# *Changing Images of Disability in British Television Drama:*

# *from the 1970s to the Present*

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**Abstract.**

*Changing Images of Disability in British Television Drama: from the 1970s till the Present* is a historical overview that works to discover whether representations of disability have changed and what has caused those changes. It establishes the relationship between genre, production cultures, and representations. Changes in production cultures include shifts in attitudes towards disability, accessible sets, and improved working conditions; these changes have had a bearing on the representations of disability and inclusion. It demonstrates that genre's fluidity has also shaped the types of roles available to disabled actors and that as genre has changed, so have its representations.

The thesis is a three-pronged study that analyses production cultures, representations, and the lived experiences of disabled actors. To produce a multifaceted analysis of the images of disability in two genres, telefantasy and soap opera, their contrasting codes and conventions demonstrates the relationship between genre and representations. The work advocates for inclusive practices that crucially provide opportunities for disabled actors and considers which barriers have and continue to hinder inclusion. The work uniquely offers a space for disabled actors to reflect on their time in the industry, and it provides insight into the reality of being a disabled actor and its associated difficulties. The work demonstrates evident changes in the images of disability, and with broadcasters committing to inclusive initiatives, the changes identified here are only the beginning.

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## Chapter 1 Introduction.

This research focuses on portrayals of disability in British television dramas from 1970 to 2020. The qualitative analysis presents a historical overview of the images of disability to understand the changes in practices and portrayals in the British television drama industry and what has brought about those changes. The title of this work, *Changing Images of Disability in British Television Drama*, notes the research question- that is how have the images of disability changed, and the objective of the work - to highlight practices that have improved inclusion and to note where barriers to inclusion remain.

Currently, broadcasters have re-evaluated their inclusive initiatives as a response to the criticism from disabled activists (BBC, 2022). Therefore, new initiatives have been created in partnership with disabled people and disabled groups to ensure policies are meeting the expectation of those disabled activists and groups. These newer policies align with the findings of this research. The work calls for the British television industry to become more accessible through engagement with training programmes to ensure disabled people can attain the skills and experience necessary to secure employment in their area of interest, should that be, for example, acting, writing, or directing. Doing so would be the formation of a pipeline or entry point so that disabled talent can enter the British television industry.

The BBC aims to improve the inclusion of disabilities through their new "Access First Titles" scheme. Here "programmes work with the BBC's Creative Diversity Team and Access Co-ordinators to bring disabled talent onto their production teams", working towards widening "opportunities" and providing "a pathway for talented individuals to grow and progress and share learning across the organisation" (BBC, 2022a). Channel 4 also suggests its staff "work on building up a good network of disabled talent, so that you already have fantastic disabled people on your radar before you come to hire into specific roles or crew up particular productions" (Channel 4, 2021). By using the term talent or talented in their initiatives broadcasters have failed to consider the difficulties disabled practitioners have in gaining appropriate training. The reality, as demonstrated by this research, is disabled people face barriers in entering the British television industry because of a lack of training and educational opportunities. The talent pool of disabled people broadcasters can utilise is small and with little growth, because of the barrier's practitioners experience in the formative years of their career. An equitable approach would see broadcasters invest in training disabled

talent to ensure their standards are met and that non-disabled people do not hold an advantage.

ITV is working to ensure sets are accessible before production, and they recommend their staff "anticipate" needs rather than reactively make adjustments to sets (ITV, 2022); similarly, so do Channel 4 (Channel 4, 2021). This work shows how ITV actively undertakes this commitment. In my research interviews with British television actor Cherylee Houston, we consider her access needs and how ITV ensured the installation of those access needs while building the new *Coronation Street* set. Houston goes on to explain that in meeting her needs, the set had become accessible for older members of staff and any future inclusions of disability and demonstrate how ITV are implementing their initiatives (Houston, 2022). Broadcasters regularly update their initiatives, and although they are beginning to work with disabled groups such as The Disabled Artist Networking Community (DANC), this research considers a disabled actors lived experiences of working on a television production set and whether they still face ableism and exclusion despite the efforts of broadcasters.

The thesis is a three-pronged study that analyses production cultures, the representations of disability, and the lived experience of disabled actors to understand how an image of disability is constructed, read, and changes images of disability. When considering production cultures, the focus here will be on accessibility for disabled performers. Some disabled actors need reasonable adjustments for them to work safely and comfortably. Employers were not legally obligated to make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees until the legislation of the Disabled Discrimination Act of 1995 (DDA). However, it has become apparent through the interviews I have conducted that there were early attempts at making reasonable adjustments before any interventions from the government. Some productions lacked the goodwill and the knowledge to make those necessary adjustments, forcing some actors to work in discomfort, sometimes in pain, whilst educating their peers about disability during their tenure. My interviews with disabled actors explore their access needs and experience of working under challenging circumstances.

The original textual analysis conducted in this thesis will demonstrate the relationship between reasonable adjustments and performance. For example, I will discuss the limited mobility Nabil Shaban had whilst playing Sil in *Doctor Who* (BBC, 1963-), making him dependent on others for movement, and how his disability informed the representation. The

consideration of the text will also allow for the analysis of the representations of disability to discover what function/role within the narrative the disabled actor or character serves and whether they are as integral to the drama. I will also focus on genre, noting how the genre has shaped the inclusion and the performance of the disabled actor.

This research will demonstrate the relationship between genre and the images of disability in British television dramas. The literature review will show academic criticism has called for a multi-methodological approach into the representations of disability, with the incorporation of genre analysis to produce deeper readings. I will demonstrate the relationship between genres, production practices, and representations of disability, showing how this relationship ultimately shapes the representation. I will make the case that genre is an important consideration when discussing disability. I will demonstrate genre is not a fixed cultural category and that its fluidity, that ability for genre to change, has had a complex bearing on the representations of disability. Simply put, changes in the codes and conventions of a genre, has seen the production of more diverse disabled roles. The thesis will be split into two genres; chapter 4 will focus on telefantasy programming, and Chapter 5 will consider Soap opera. The genres were chosen for they contrast one another with their use or lack of realism. Telefantasy programmes are concerned with representing the fantastic, whilst soap operas tend to use represent social realism or emotional realism, or a combination of them both. The contrast here creates differing opportunities for disabled actors, one shaped by the programme's representation of realism, the other to the representation of the fantastic. On page 23 I explore the fantastic, social and emotional realism in more detail. It is important to remember both genres are not static, their instability has also had a bearing on the opportunities afforded to disabled people. The two genres offer disabled actors roles unique to their codes and convention, but changes in genre has resulted in changes in representations.

The study's question is have images of disability changed and what is the relationship between change, genre and production practices? The study's objectives are to:

Produce a historical overview of the images of disability in telefantasy and soap opera dramas, focusing particularly on BBC and ITV programmes. The study focuses on BBC and ITV programmes for several reasons. Both broadcasters aim to reflect British society and culture, including its diversity (BBC.com, n.d) (ITVPLC.com, n.d). The channels are the only two broadcasters that fit the study's time parameters. For example, although publicly owned,

Channel Four began broadcasting in 1982, ten years after the first image of disability identified in this study. Channel Four also fulfils its remit to reflect British society mostly in its entertainment and factual programmes. For example, when broadcasting the Paralympics, Channel 4 elected to have " half of the presenters and reporters covering the Games" be disabled (Channel 4, 2012). For the 2022 Paralympics, the entire presenting and punditry team were disabled (Channel 4, 2002). Programmes were also produced in 2012 by Channel 4 to showcase disabled talent. However, they were either comedic, such as the hidden camera prank show *I Am Spazticus* (2012) or entertainment programming like *The Last Leg* (2012-) and *The Undatables*(2012-). There are examples of dramatic disabled portrayals on Channel Four, such as Amy Conachan (a wheelchair user), who plays Courtney Campbell in *Hollyoaks* (1995-). However, there remain more examples of disability to consider on BBC and ITV because of their longevity and commitment to drama; also, the participants interviewed are best known for their roles in BBC and ITV dramas. Unfortunately, there was limited access to disabled actors who have appeared in Channel 4 dramas.

Another study objective is to consider the often-overlooked opinions of disabled actors. Here actors reflect on their practices and the industry practices for a then vs now comparison; they consider the ableism they have experienced and its impact on them and their careers. The study features a unique grouping of disabled actors with various experiences in British television. Those interviewed and who have waved their anonymity are Nabil Shaban, Jimmy Vee, Rachel Denning, and Ellie Wallwork. These disabled actors have featured in the telefantasy programme *Doctor Who* (BBC,1963-). Therefore, these interviews are included in the telefantasy section, along with an interview with the programme's casting director Andy Pryor, who has no known disability but gives an insight into the casting process, particularly casting disabled actors. These interviews shed light on the inclusive practices of a major broadcaster in one programme over a forty-year period. This chapter demonstrates a change in the types of roles given to disabled actors; initially, productions hired disabled actors to further the appearances of alien characters. Particularly for actors with dwarfism, where their size was crucial in creating these monsters/aliens. However, more recent inclusions of disability have shifted away from this typecasting, with actors like Denning and Wallwork appearing in more diverse roles.

The second chapter, titled Soap Opera, features interviews with Cherylee Houston, Julie Fernandez, and others who have opted to remain anonymous. Although soap operas are long-

running programmes, there are fewer appearances of disabled actors in one programme, unlike *Doctor Who,* so to understand the practices of inclusion in soap opera, the section needs to include more than one programme. Therefore, the soap opera chapter includes the following case studies: *Crossroads* (ITV, 1964- 1981), *Eldorado* (BBC, 1992-1993), *Emmerdale* (ITV, 1972-), *EastEnders* (BBC, 1985-), and *Coronation Street* (ITV, 1960-). One of the topics covered in this section is building the *Eldorado* set and the *Coronation Street* set. Both sets were built after the hiring of a disabled actor, this presented both programmes with the opportunity to pre-empt any reasonable adjustments before commencing filming. However, the BBC, during the filming of *Eldorado*, were not legally obliged to make reasonable adjustments. When Houston was cast in *Coronation* Street, the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) was well established and this saw improvements in pre-empting reasonable adjustments, communication, and the programmes aftercare.

