, 14th August 2018. [online] Available at: https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/film/2018/08/jack-whitehall-disney-straight-actor-first-gay-character-problem [Accessed 7 June 2019].

Tepper, M.S. (2000) Sexuality and Disability: The Missing Discourse of Pleasure. *Sexuality and Disability* 18(4): 283-290.

Totaro, D. (2003) Visual Style in M. Night Shyamalan's 'Fantastic' Trilogy: The Long Take. *Offscreen.com.* [online] Available at: https://offscreen.com/view/shyamalan#fn-1-a [Accessed 12 May 2019].

Tracey, E. (2013) Disability History Month: Unpacking Medieval Myths. *BBC News.* [online] Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-ouch-25188538 [Accessed 7 June 2019].

Verstraete, P., Van Hooste, A., Thyssen G., & Catteeuw, K. (2004). "Het is maar hoe je het Bekijkt: Een Experiment met Filmseminaries voor Orthopedagogiek en Historische Pedagogiek." *Leuvens Bulletin LAPP*, *Vol. 53*: 47-66.

Verstraete, P. (2012) *In the Shadow of Disability: Reconnecting History, Identity and Politics*. Opladen: Barbara Budrich Publishers.

Weinstock, J. (ed.) (2010) *Critical Approaches to the Films of M. Night Shyamalan: Spoiler Warnings*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

White, D. (2011) *Johnny Depp: The Unauthorised Biography*. London: Michael O'Mara Books.

Guidelines for future contributors

Spark only accepts contributions from LJMU undergraduates and recent graduates in Education Studies, Early Childhood Studies and related disciplines. Both staff and students may suggest pieces of undergraduate work for publication in Spark. This may be work previously submitted for assessment, or an original piece based on the student's own research interests. If based on an assessed piece of work, this should have received a mark of at least 75%, or have a significant portion which merits that mark. Non-assessed pieces should be of an equivalent standard.

If you wish to submit your work for consideration, please register at http://openjournals.ljmu.ac.uk/spark to submit your document online. If you have any queries please email the editorial team via SPARK@ljmu.ac.uk

At the top of the document submitted for consideration you should include:

- Author name(s)
- Your affiliation(s)
- Article title

Authors should ensure that their articles use

Font - Arial 12
Line spacing - 1.5

Headings and subheadings should be in bold, aligned left and not underlined. Quotations that are longer than four lines in length should be indented from the left hand margin and have a clear line space from the text above and below the quotation. The date and page number should be inserted at the end of the quotation.

All references should be made using the Harvard system based on the LJMU Library Referencing Guidelines.