The conclusion, will reflect on the changes identified in this study, noting that disabled actors continue to face barriers when entering the industry because of a lack of training for upcoming disabled actors, and there needs to be more opportunities generally for established disabled actors to continue to work within the industry. I will argue that disabled led companies and theatres have trained disabled actors with the skills necessary to be included in British television drama, and that broadcasters need to regularly engage with such companies to provide opportunities for disabled actors. It has become clear that broadcasters have begun to do this, but only in recent years. It is also not just actors who could benefit from this communication but disabled crew members, inclusion in all aspects of a production can have an effect on the representations of disability. Although the industry is turbulent for all those who want to enter it, this is notably worse for those disabled people who, having experienced constant rejection due to ableism, have not been able to develop those essential skills to secure regular or steady employment in the industry. Broadcasters need to utilise the communities these disabled companies have created and work with them to support disabled people's development and form a clear entry point for disabled people. Broadcaster must also recognise the need for continued engagement with disabled actors, to support disabled their careers over a significant period of time; this is crucial to ensure disabled people remain in regular employment.

## 1.1. Television Specificity.

Uniquely television offers a distinct approach to representing disability. When Dorothy Hobson wrote her section on familiarity in British soap operas (2003, p.159), she provided an important framework for understanding television specificity and its images of disability. Hobson's textual analysis of a scene from *EastEnders* where the familiarity created between the programme and regular viewers is disrupted. Familiarity refers to the "richness and density" (Geraghty, 1991, p. 15) that regular viewers bring to the material. Familiarity does exist in other mediums, but not to the same degree as it operates on television, particularly in soap operas, the familiarity creates a degree of closeness between characters and audiences. These regular viewers have grown alongside the fictional characters and have developed an understanding of a character's personal history. Inexplicitly linked to a programme's longevity, familiarity allows audiences to understand life with a disability over a realistic or more protracted amount of time than possible via any other medium.

In *EastEnders*, in 1991, Mark Fowler (Todd Carty) is diagnosed with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), becoming the first long running soap character in the UK to be portrayed as having HIV; Mark then lived with the virus for 13 years. As Hobson notes Fowler became an educational tool educating other characters and audiences about HIV, tackling stigmas held at the time: "the production included many characters who asked questions and aired their opinions, prejudices or ignorance of the subject. As Mark answered all their questions, the audience learned about the issues at the same time as the characters were informed" (Hobson, 2003, p.159). Peggy Mitchell's (Barbara Windsor) refusal to serve Mark in the local pub because of his diagnosis prompts him to give a speech on HIV where he dispels misconceptions about the virus.

Mark's diagnosis, presents the broadcaster (the BBC) an opportunity to meet its values to educate, inform, and entertain its audience. Values distinct to television and the BBC. Founded by John Reith, the BBC's first Director General, these values continue to be upheld to a degree by the BBC today. According to O'Malley, Reith believed that "broadcasting should be a public service" (2006, p.133). In 1955 with the introduction of ITV, the BBC lost its monopoly. No longer the only television broadcaster the BBC was now in direct competition with a commercial television station. Independent television (ITV) sought to produce popular rather than populist programming (Nelson, 2006, p.89). The difference in

values means there should be different approaches to exploring disability and issues around disability. However, it will become apparent, due to changing values and aims; both broadcasters use melodramatic storylines to appeal to audiences. These narratives avoid the subject of disability at times, but there are still example of this educational process in ITV's *Coronation Street*, but less so in the BBC's *EastEnders*. Although Hobson is not considering a disability, but rather the virus which can lead to disability. Her analysis shows how soaps educate their audiences on a range of subjects, which could include disability. A shift away from this educational approach towards a melodramatic exploration is the result of shifting genres and the competition between broadcasters. The soap opera's generic codes and conventions shapes its representations of disability and changing values has seen less reliance on this educational process with regards to disability.

I will use textual analysis to discuss representations of disability, as Hobson has done above. I will also use textual analysis to discuss representations in telefantasy, the distinction between both genres being their use of realism. My analysis will focus on camerawork, mise en scène, casting, setting and costume, make-up, action, dialogue, and ideological codes. I will break down these elements further in the methodology (see page 36). Interview material will also allow an understanding into production cultures, those being the decisions behind the screen which have impacted the representation of disability. The interviews support the textual analysis but also give context and allow an understanding of the lived experience of a disabled performer.

Telefantasy programming is, as is soap opera, unique on television, with no equivalent in cinema. The term telefantasy denotes the fluidity of the programme: "telefantasy, as a term, is a broad catch-all that, as a cultural category, acknowledges and accounts for the tendency of texts that represent the otherworldly and unreal to defy easy generic classification" (Johnson, 2015, p.58). Telefantasy is not simply another term for science-fiction, but encompasses "a wide range of hybridised science-fiction, fantasy and horror programmes speaks to the shared representational strategies, tendencies and pleasures that can be found across an array of different programmes all concerned with representing the unreal" (Johnson, 2015, p.59). The fluidity of the telefantasy genre is liberating, as opposed to the stringent realistic tones of soap operas, where experimentation risk disrupting the programme's realism.

Another distinction of the telefantasy genre is the budget afforded to create the unreal. Cinema had the freedom and funding to produce material which is "for TV" and "finically too extravagant for TV" (Ellis, 1992, p.179). Ellis here is comparing the aesthetics of telefantasy television against American science fiction cinema. He goes on to example *Star Wars* (Lucas, 1977) and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (Spielberg, 1977) (1992, p.179). He explains that a budget for a television series is "finely calculated in advance" whilst "entertainment cinema" is "more chaotic" and are "financed on a far more speculative basis than television" (Ellis, 1982). The rigour around television budgets has meant a continued reliance on Visual Effects (VFX) rather than Computer Generated Images (CGI), particularly in the case of *Doctor Who*, whose budget is dependent on the licence fee. Telefantasy programming relies on visual disabilities to further the creation of the unreal. However, this has begun to change with the recent casting of Warwick Davis, Rachel Denning, and Ellie Wallwork, three disabled actors who played humans on *Doctor Who* in 2013, 2017, and 2018. Previously disabled actors, particularly those of restricted height, were given only roles where they played aliens, as was the case for Nabil Shaban and Jimmy Vee. The codes and conventions of the genre have shaped the roles afforded to disabled actors. However, prejudices limited their involvement and resulted in the typecasting of disabled actors as aliens.

The literature review will further demonstrate the fluidity of the genre to show the relationship between genre and changes in the images of disability; further illustrating the importance of considering genre when discussing disability on television. However, it is essential to define the term disability for this study, to ensure clarity. The definition of disability varies in scholarly material; there is no one true definition.

### 1.1 Defining Disability.

Disability is an ambiguous term, as Cumberbatch and Negrine write, "the umbrella term 'the disabled' masks enormous diversity and obscures individual dignity of those included in the category" (1992, p.6). The word disability is an oversimplification, convoluting the diversity among those considered disabled. In grouping disabled individuals under a single term, there is a failure to consider the personal experiences of disability. The difficulty in defining disability also means that any chosen definition will leave some sections of the disabled community excluded from a study such as this one.

Some academics adopt the government's terminology (Ross, 1995), which are terms that often exclude some disabilities and change regularly, meaning the studies can become outdated. It is clear then that in employing disability as an analytical term, a disability will inevitably be missed, excluding the people the research intends to help. This study's definition of disability is no different; unfortunately, the study cannot include every type of disability, so this research shall not attempt to do so.

Others rely on the two models of disability to help define the term. There is the medical model of disability which places the responsibility on the individual. The medical model stems from the World Health Organisation's (WHO) definition; they break disability into three categories, impairment, disability, and handicap:

> Impairment refers to 'any loss or abnormality of physical, physiological, or anatomical structure or function'. Disability denotes 'any restriction or lack (resulting from impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being'. Handicap is defined as 'a disadvantage for a given individual, resulting from an impairment or a disability that limits or prevents the fulfilment of a role that is normal (depending on age, sex, social and cultural factors) for that individual'. (WHO cited in Oliver & Barnes, 2012, pp.17)

The "lack of ability" suggests that non-disabled people are superior to disabled people. The term handicap is outdated and rarely used, but here it refers to the disadvantage or the limitations a person experiences because of their impairment. Academics have dismissed this model because it underpins a "personal tragedy" approach, implying that disability is a chance event that occurs randomly to unfortunate individuals (Durell, 2014, p.20). The condemnation of the medical model has led to the creation and reliance on the social model of disability, which originated from the Disabled Peoples International (DPI) definition:

> Impairment: is the functional limitation within the individual caused by physical, mental or sensory impairment.

> Disability: is the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical and social barriers. (DPI cited by Oliver in Barnes & Mercer, 1996, p.41).

In this model, society is responsible for the disablement of a person. For example, buildings without wheelchair ramps are inaccessible for wheelchair users. Under the social model, the impairment is not responsible for the disablement but the inability to cater for disabled people in broader society. However, there is a risk that the social model is in "danger of assuming that impairment has no part in determining our [disabled people] experiences" (Crow cited in Morris, 1996, p.208). Although the social model is considered more inclusive, academics have argued that the social model is not the endpoint of disabled activism but rather signifies a shift away from the medical model. (Stibbe, 2004. Morris, 1991. French 1993. Crow, 1996. Oliver. 1999).

This study's definition of disability will be specific and narrow. Similar to Cumberbatch and Negrine's study, who were "interested in the physical limitations that they [images of disability] exhibit and the social milieux that they are depicted in" (1992, p. 6), the research will consider visual identifiers of disabilities because of the visuality of the television medium. This study's definition of disability is as follows: an individual with an impairment which has caused a visible difference from the conventional human form.

The definition considers disabled characters, whether they are played by an actor with or without a disability, but also disabled actors playing characters with or without a disability. For example, Nabil Shaban and Jimmy Vee appear in *Doctor Who*; both are disabled actors of restricted height and play non-disabled aliens. Shaban's and Vee's restricted height is a visible distinction from the conventional human form, and their height difference is identifiable when the actors appear in prosthetics to play the alien characters. The research focuses on those visual signifiers to distinguish disability. If the study relied on a definition by ability, alien characters like those played by Shaban and Vee may not be included because the characters are able-bodied.

The chosen definition is not all-encompassing, but limiting the types of disabilities included in this project is not inherently negative. It would not be appropriate when discussing physical impairments like blindness to compare depictions of neurological disabilities like

autism. Instead, it would be more beneficial to consider the two separately because there are more distinctions between those disabilities than similarities; also, there would not be the space to consider such a variety of disabilities in this study. The methodology used in this research may currently focus on physical disabilities. However, other studies can use the methodology when researching different disabilities.

## Chapter 2 Literature review.

This literature review aims to show an understanding of previously researched areas and identify methodologies that can underpin the aims and objectives of this study. It also identifies issues with methodologies to avoid repeating those issues. Sometimes, I also consider the need for further academic engagement in certain areas. I have elected to break the literature review into three sections, Images of Disability, Representations, and Genre. Though this research uses the terms images of disability and representations interchangeably, it has become apparent through the literature that there is a distinction in the methodologies. Studies concerning the images of disabilities focus on content analysis; quantitative studies that show the lack of disability in specific mediums or specific genres. Cumberbatches and Negrine's (1992) seminal research typifies this approach.

Cumberbatch and Negreine's work does go on to consider representations. However, as this is an images of disability study, their approach remains quantitative. It focuses on content analysis where they labelled disabled characters as occupying either, minor, incidental and background roles (Cumberbatch & Negrine, 1992, p.43). Instead, representational studies use textual analysis to interpret the meaning behind a disabled role. There are representational studies which also rely on the employment of stereotypes in an attempt to understand whether a role is negative or positive. Although, as I will show, representational research has moved beyond the stereotypes offered by Barnes, 1992. Shakespeare, 1999. Darke, 1998. Shaprio, 1994 and Longmore, 2003. The focus is now on developing multiple readings through textual analysis and audience participation to avoid the reductive labelling of representations which have come before.

In breaking up the images of disability and the representations of disability, I can explore and understand the relationship between the two methodologies. It becomes clear through the literature review that quantitative research has fundamentally shaped the exploration of representations of disability. Ellis (2015) uses the quantitative analysis of Cumberbatch and Negrine to underscore the need for multiple readings and audience engagement. Barnes (1992), is critical of Cumberbatch and Negrine's approach, uses their research to support his identification of stereotypes. The images of disability methodology has become, as intended by Cumberbatch and Negrine, a basis for research, with contemporary research shifting away

from content analysis to a multidisciplinary methodology to produce complex and multiple readings that move beyond the binary labelling of the representations of disability.

There is also a space dedicated to Genre; this section will consider the methodology of studies that consider genre and disability on television. Firstly this section will show how genre is not a taxonomical tool but a cultural category where genre depends on multiple factors such as audience, text, and industry discourses (Mittell, 2001). It will demonstrate how generic analysis allows the research to consider the construction, exploration, and representation of socio-political issues, exampling studies using genre analysis to explore race, parenthood, gender, and sexism and demonstrating how such an approach can be applied to disability in British television dramas. Academics researching representations of disability have called for studies that engage with genre analysis to produce more profound and multiple readings of a text (Vertoont et al, 2021). The genre section also considers genre fluidity, arguing that generic fluidity is an important consideration when understanding how images of disabilities have changed. It should be stated that there are a limited number of studies on genre and disability. For that reason, examples in this section are not always fictional. However, even exploration of non-fictional or entertainment programmes demonstrates the relationship between genre and the images of disability.

## 2.1 Images of Disability.

The *Images of Disability on Television* (Cumberbatch & Negrine, 1992) is a study of two parts, the first being a quantitative analysis of the amounts of disabilities on television focusing on British broadcasting. It was not the first quantitative study of disability, with Dianna Byrd, Keith Byrd, and Carol Dillon's study in 1980 also highlighting the lack of disability on television. Cumberbatch and Negrine counted the frequency of disability in six weeks of peak-time programming. They were also concerned with the "nature of the portrayal[s]" to understand if disabled people were underrepresented and "portrayed in a way that might be called manipulative or condescending" (Cumberbatch & Negrine, 1992, p. 2). The writers do not explore the subjectivity in coding roles as "manipulative or condescending".

The second part of the research interviewed groups of people which included disabled people, "those who care professionally for people with disabilities and with those from families in

which someone has a disability" and "able-bodied people with no such experience" of disability. Similarly to my research Cumberbatch and Negrine also met and spoke with practitioners from the industry, although they met with writers and producers only, not the disabled actors themselves (Cumberbatch & Negrine, 1992, p. 2). They also surveyed "public attitudes towards certain issues concerned with people with disabilities" (Cumberbatch & Negrine, 1992, p. 2). The survey questioned the general public on "two broad areas: attitudes concerning the meaning of disability and attitudes to the portrayal of disability on television" (Cumberbatch & Negrine, 1992, p.105). The writers asked, "when I say the word 'disabled', what do you think of ?" (Cumberbatch & Negrine, 1992, p.105), and "should people with disabilities appear in a range of programmes or should they be restricted to certain categories of programmes?" (Cumberbatch & Negrine, 1992, p.113).

The results of the survey showed "seventy-one per cent or more of the respondents felt that people with disabilities should appear in all types of programmes", which led the researchers to conclude "that a majority of the public does believe that [disabled] people should appear across all genres"(Cumberbatch & Negrine, 1992, p.113). The inclusion of the latter question and the response from those surveyed suggests a belief from both the researchers and the audience that genre will result in different types of roles for disabled people; that genre has a bearing on the representation of disability. Although the writers choose not to explore this discussion of genre further, it supports my decision to use genre as a lens to investigate the images of disability to show that representations are shaped not only by performance and narrative but also by the genre itself.

Cumberbatch and Negrine's work is helpful for several reasons; it highlights the disparity of disabilities on television. Although the researchers do accept that there are issues with their methodology: "inevitably, someone or something important was missed…no partial monitoring can be fully representative" (Cumberbatch and Negrine, 1992, p.89), with too much programming for researchers to comb through some images of disability will be missed. Similar issues plagued Byrd, Byrd, and Dillon's study in 1980. Their figures were inflated by including Ironside (Raymond Burr) from the programme of the same name, *Ironside (NBC, 1967 -1975)*. The character, Ironside, is a wheelchair-using detective, played by Burr, who did not have paraplegia. Byrd, Byrd, and Dillon showed that the amount of paraplegia on television in 1978 increased (1980, p.68) because of this single representation. Quantitative studies are plagued with issues around accuracy, but qualitative studies such as

my research face similar difficulties. My research can only be partially representative, like Cumberbatch and Negrine's, even though my research is not concerned with counting the number of disabilities on television. Some will question why some representations have been included and not others in this study. I have attempted to negate this issue by casting a narrow net by investigating images of disability according to genre. The case remains that some representations will be missed, despite the specificity of the project.

Cumberbatch and Negrine begin to investigate the types of roles given to disabled actors and the importance of those roles. The qualitative analysis helps to articulate the prominence of a disabled character, but there is little investigation into the representation itself. The researchers coded roles as "*major, minor, incidental and background*" (Cumberbatch and Negrine, 1992, p.43 original emphasis). Although this analysis includes films, Cumberbatch and Negrine argue that films "comprise a substantial part of television programming" (Cumberbatch & Negrine, 1992, p.41). The writers discovered that disabled people make up "1.3 per cent of all those portrayed on television who have a speaking part" and "only 1.5 per cent of the leading parts in dramatic fiction" (Cumberbatch & Negrine, 1992, p.45). The researchers have demonstrated that disabled actors are unlikely to secure major roles, meaning representations will be limited and disabled actors will be less likely to gain regular employment.

Cumberbatch and Negrine begin to explore employment and the limitations placed on disabled people in entering the industry and securing work. The writers question, "should disabled characters be played by actors with disabilities?" and begin to note issues around accessibility "most television producers and writers would answer the question in the affirmative. Yet most point out the difficulties which they encounter in attempting to fulfil this objective. Access to studios, costs and the availability of suitable actors" (Cumberbatch & Negrine, 1992, p.115). Cumberbatch & Negrine use interview material to argue that a disabled actor playing a disabled character would "bring their own personal experiences to the part" (Cumberbatch & Negrine, 1992, p.115). The researchers draw parallels with the "plight of black actors" where it was once acceptable to cast white actors as characters of black or other ethnicities, they argue that hiring abled-bodied actors limits opportunities for disabled actors, similarly to the hiring of white actors in black roles (Cumberbatch & Negrine, 1992, pp.115-116).

The discussion around opportunity continues, with the writers touching upon limited opportunities for disabled people due to a lack of training and no clearly defined path of entry for disabled actors to enter the television industry. They state that casting directors and producers are limited in whom they can hire because of the difficulty in sourcing adequately trained disabled actors. They highlight the importance of disabled-led theatre companies because casting directors can use companies such as Graeae (pronounced as grey-eye) to source disabled talent. Cumberbatch and Negrine also state that such "informal networks of this kind are undoubtedly important but they cannot overcome the lack of opportunity and facilities for actors with disabilities" (1992, p.118).

Cumberbatch & Negrine limited their study by only considering the producers' point of view in their interviews. There was also not the space for them to consider the contribution of disabled led theatre companies and the opportunities they offer to disabled actors, where-as this thesis demonstrates the importance placed on them by practitioners and the need to consider them further. They have also failed to consider the disabled actor's experiences on set. It is unclear how some disabled actors view production cultures and what improvements they feel are necessary to improve inclusion; because the research has been conducted from a non-disabled perspective. For example, the writers question whether some disabilities are too "distressing" for television. They cite by way of example the appearance of Nina appearance of Nina, a girl with Down syndrome, in *Crossroads*. The prejudices of the time become evident in an extract from a contributor who discusses Nina. The contributor states a disabled character must "be the acceptable face of handicap because it went out at tea-time. You could not have a person who slobbers… We felt that we were educating the public about mental handicap" (Cumberbatch & Negrine, 1992, p.120). Disability, in this example, is an educational tool to educate members of the public on life with a disability. In order to educate audiences, according to Cumberbatch and Negrine, the disability needs a rationale: "One could easily confront the audience, but if one wanted to help the audience understand the disability - to help the parent explain to the child - one needed something more" (Cumberbatch & Negrine, 1992, p.121). The writers argue that the inclusion of disability is nothing more than an educational opportunity, with representations shaped to avoid offending audiences. A disabled character's existence must be explained to an audience to provide some comfort; being disabled without a rationale creates discomfort for audiences.

Some argue that accurate portrayals of disability benefit the treatment of disabled people in broader society (Bond, 2013. Elliott & Byrd, 1982. Sadlick & Penta, 1975). Elliott and Byrd's article "concerns itself with the portrayal of disability and its effect on attitudes toward disability" (1982, p.348). The article is a literature review which features unpublished and inaccessible texts but showcases early approaches to discussing representations of disability. Like Cumberbatch and Negrine's writing, it is from the non-disabled persons perspective and questions how disability on television can be made palatable to a non-disabled audience. Research on the images of disability is often written from a non-disabled perspective, instead focusing on attitudes towards disabilities. Farnall and Smith's article (1999) is another example where disabled people are discussed and not included, as the pair work to measure attitudes towards disabled people.

Elliott and Byrd hypothesise that television is an opportunity to educate audiences about disability, arguing that "unrealistic depictions influence negative attitudes and the negative attitudes are projected onto those with disabilities" (Elliott & Byrd, 1982, p.350). Fanell and Smith's findings support Elliott and Byrd's hypothesis, and they find inclusion on television can reduce "certain negative emotional reactions" but creates a "greater likelihood of feeling uncomfortable with those with some types of disabilities" (Farnall and Smith, 1999. p.669). Such research is built upon the concept of negative and positive representations, that there is a right way to represent disability. The binary labelling of roles as either positive or negative is entirely subjective, failing to acknowledge that "positive" and "negative" can co-exist within one portrayal, or as Darke writes:

> It is a fallacy to argue that there is a 'true' way in which certain images can represent impairment and disability; apart from the fact that there is no universally 'true' way anything can be represented, it is even more pernicious that most disability imagery writers insist on more normalized' [sic] images of impairment: images which they consider to be 'positive'. I would argue that such images validate not difference but normality, the very illusion at the heart of the oppression of disabled people. It is quite bizarre that disabled writers argue that images which negate difference in favour of normality and conformity are 'positive'. One suspects that such a perspective reveals more about the writer's social and attitudinal position than it does about disability. (Darke,1998, p,183)

Elliott and Byrd's writing relies on this "normative fallacy" (Macheray, 1978). Elliott and Byrd explain that the endings of disabled narratives at that time were mainly more "positive [for disabled characters] than those with non-disabled characters, in that most disabled characters experienced a miracle cure at the end of the program" (Elliott & Byrd, 1982, p.350). The erosion of the disability is considered to be a "positive", but Elliott & Byrd describe portrayals like Ironside as "unrealistic" and, therefore, damaging because they "provide inaccurate information for the formulation of attitudes toward these disabilities" (1982, p.349). Therefore, they argue that it is better to cure a disability than be disabled. Schalk explores such representations in the films *Avatar* (Cameron, 2009) and *Source Code* (Jones, 2011). With both films set in the future, they use technology "to erase their disabled bodies mostly from sight, and, finally, by eradicating disability entirely with a technological cure" (2020, p.416). The curing of disability reinforces the idea that "the most valued disabled people are those who would do anything, including risk death, to be non-disabled" (2020, p.416). Such narratives are not concerned with accuracy but with making disability palatable for non-disabled people.

Ross (1997) notes that research on the images of disability has so far fallen into two categories, with research either being "organized [sic] around content analysis (for example, Cumberbatch and Negrine, 1992) or else focused on attitudes among non-disabled audiences" (Ross, 1997, p. 669), as the examples above show. Ross instead focuses on the attitudes of disabled audiences and how they view representations of disability. Those involved in Ross's study expressed the belief that there was a lack of variety of disabilities. Ross found that disabled audiences believed "writers and programme makers often use a wheelchair 'user' when they want an easy way to signal disability and disability themes" (Ross, 1997, p.670). Many in the study doubted disabled actors played disabled characters and that non-disabled actors were more desirable to productions. The contributors believed that using non-disabled actors allowed productions to avoid "the messy business of actually employing a disabled actor with all the associated inconveniences of adapting sets to make them more accessible" (Ross, 1997, p.671). Ross's research rightly considers the opinions of disabled audiences but does not challenge or validate the claims of those involved in the study. My research will instead speak to disabled actors. It will highlight areas where productions have failed to be inclusive and demonstrate that some producers did consider disability to be a "messy business" and worked to limit the involvement of disabled actors in some productions. As a result, some disabled actors were typed cast and had their opportunities in the industry

limited. Interestingly, disabled audiences are discussing production cultures and share the idea that the industry has barriers for disabled people, according to Ross's study.

Studies concerned with the images of disability have identified the lack of disability on television and begun to consider the production cultures which may have impacted inclusion. Ross's incorporation of audience opinions is a shift that signifies a move away from the quantifying of disability on television towards studies that explore and unpack representations of disability. The work undertaken by Cumberbatch and Negrine has been instrumental in supporting the analysis of the representations of disability. The following section considers literature which investigates representations of disability and shows how contemporary research uses quantitative studies as a base to undertake deeper analysis.

## 2.2 Representations.

The study of the representations of disability is not a field of research exclusively undertaken within television studies. Researchers have explored the representations of disability in various mediums, including but not limited to film, literature, music video, and news and current affairs (Barnes, 1992. Ellis, 2015. Longmore, 2003. Shapiro, 1994). Barnes's work in 1992 explored representations of disability in the media, often touching on portrayals of disability in British Television drama. Such early work sought to categorise representations according to stereotypes. Barnes identifies eleven stereotypes of disability and argues that at the time of his writing, that no representation of disability was positive. There was a general agreement between researchers that disabled people were shown as pitiable individuals who must rise to the challenge and prove their self-worth; such a representation became known as the Super Cripple stereotype (Barnes, 1992. Shapiro, 1994. Longmore, 2003). Disabled people are often portrayed as individuals who experience violence or perpetrate it themselves. The latter became known as the evil avenger stereotype (Harnett, 2000, p.21), tying together a character's impairment and villainousness; they are evil because they are disabled or vice versa.

In the previous section, I referred to the normalcy fallacy (see page 16) which questions whether there is a truthful way to represent disability. Ellis notes that research into the representations of disability has focused much on identifying negative stereotypes, and the "focus on negative stereotypes has seen research into disability television stagnate" (Ellis,

2015, p.1). Mallett writes that some areas of "disability-criticism have begun to acknowledge that 'stereotypes' are not exclusively a negative form" (2009, p.4). Mallett is not suggesting stereotypes are instead positive but instead examines how a programme can subvert disability stereotypes. Similarly, Vertoont et al. argue that "disability studies have paid more attention to popular media representations, though often getting stuck on reductionist conclusions about acceptable and unacceptable depictions… and failing to include genre conventions, the polysemic nature of media texts and the broader cultural context" (2021, p.2).

Mallett Identifies three common "strands" of critique used by researchers in evaluating stereotypes of disability. (1) whole selves, (2) acceptance and fulfilment of self and (3) self-defined by absence (Mallett, 2009, p.5). The first strand is that stereotypes of disability do not represent a complete individual: "This strand of criticism positions the possession of the whole self as the standard disability representations should be judged against" (Mallett, 2009, pp.5-6). Failing to do so would result in a representation being labelled as a negative stereotype; identifying one-dimensional or whole characters is entirely subjective. The second strand of criticism is the argument that "disabled characters must be portrayed as being accepted by others" as well as themselves, a standard which all representations of disability should be measured against (Mallett, 2009. p.6). This strand of analysis argues that disabled characters should only be shown as accepted individuals by their communities and themselves. Such criticism is restrictive and limits narrative exploration. The third strand of criticism "posits an absence of a 'whole' self as a defining characteristic in negative portrayals" and sees the association of disability with evilness (the evil avenger), here the character is defined by their "absence and/or insufficiency" (Mallett, 2009. p.6). Mallett argues that "deploying 'stereotypes' reduces criticism's ability to attend to insurgent cultural practices and this presents problems, particularly when disability-criticism" (2009. p.6) meets a text which attempts to subvert disabled stereotypes; Mallett examples the disabled characters in *South Park* (Paramount, 1999). Reliance on stereotypes often results in a shallow analysis that misinterprets the text (Mallett, 2009. p.6).

Mallett suggests that to avoid the limited criticism of representations of a disability, research needs to be more "responsive" and consider the conventions of genre and audience reception (2009, p.8). Ellis (2015a) looks into representations and audience reception to produce a broader analysis that does not misrepresent the intentions of the text. Ellis argues that Cumberbatch and Negrine are using the strands of criticism identified by Mallett and that

they “targeted crime drama for its inaccurate and damaging portrayals of people with disabilities and mental health conditions… [they] argued that depicting those with disabilities as ordinary people with ordinary problems was vital to prompting social inclusion” (Ellis, 2015a, p.6). Cumberbatch and Negrine label disabled representations in crime dramas as negative stereotypes which need to be eradicated, but Ellis finds despite this association that the “crime drama emerged as a popular genre amongst people with disabilities” (2015, p.1).

Ellis notes in her conclusion that the stereotypes identified by earlier studies typically situated the disabled people in crime dramas as vulnerable to crime or “better dead than disabled”; these programmes also “confront a range of audiences with issues relevant to the disabled community such as abuse, communication and the complexity of interpersonal relationships” (Ellis, 2015, p.21). Her case study *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit* (1999-) highlights how it is “indicative of the disability in crime drama where disability is both disparaged and privileged, with people with disability frequently appearing as both victims and perpetrators of crime” (Ellis, 2015, p.21). Such an analysis has moved beyond the binary labelling of roles as positive or negative and is considering the genre's importance in shaping representations. Ellis shows that disabled audiences do not necessarily agree with the negative labelling of roles. The same may be said for disabled actors who may not view their inclusion in a programme as stereotypical or negative.

Vertoont et al. acknowledge that previous work into the representations of disability in the media has revealed “very disempowering and stereotyping practices toward people with disabilities” and that disability is often “medicalized, individulized, victimized, or applauded [sic]” (2021, P.4). To produce broader analysis the researchers undertake “collective textual analysis”, which intended to create “multiple kinds of input, insights, foci and to genuinely become--with each other to create profound, intra-active, multiple and layered interpretations” (2021, p.5). In an attempt to diversify readings of a text, academics are engaging disabled people in research, going further than Ellis.

Vertoont et al. offer a framework that aims to “enhance more nuanced analysis of disability representations” and has incorporated several intersecting tropes of disability which work to “confirm and disrupt cultural hegemonic order concerning dis/ability” (2021, p.10). The tropes allow for further analysis, as the research comments on how particular representations blur the lines between “emancipation and empowerment, acceptance and ableism” by

showing how stereotypes can be "reaffirmed and subverted" in a text (Vertoont et al., 2021, p.6). The tropes identified in this research are: (1) patronises disabled people, (2) a consolidating trope, (3) deconstruction of "hegemonic order", (4) deconstruction of that order, (5) the imposition of ableist normalcy (Vertoont. et al., 2021, pp.11–12). These tropes allowed the researchers to explore complexities in representations, noting how they conform to stereotypes whilst subverting them.

The researchers argue they could easily categorise their Dutch case study *Tytgat Chocolat* (één, 2017) as an "agent of normization [sic] and an opponent of inclusion", but it is through the use of the tropes that they have identified the complexity of the text. The programme shows people with intellectual disabilities as autonomous and allows for moments of "self-acceptance", but this autonomy is not accurate for those with intellectual disabilities, according to disabled people undertaking the textual analysis. Such a reading shows the subjectivity of textual analysis and how the interpretation depends on the researcher (Mallett, 2009). Vertoont et al. show that collaborative research is crucial in understanding the complexities of disabled representation. Many of the case studies in my research can be interpreted as negative and reductive stereotypes, but doing so would produce a superficial reading and fail to understand the importance placed on such roles by disabled people themselves. My work is a collaborative process, too, working with disabled actors to avoid the production of shallow analysis and to fully understand the complexities of a representation of disability.

Shakspeare noted the benefits of multidisciplinary research. He argued that early research into cultural representations of disability had taken a feminist-inspired approach, following from "feminist concerns with social representations of femininity, cultural stereotypes, norms of physical beauty and so forth" (Shakespeare, 1994, p.284). Such an approach has resulted in the identification of the stereotypes of disability I explored above. Shakespeare compares the objectification of women to the objectification of disabled people, using feminist theory to support his analysis. He explores the fetishism of disability, arguing that cultural representations of disability portray disabled people as objects "on to which artist projects particular emotions, or which are used to represent specific values or evils" (Shakespeare, 1994, p.287). The analysis only adds to the identification of "negative" stereotypes.

Shakespeare does consider de Beauvoir's 1976 work *The Second Sex* to introduce the concept of otherness. Shakespeare notes that de Beauvoir's work argues that "the position of women is not natural or biological but cultural and contingent, or "one is not born a woman, one becomes one" (Shakespeare, 1994, p.291). Shakespeare goes on to explain that if you "substitute 'disabled people' for women" that "disabled people could also be regarded as Other" with disabled people being viewed as "evidence of the constraining body; and their status as constant reminders of mortality" for the non-disabled person (Shakespeare, 1994, p.292). The feminist theory developed approaches to cultural representations of disability. Such comparisons continue in contemporary television research, for example, in Stibbe's "Disability, gender and Power in Japanese television drama" (2004).

Stibbe considers representations of disability in Japanese television, making generalising comparisons with Western representations, labelling them primarily as negative. Stibbe undertakes a textual analysis of popular Japanese television dramas. According to Stibbe, Japanese television drama, although it avoids the "negative images that have appeared on television in the West", reinforces "many of the aspects of the traditional medical model" (2004, p.22). In relying on the medical model, the drama portrays disability as "a form of powerlessness, which is attached to female characters" (Stibbe, 2004, p.32). Stibbe's work falls into the trap of labelling roles as negative or positive, but he also undertakes multiple readings and shows an understanding of the complexity of representing disability. Such work demonstrates another, but not as used methodology, using the feminist-inspired approach to support analysis of the representations of disability. Stibbe suggests a direct link between representations of disability and representations of gender. Stibbe shows that disabled studies are progressing to consider other attributes which may also impact the shaping of portrayals.

Research into the representations of disability had once focused on stereotypes. Such research relied on the normalcy fallacy, with the belief that there is a right way and a wrong way to portray disability. The identification of stereotypes has led to representations of disability across media being labelled as negative. More recent studies have begun to reevaluate how academics investigate the representations of disability and argue that the reliance on stereotypes has resulted in the stagnation of research in television, as disabled roles were labelled as negative portrayals. Recent literature has reevaluated the representations of disability once labelled as negative to argue that earlier analysis produced shallow readings. Research calls for multidisciplinary research that will allow for deeper analysis to

demonstrate the complexity of disabled portrayals. Multidisciplinary approaches have used feminist theory to arm academics with the tools for that more profound analysis. More recent work has called for the incorporation of audience research and to consider genre theory. My research considers genre to understand the relationship between genre and images of disability. I will now show how this methodology has allowed for the exploration of other social-political issues, such as race and sexism, arguing that it can do the same for disability. I will consider texts that have begun to consider genre and disability but note their failure to consider the fluid of genre, which will have had a bearing on the changes in the images of disability.

## 2.3 Genre.

This literature review will begin by discussing the research around genre, mainly focusing on the fluidity of genre and defining genre as a cultural category. The work will show the need to look "beyond the text as the locus for genre" and how complex "interrelations among texts, industries, audiences, and historical contexts" (Mittell, 2001, p.4) need to be the focus when analysing genre. By considering genre as a cultural category, one can begin to explore the representations of disability. Academics have already used genre as a cultural category to discuss representations of race and gender; the literature will argue the need for a similar approach when considering disability.

This research considers two genres, Telefantasy and Soap Operas. These two contrasting genres create different opportunities for disabled actors because of their use of realism. "Realism" was initially used to describe the art movement (McCarthy, 2015). Art historian Linda Nochlin states, "The goal of realism was to give a [true], objective and impartial representation of the real world, based on meticulous observation of nature and contemporary life" (Nochlin, 1971, p.13). Fiske states that realism is "not a matter of any fidelity to an empirical reality, but of the discursive conventions by which and for which a sense of reality is constructed" (Fisk,1987, p.21). Williams takes this a step further, arguing that realism does not need to be an accurate reconstruction of the real world but instead can be subjective and instead be made to appear realistic, that realism is "a set of formal representations, in a particular medium (qq.v.) to which we have become accustomed. The object is not really lifelike but by convention and repetition has been made to appear so" (Williams, 1985, p.185).

Realism is a portrayal of the real world intended to be objective. However, it is, in fact, subjective, varying from object to object or, in this case, genre to genre. Realism is achieved through familiarity and repetition. Darrow (1899) considered realism in literature, but his description can be applied to the creation of realistic representations of disability. He writes realism should show "all the beauty and loveliness of the world, and all its maladjustments too, and do[es] not seek an answer to it" (Darrow, 1899, p.11). Darrow's definition of realism describes the idealistic desires of disabled actors, according to the interviews I have conducted. Realistic representations of disability should present the beauty of impairment, with disability not defining a character. However, it should also present the difficulties of disability without the need to "seek an answer" as to the existence of a disability, which can also mean disability in television drama, should not have to be justified.

Soap operas are long-form serialised programmes with a storyline that continues from one episode to another. The long-form format of soap operas offers disabled actors the opportunity to represent a disability over a realistic time period. Instead of condensing the disabled experience, soap operas can show the long-term impact of impairment. One defining feature of soaps is their reliance on social realism. Jordan describes social realism and states it demands that:

> Life should be presented in the form of a narrative of personal events, each work with a beginning, a middle and an end… the characters should be either working-class or of the class immediately visible to working classes… and should be credibly accounted in terms of the "ordinariness" of their homes, families, friends… that time should be "the present", that the style should be such as to suggest an unmediated, unprejudiced, and complete view of reality. (Jordan, 1981, p.28)

Telefantasy contrasts the realism present in soap operas; it instead represents the "unreal" or the "fantastic", contrasting the "social-cultural expectations of the lived reality" (Johnson, 2015, p.57). Soap opera works to depict our "lived reality" accurately, but telefantasy works to disrupt the construction of our "lived reality". Though it is important to note that these genres are fluid, at times, the programme's constructed reality may confound the audiences expectations and break the conventions of the genre. Instead of labelling *Doctor Who* as science fiction, which suggests generic stability, telefantasy denotes fluidity. As Johnson

writes: the term denotes the "wide range of hybridised science-fiction, fantasy and horror programmes speaks to the shared representational strategies, tendencies and pleasures that can be found across an array of different programmes all concerned with representing the unreal" (Johnson, 2015, p.59. Johnson, 2005).

As a taxonomical tool, industries make it easier for consumers to consume media that suits their tastes by genre. The television industry has even created specialist channels which showcase a particular type of programme (Creeber, 2015, p.1). For example, the channel SYFY specialises in science fiction. However, this grouping of text according to textual components is deeply flawed, as the channel SYFY exemplifies. It broadcasts content that could not be exclusively typed as science-fiction but also plays horror, fantasy, action, thriller, and comedy, to name but a few. The difficulty in identifying a text as one specific genre stems from "genre hybridity", or rather fluidity, where one text features the components of more than one genre (Creeber, 2015, p.1).

Instead of relying on textual features to classify programmes, it is "more useful to conceive of genres as *discursive practices*" (Mittell, 2001, p.8, original emphasis). Mittell argues that genres are cultural categories that "surpass the boundaries of media texts and operate within industry, audience, and cultural practices" (Mittell, 2001, p.3). A discursive approach to genre "decentre[s] the text as the primary site of genre" (Mittell, 2001, p.9). Mittell argues that we should not entirely dismiss the textual approach but rather examine those features alongside "audience and industrial practices" (2001, p.9). Decentering the text allows for the "mapping" of generic discourses, "situating them within larger cultural contexts and relations of power" (Mittell, 2001, p.9). The purpose of this mapping is "explore the material in ways in which genres are culturally defined, interpreted, and evaluated" to consider the "larger cultural practices of genre", leading to questions such as "what does genre mean for a specific community" (Mittell, 2001, p.9); in this case the disabled community.

Mittell suggests prioritising examining the cultural practices before analysing the textual components to account for how "industry and audience practices constitute genre and how genres can be both fluid over time yet fairly coherent at any given moment" (Mittell, 2001, p10). Considering genre discursively allows for further consideration of genre's fluidity, as Mittell argues:

> Discourse theory offers a model for such stability in flux - genres work as *discursive clusters*, and certain definitions and meanings come together at any given time to suggest a coherent and clear genre. But these clusters are contingent and transitory, shifting over time and taking on new meanings and definitions in different contexts. (Mittell, 2001, p.11)

Mittell argues that genre is not fixed, and although there may seem to be a stable interpretation of a programme's generic classification, it is, in fact, temporary because of the shifting ideologies of industry, audiences, and broader contexts. The following example by Carlos de Yarza (2017) analyses *Star Trek: The Original Series* (Paramount, 1966) (and other Star Trek spin-offs), applying Mittell's television genre theory. De Yarza states the importance of examining *Star Trek* through "Mittell's lens" is to show how the *Star Trek* series "obliterate[d] the bounded realm of television science fiction" and became an "engaging commentary into the cultural framework" of their time (2017, p73). Instead of discussing the textual features of the programme to strongarm the text into a generic classification, de Yarza focuses on unpacking "sociological, political, and environmental issues" within the programme's framework.

One topic covered in de Yarza's writing is the prejudice against black actors of the time (1966), the backlash the programme faced and decisions within the production culture which shaped the treatment of the character. De Yarza notes the importance of casting an African-American woman as Lieutenant Uhura (Nichelle Nichols) and the novelty of a black woman playing a character in a position of power (de Yarza, 2017, p.74). *Star Trek* reflected issues around race in the programme's narrative with the ship's crew meeting alien races who were half black and half white, leading the crew to reflect "on the growth of racial conflict and civil rights struggles dominating life in the 1960's" (de Yarza, 2017, p.75).

*Star Trek* famously broadcasted the first interracial kiss between Lieutenant Uhura and Captain Kirk (William Shatner). De Yarza explains that the showrunners broadcast the kiss "knowing they were close to cancellation" (de Yarza, 2017, p.75). The interracial kiss was not the cause of the cancellation, but rather, the impending cancellation allowed the programme the freedom to broadcast the "taboo kiss" safely in the knowledge that any outrage would not have impacted the production. Yarza could have gone further here to consider the actor's interpretations of the interracial kiss. As Shatner explains, the narrative

saw the two characters being manipulated by an alien with mind control and forced to kiss one another ( Pioneers of Television, 2022).

De Yarza has not fully explored the crew's reluctance during the production, with the director shouting “cut” as Nicholes and Shatner kissed because it was never intended for their lips to touch (Buck, 2016, Foundation Interviews, 2011). Shatner took matters into his own hands and tried “to make it so they couldn’t edit it out, I was all over her” (The List Show TV, 2020). Nicholas describes the atmosphere on the set during the filming of the kiss, as a director whom she respected talked about her as though she was not in the room (Foundation Interviews, 2011). Nichola’s and Shatner's accounts suggest that not everyone involved in the production welcomed the kiss, as Yarza suggested. There is a dichotomy between the programme's depiction of a utopian society and the racist biases of those producing the text. In this case, the racial bias did not impact the broadcast of this specific scene because of the opposition of the production's actors. Considering genre as a cultural category has allowed for a broader discussion of representations of race and will allow for a similar analysis of the representation of disability.

In her chapter “‘A Hero Mumsy’: Parenting, Power and Production Changes in *The Sarah Jane Adventures”* (2014), Victoria Byard reevaluates the series *The Sarah Jane Adventures* (2007-2011), analysing the narrative and fan practices around the text that ultimately shaped the production. The spin-off used the format of its parent programme, *Doctor Who,* but attempted to differentiate itself by combining “science fiction and soap opera” (Byard, 2014, p.118). Byard focuses on parenthood and how the Sarah Jane character, who originally appeared in the classic *Doctor Who* series in 1973, has “regenerated” into a maternal figure, as the format has been “adapted for children's television” (Byard, 2014, p121). Format “specifies the ingredients of a programme”; production companies can take the essential components of a programme and replicate the “look” of a programme, sharing or replicating “main characters, settings and genre components” (Bignall & Lacey, 2014, p.102). The difference between genre and format is that “genre allows for innovation”, and “programmes gain large audiences by manipulating conventions in new ways” (Bignall & Lacey, 2014, p.102). *The Sarah Jane Adventures* exemplifies that, as Byard shows, with generic fluidity, the programme explores topics for a younger audience.

Byard argues that the regeneration of Sarah Jane's character into a parental figure allows for the exploration of socio-political issues like other children's programmes which, although they have generic fluidity, have codes and conventions which closely align with soap operas:

> The presence of Sarah Jane as a mother situates the *Adventures* within contemporary British Children's television through its focus on ethics of care, chosen families, and social integration and responsibility, but it also incorporates quotidian issues more familiar from children's programmes such as *The Story of Tracey Beaker* (BBC 2002-6) or *Grange Hill* (BBC 1978 - 2008). (Byard, 2014, p.125)

The difference between Byard's case study and the examples in the quotation above is the programme's use of the fantastic to create distance for the audience, "the fantastic gives an escape textually and narratively from quotidian social issues" (Byard, 2014, p.125). The use of the fantastic here works as it does in *Star Trek,* as de Yarza explained. The programmes can discuss contemporary socio-political issues, and the fantastical elements create distance and offer safety for the viewer. Safety was necessary during the broadcasting of *Star Trek* because the topics it covered were polarising and problematic. *The Sarah Jane Adventures* uses the fantastic to offer safety to its young audience, who may find some themes in the programme challenging. Interestingly Bayard's use of the word "escape" suggest that the introduction of the fantastic is a complete break from the exploration of everyday social issues and that the two cannot co-exist. In contrast, Yarza suggests that using the fantastic furthers the exploration of social issues.

Byard's research shows how, like de Yarza's, generic analysis is not just a taxonomical tool but rather a mode of analysis that allows us to consider the programme's constructions of social-political issues. In Byard's case, they have been able to discuss the representation of parenthood and how this change is a result of a shift in the formats genre from the family-orientated *Doctor Who* to a child-only demographic for *The Sarah Jane Adventures.* Generic analysis has shown the relationship between a genre's codes and conventions and its construction of social-political issues such as race, sexism, and single parenthood. Academics who study representations of disability push the need for such analysis when considering the socio-political issue of disability (see pages 18-19).

Margaret Montgomerie investigates representations of disability in the sketch show *Little Britain* (BBC, 2003-2006). The analysis begins to consider the generic conventions of the sketch show, discussing whether we are laughing with disabled people or laughing at them (Montgomerie, 2010, p.111). Montgomerie's analysis relies on identifying stereotypes and labelling them as negative, resulting in a shallow analysis and a misunderstanding of the text.

Montgomerie focuses on two representations of disability in the programme, the first being Andy Pipkin (Matt Lucas), who is a wheelchair user, and according to Montgomerie, he seemingly has "learning difficulties", a conclusion made because it is "inferred through his speech, demeanour and behaviour… his slack-jawed smile and his scruffy, outdated and ill-fitting clothes", characteristics which can all be read as a "stereotypical caricature of the adult with learning difficulties" (2010, p.112). The second representation is of Anne (David Williams); Montgomerie notes the comedy within these sketches stems from the "shared joke between audience and Andy and Anne as deceivers and trick players, and from the situation that the supposed experts, Lou (Andy's helper) and Dr Lawrence (Anne's Psychiatrist), are seemingly taken in by the temporary performance of disability" (2010, p.117).

It is difficult to label the characters as disabled because it is never made clear to the audience whether the characters are disabled, with the characters remaining "fundamentally ambiguous and anomalous" (Montgomerie, 2010, p. 118). Regardless of this ambiguity, Montgomerie describes *Little Britain* as reliant on the "exaggerated and grotesque characterisation of a whole range of abject physical and social anxiety through typage, which is in turn reliant on the currency of the stereotypes mobilised" (201o, p.123). The programme is built upon stereotypes and caricatures, which can be interpreted as a negative representation. However, as in the previous section, categorising representations in this manner is not necessarily useful; it is a limiting mode of analysis. Montgomerie compares *Little Britain* to the freak show and argues that such stereotypes endorse the medical model (2010, p.125).

A conclusion such as the one above has been made because of the researcher's dependency on negative stereotypes; though there are intentions to consider genre, the work relies too much on the negative categorisation of representations and fails to offer multiple readings, as Mellett and Vertoont et al. do. Interestingly Montgomerie notes that despite the academic disdain for the Andy Pipkin character, it was voted "the Greatest Disabled TV character" in an Ouch magazine poll (2010, p.118). Although we cannot assume how many of the

magazine voters were disabled, it could be argued, similarly to Ellis's work, that despite the labelling of the representation as negative by academics, disabled audiences may have an alternative reading or admiration for the programme.

One alternative reading is that the programme was tapping into the British public consciousness and portraying the British psyche towards disability, mirroring the political discourse of the time. During the "early 1990s to the late 2000s there was a bipartisan collapse in positive depictions of welfare" British politicians focused on fraudulent claims instead, and public opinions shifted too (Grady, 2022). Disabled people were seen as benefit cheats relying on the system; one could argue that Andy Pipkin is instead a personification of the political discourse at the time, which shaped the publics image of what a disabled person was. The caricature is of Britain and its ablism; it is less so a caricature of disabled people. Such an evaluation would need further analysis but illustrates how one can produce multiple interpretations that do not reduce the text by considering the programme's context and genre.

Montgomerie's analysis relies on Tom Shakespeare's *Joking Apart* (1999), which considers the complex nature of comedy and disability. His discussion offers some insight into how comedy should handle disability; I also wanted to note how he also identifies how disabled people use humour as a coping mechanism:

> For the disabled person, who has lived with difference perhaps for their whole lives, the abnormality is invisible anyway. But, for the stranger, it is absolutely overwhelming. Therefore, the disabled person must find a way of acknowledging the difference, showing that it is not important, and that the interaction can now progress (Shakespeare, 1999, p.50).

Such analysis is useful when considering the construction of disability in comedy programmes, as Montgomerie employs. However, Shakespeare has identified an important mechanism employed by disabled people in an attempt to overcome barriers quickly throughout their daily life. It has become apparent through the interview process that disabled television actors continue to employ such mechanisms throughout the production process, again to break down any anxieties their colleagues may hold. Shakespeare has shown how disabled people develop "interactional management in order to put the other at their ease" ( Shakespeare, 1999, p.41). Using humour, disabled people acknowledge their difference and

assure the non-disabled person to break their anxieties. I will return to this in the textual analysis to show how Shakespeare's analysis is not restricted to the screen, and such mechanisms have become part of the production culture.

Backstrom (2012) considers the contemporary "freak show", and although her study is concerned with the "Cultural Representations of Dwarfism and Obesity", I have opted to place the work in the genre section because it engages with genre and considers the continued existences of the freak show in reality television. Backstrom argues that Dwarfs and the obese continue to be "objects of cultural fascination and sought after by the entertainment industry" and that the "legacy of the freak show" continues (Backstrom, 2012, p. 688) but now exists through reality TV. However, representations of Dwarfism on reality tv are now "humanizing, desensitizing, [sic] and educational" (Backstrom, 2012, p. 689), but obesity continues to be stigmatised. This study is a rare example of an academic arguing that a representation of disability is a positive portrayal.

Backstrom undertook a close analysis of the reality programme *Little People, Big World* (TLC, 2006-) and sought "themes related to the representation of different bodies". Backstrom undertook two viewings, where she focused on characterisation, plot, visuals, and "recurring messages about bodies, disability, and difference", then focused on the episodes themes (Backstrom, 2012, p.694). Through the textual analysis, Backstrom discovered that the programme employed the social and not the medical model of disability, "exhibiting a positive identity, being self-accepting, and engaging in full social participation" (Backstrome, 2012, p.694). She identifies the goal of the programme as to "educate the audience" that dwarfism does not impact daily life but that they "must find different means to achieve the same ends as others" (Backstrom, 2012, p.694).

Those academics, like Montgomerie, who engage with disabled stereotypes may criticise Backstrom's analysis here as she has failed to consider the aspirational stereotype defined by Barnes as "The disabled Person as Their Own Worst and Only Enemy" where disabled people are portrayed as "self-pitiers who would overcome their difficulties if they would stop feeling themselves, think positively and rise to 'the challenge' " (Barnes, 1999, p. 14). Furthermore, it could also be argued that such portrayals feature "The Disabled Person as Pitiable and Pathetic" stereotype where disabled people are portrayed as "plucky, brave, courage, victims, or unfortunate" (Barnes, 1992, pp.7-8). Although relying on these

stereotypes alone can produce shallow analysis, Backstrom's analysis should encompass stereotypes as she engages with the binary labelling of representations as positive or negative. Backstrom argues that dwarfism earns this positive framing because the condition is congenital:

> Dwarfism is an ascribed, genetic condition that is present at birth. Little people may adopt disability rights tenets of identity because they are forced to accept and adapt to their condition as there is no recourse to become taller. Ascribed statuses draw sympathy because the person with the condition is not held responsible for it. (Backstrom, 2012, p.703)

Whilst obesity is a condition that does not fit into the social model of disability and is viewed as a self-inflicted condition, with the "prevailing cultural notion" being that "obese people should change their bodies" (Backstrom, 2012, p.703). The distinction between body forms is their causality; the inability to treat dwarfism but the ability to treat obesity has shaped the framing of body forms on reality television. Dwarfism has been framed with the social model of disability, showing how society disables those with dwarfism. Obesity is framed with the medical model of disability in reality programmes, that the individual has caused their obesity, with a focus on fitness to lose weight. Reality television purports to educate emotionally so the viewer "gains tolerance and empathy" by watching stigmatised conditions on reality programming. However, it is "undeniable that these television shows exist solely because public curiosity generates profit just as the freak show once did", and freak shows "may seem far more negative and distasteful because it is socially uncomfortable to stare at a disabled person on a stage in person, whereas the television screen creates a comforting space that releases tension for both performer and viewer" (Backstrom, 2012, p.705).

Backstrom has analysed the genres form here and has shown how the genre and the specificity of television has impacted the representations of two contrasting body forms. That the safety television offers viewers has changed the format of the freak show, and reality television is relying on stigmatised conditions to gain and retain an audience, purporting to be an educational experience. However, it could be argued that such representations are limiting and continue to stigmatise disabilities. Although there is a lack of engagement with stereotypes, Backstrom's analysis offers a deeper reading of the case studies through engagement with some genre analysis. Backstrom also calls for similar research to be

undertaken for further examinations of portrayals of "dwarfism and obesity in nonreality television or talk shows. Worthwhile studies could also examine how aspects of cultural production across genres or shows effects representations" (Backstrom, 2012, p.704). My thesis does this by considering the representations of dwarfism in fictional television.

Wohlmann and Harrison (2015) investigate the representations of chronic disease and disability in serialised television. The researchers argue that serial television offers "intriguing ways to rethink the functions and meaning of narratives in health contexts" (Wohlmann & Harrison, 2015, p.68). They acknowledge that disabilities and chronic diseases undermine the "classical narrative structures and expectations", disrupting the resolution or closure of a classical narrative structure (Wohlmann & Harrison, 2015, p.68). Interestingly the study focuses on one actor, Michael J Fox, and his appearance in two programmes of contrasting genres, drama and comedy, with different narrative structures. Focusing on "Fox's neurodegenerative disorder [Parkinsons]", they "explore a potentially productive tension between common narratives of chronic illness and the episodic narrative structures of TV series" (Wohlmann & Harrison, 2015, p.68).

The research considers *The Michael J Fox Show* (NBC, 2013-2014) a rare example of a sitcom fronted by a disabled actor. It is also an example of a sitcom where the fabric of the programme is "closely interwoven" with Fox's public image (Wohlmann & Harrison, 2015, p.80). The programme, created, written, and staring Fox means the programme tries to break those stereotypes and offer a more authentic representation of disability, or as Wohlmann and Harrison write: "*The MJF Show* both dismantles and ridicules the inspiration and tragedy narratives" (2015, p.78). One example of this dismantling and ridiculing of stereotypes is how the programme does not desexualise Henry [Fox] "The programme refuses to associate disability with asexuality or abnormality" (Wohlmann & Harrison, 2015, p.78). They also examine the programme's use of humour which relies on Fox's public image to invite its audience to laugh with him. The writers note, "by inviting his [Fox's] fans to laugh *with* him when he jokes about himself, Fox suggests that he is in a position of authorial power, which paves the way for a humorous representation of his own condition" (Wohlmann & Harrison, 2015, p.80). Whereas Shakespeare "interactional management" tool is to put others at ease (see page 30). Wohlmann & Harrison argue Fox is shifting the power dynamic between a disabled person and non-disabled person; a process which allows the audience to become familiarised and normalised with the disability (Wohlmann & Harrison, 2015, p.80).

Although my work is not concerned with comedy, it is interesting to consider how other genres may attempt to create safety for audiences, allowing them to reanalyse their understanding of disability; Soap operas create distance for audiences by opting to not explore disability, and, like above, work to familiarise the disability to the audience at ease.

The writers consider the drama *The Good Wife* (CBS, 2009 -2016), where Fox plays lawyer Louis Canning, and Wohlmann & Harrison describe him as "manipulative and exploitative" (2015, p.79). Canning is a returning character who cannot be labelled a victim or a hero; the programme consciously attempts to subvert stereotypes (Wohlmann & Harrison, 2015, p.75). As the programme is a serialised drama programme, it continues to allude to "a foreseeable decline of health and potential finitude of Canning's life" as *The Good Life* undermines the "certainty or predictability about the course of his health, cautioning us to not write Canning off prematurely" (Wohlmann & Harrison, 2015, p.76). The seriality of the programme has shaped the representation of the disability; just as an audience may tune in to a serial crime drama to see whether a killer has struck, the character's possible death caused by his chronic disease becomes a cliffhanger.

The sitcom and its narrative closure invites audiences to explore disability through the perspective of the disabled writer. The disabled writer holds a position of power and dictates what is and what is not funny. Wohlmann & Harrison argue that both sitcom and serial drama implies "an open-ended aesthetic of representation that offers an alternative to a closed narrative structure" (Wohlmann & Harrison, 2015. p.81). Such a finding only alludes to genre fluidity; the writers have categorised programmes taxonomically and have not noted the changes in genre. Contemporary sitcoms commonly have hybridity; because of that, both episodic and serialised narratives exist (Mills, 2015, pp.106-107). Importantly such work demonstrates how a genre's codes and conventions have shaped a representation of disability. In comedies disability is explored through humour and allows the breaking of stereotypes. Drama, in this case, has also sought to disrupt stereotypes but also reinforces them. The programme's structure sees disability become a cliffhanger where the ambiguity of the character's decline is employed to see audiences return.

Genre is an important consideration when investigating representations. Genre analysis allows for a deeper reading of a text and demonstrates its relationship in constructing an image of disability. Academics have been calling for a methodology that avoids heavy

reliance on stereotypes. Such an approach leads to binary labelling of roles as negative or positive, which is not constructive analysis. Instead, academics consider relevant contexts and their role in the creation of a disabled representation, and those include genre and audience reception. These methods are similar to Mittell's use of genre as a cultural category. There has been a lack of consideration for the bearing production cultures have on the inclusion of disability, a vital element to consider, as limitations in this area profoundly impact the opportunities afforded to disabled people. This research, therefore, focuses on filling that gap in the literature. It works to build on the base developed regarding representations but shows genre fluidity has had a fundamental impact in changing images of disability, and so too have production cultures.

I will now discuss my multipronged methodology, which considers representations of disability, the contexts of the text, and production cultures to show that as genre has changed, so too have the images of disability. Such a methodology blends itself into a historical overview, allowing for a retrospective analysis that can demonstrate areas that have hindered inclusion and practices that have granted opportunities for disabled actors. It will allow actors to draw on their lived experiences to develop a deeper understanding of a representation. Although the images could be interpreted as "negative stereotypes", they may be viewed and intended differently by those involved in their creation. Through such critical engagement, one can ponder how the images of disability will be constructed in future productions and how inclusive practices may evolve to support disabled people currently in and new to the industry. The methodology could also be used as a base for future research, showing that investigating genre and production cultures allows for a deeper analysis of the representation of disability.

## Chapter 3 Methodology

The research uses three methods to analyse changes in the inclusion and representation of disability: textual or close analysis, linked closely to genre analysis, and semi-structured interviews with practitioners, notably disabled actors. The interviews reflect on the industry practices (past and present), any ableism the disabled actor experienced, and the successes of their performance. The research utilises textual analysis and genre analysis to deconstruct representations of disability to understand the limitations and creative freedoms genres allow. This study's three-pronged approach to analysing representations, texts, and media production will allow for the historical evaluation of the images of disability. To note any changes in inclusive practices by mainstream broadcasters and whether the types of roles given to disabled actors have changed, in that a disability is not crucial to their casting.

Like my study, Richard Hewett's *The Changing Spaces of Television Acting* (2017), which considered the shift from studio filming to on-location shooting, used a multiple-pronged approach to successfully demonstrate the change in practices and its impact on television aesthetics. Hewett also used textual analysis and interviews with practitioners to highlight the BBC's shift in practices and ideologies. Through similar techniques, this work also discovers changes in production and ideologies whilst considering their impact on the images of disability. Cumberbatch and Negrine's in-depth study also used a multi-pronged approach to quantify the amounts of disability on television and analyse the roles given to disabled actors statistically; their study utilised content analysis and semi-structured interviews. The content analysis was useful in identifying and counting the images of disability. The semi-structured interviews were discussions with disabled people, professional carers, family carers, non-disabled people removed from disability, and some exerts from practitioners of the British television industry. This audience research was useful in presenting context into attitudes towards disability at the time, but the interviews with television practitioners were shallow and excluded disabled practitioners from the conversation. My research will go further in its engagement with interviews from practitioners and presents disabled actors with an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and practices.

The following chapter will explore my chosen methodology and how it answers the thesis's objectives and aims to identify changes in production practices and representations by creating a historical overview that demonstrates the freedoms and restrictions placed on

representations of disability by a programme's genre. The chapter will explain my focus on television and the decision to use genre as a lens to compare images of disability. The chapter will end with a section on reflexivity, my positionality, and the decision to disclose my disability to interviewees.

## 3.1 Textual analysis

Textual analysis or close analysis is "simply the means by which all texts … are interpreted" (Creeber, 2006, p.26). Creeber goes on to explain that textual analysis is a broad term which encompasses many different methods, such as "semiotics, narrative theory, genre study, ideological analysis, psychoanalysis, content analysis, linguistic analysis, discourse analysis and so on" (Creeber, 2006, p.29). In the introduction (see page 6), I discussed the textual analysis undertaken by Hobson in her book *Soap Opera*. Hobson explains that the conventions of soap operas allow the programme to cover "the big issues" (2003, pp.142-161) in its narrative in a unique way whilst appealing to mass audiences, as a result educating those audiences. For those reasons, her textual analysis comprises of narrative analysis and genre analysis, the two types of textual analysis that Creeber argues are closely linked.

> Narrative theory is closely linked to genre theory, a form of analysis that attempts to understand and categorise the fundamental characteristics of textual groups… Genre theory allows the critic to approach television in a systematic and methodical manner that may also take into account issues and methodologies such as ideaology, discourse and semiotics. (Creeber, 2006, p.30)

Genre study has successfully allowed for the fair evaluation of programmes from the same genre (Cardwell, 2006, p.77). Furthermore, Creeber argues that genre studies can also be "greatly enhanced through the application of other research methods and contexts, particularly historiography, industry practices, and audiences" (Creeber, 2006, p.32). This point is supported by Johnathan Gray and Amanda Lotz; "genre flows between programs, industries, audiences, and contexts, and thus, although an overwhelming proportion of genre analysis has focused on programs, it is a lens of analysis that lends itself toward a multi-pronged study" (Gray & Lotz, 2011, p.58).

My thesis demonstrates the relationship between the codes and conventions of a genre and its construction of disability, just as Hobson's research showed. However, it goes further to show the relationship has a bearing on the roles available to disabled actors as well as its representations of disability. Genre theory is helpful because, as Creeber writes (see above), it allows the writer to consider “ideaology, discourse, and semiotics”, methodologies crucial in unpacking representations. The analysis will consider the codes and conventions of a genre whilst also producing a shot-by-shot analysis which will consider camerawork, mise en scene, casting, setting and costume, make-up, action, dialogue, and ideological codes; elements which Creeber breaks down (2006, pp.38-43). Similarly, I will now break down these elements and how I will be analysing them in this research.

The thesis will consider the codes and conventions of a genre, examining what types of roles should be available to disabled actors. For example, in the telefantasy genre, a disabled actor is entitled to play a hero, a human, an alien, and a villain, yet they predominantly feature as villainous aliens. The analysis will also explore how the conventions shape the stories available to disabled actors, such as the educational approach in soap operas or how disabled actors' characters are likely to be killed off or only have one-off appearances in telefantasy programmes.

The textual analysis will also consider the camerawork, the framing of a disabled performance, noting the cameras level and its effect on the power in the scene and the viewer. I will also investigate any masking of disability through camera work, whether the camera work keeps disability visible or the if the framing focuses on the actor's performance.

The thesis will examine the mise en scène, which encompasses the programme’s setting. Mise en scène is a stage term and will note the “composition” of a programme (Creeber, 2009, p43). Here I will focus on the actor's movement; disabled actors have limited movement in earlier examples of disabled imagery. Julie Fernandez was often fixed to one spot during her time on *Eldorado*. The same can be said for Nabil Shaban during his tenure on *Doctor Who*. The performances were static compared to more recent examples like Cherylee Houston on *Coronation Street*; the programme shows her navigating the set and moving with other characters. The actor’s movement here relates to reasonable adjustments and shows how they are necessary for disabled actors or risk limiting their involvement and performance.

When considering casting, I will investigate whether the disabled actor was chosen on acting merit or whether their disability had a bearing on the role they played. It will become clear that disabled actors in the telefantasy programme *Doctor Who* were typically actors of restricted height. It is because the actor's size helped further the fantastical elements of the genre. Therefore the person's type of disability was crucial in them securing employment. In soap operas like *Coronation Street* and *Eldorado,* these actors were hired to improve the inclusion of disabilities. Although the type of disability is not crucial to the role here, it will become clear that parts written as non-disabled rarely go to disabled people.

The textual analysis will investigate costuming and make-up, which are essential considerations when discussing telefantasy programming. Actors Nabil Shaban and Jimmy Vee wore extensive make-up in *Doctor Who,* which affected their performance. Shaban had limited movement in his suit, and the costuming for Vee meant he could appear on the programme multiple times. However, Vee never voiced a character; he was solely there as an aesthetic choice to further the fantastical convention of the programme. The costumes shaped the actors' performance, with both having to work in challenging and uncomfortable conditions caused by the costuming. The costuming and make-up interestingly masked their disabilities and allowed the actors the opportunity to play non-disabled characters.

The thesis will also consider a programme's dialogue to investigate if disabled issues are discussed within the programme's diegesis and how they are discussed between characters. There is also the case that dialogue aids characterisation in telefantasy programming. Sil, played by Shaban, never enacts any evil. Instead, the audience deduces through the dialogue that the character is villainous.

I will consider the text's ideological codes, which may not directly focus on ableism but instead gives context which foregrounds issues that were critical at the time that had an impact on the shaping of representation and inclusion—Doctor *Who* during the 1980s commented on the censoring of programming. There are examples of discomfort at seeing individuals with disabilities on television at the time. The reluctance expressed by audiences and producers may have shaped the roles afforded to disabled actors and had a bearing on the ideologies that were and were not included. Meanwhile, soap opera approaches ablism as a "big issue", as Hobson may describe it (2003, pp. 141-146). Mundane issues become

melodramatic and reflect current national issues, such as medicinal marijuana and disabled parenthood.

Finally, my work will also consider performance, similar to Hewett (2017). He considers the industries shift from multi-camera to single-camera production; it uses textual analysis to evidence the changes in "acting styles of different periods" (Hewett, 2017, p.7). His analysis of the performances has demonstrated how industry practices have shaped the actor's performance. My work will show how adaptations have shaped the actor's performance. For example, Shaban utilised method acting as Sil in *Doctor Who* to cope with the pain and discomfort caused by his costuming and prosthetics.

There has been fair criticism that textual analysis is subjective; post-structural textual analysis aims to "acknowledge the active role of the reader in making meaning… and looking for multiple meanings within a 'polysemic text'" (Creeber, 2006, p38). I acknowledge this subjectivity and the need to produce multiple readings; the interviews with disabled actors also work to produce multiple readings of a representation. The thesis uses semi-structured interviews to investigate the themes of the research but also to create an opportunity for the participant to construct and contribute knowledge pertinent to them.

The research will consider not only the text itself but the production of the text to understand how and who constructs a representation of disability. By studying production cultures, the work aims to understand the hierarchy on set and whether a disabled actor has creative control or influence. The research will also consider inclusive initiatives launched by the broadcaster and the disabled actors lived experiences of these initiatives and how they shaped their performance. The discussion of production cultures will allow the study to highlight how production practices have changed and how accessibility on the set has changed, making it easier for disabled people to be involved in production.

## 3.2 Production Cultures

Johnathan Gray and Amanda Lotz reason to understand the construction of a programme you must consider two crucial aspects of that being "who" is involved and "how" the industry is arranged (2011, p.139). Critical in answering these questions is the "examination of television industries" (2011, P.139). Although my research is not concerned with the general construction of television, the questions will aid the evaluation of the inclusion of disability in British television drama. The study will instead ask, how did a role for a disabled actor come to be created? A broadcaster may hire a disabled actor because they are working to fulfil their inclusion initiative. A writer might create the part for a disabled person, or a disabled actor could further the characterisation in a way a non-disabled actor could not. Who is also developing these roles for disabled actors? In the question above, I suggest a writer, but that is not always the case, with parts not written as disabled sometimes going to disabled actors. There are also examples of producers pushing for the inclusion of disabled talent. It is also essential to understand the motivations behind the inclusion of disabilities. Is it to fulfil initiatives, to improve representations, or is it because disability is integral to the characterisation? And finally, how has the industry changed? For example, one shift in the industry is the move away from casting non-disabled actors as disabled characters, and instead prioritising authenticity regarding disabled roles. Just as Gray and Lotz suggest to understand the construction of disabled roles in television fully, we must analyse the production itself.

> Production studies is grounded in the assumption that there is a unique and significant relationship between an individual media artifact [sic] and the production of that product, the industry from which it was created, as well as the governmental policies and socio-economic conditions that were in existence during its historical moment of creation (Banks, 2015, P.120).

In the above quotation, Banks argues that a television programme (an artefact) is a product of the "modes" and "cultures" of production, and by understanding those modes and cultures of production, scholars can begin to unpack meaning. Banks goes on to list trends of areas to study. These trends touch on "essential questions" that are critical in examining the "lived realities of people working in production" (Banks, 2015, P.121)—such as the lived realities of the disabled actors included in this study. The trends Banks suggests scholars consider

when undertaking production studies are “location”, “Insider/outsider”, “authorship”, and “self-theorization” (2015, pp121-127). Similarly to the questions posed by Gray and Lotz, Banks’s trends can help scholars understand the construction of inclusion.

Location refers to the “specific geographic location of a production workspace” because the location of a production can “dramatically” affect “and perhaps even determines - the possibilities for which practitioners will be involved in the project” (Banks, 2015, p.121). Disabled actors will have access needs which need to be considered in getting them to the set, but the focus on location sound go further and be “extremely localized [sic]”, allowing an “understanding of a specific space (district, studio, sound stage)” (Banks, 2015, p.121). The discussion around location will consider the physical barriers for disabled actors when working on set. The interviews allow practitioners to discuss their access needs and reflect on their lived experiences working on sets. The work shows a change in making locations accessible for disabled actors. Broadcasters did not always consider access needs. More recently, sets have been designed with access needs in mind for the current cast and crew but also allow any future employees to join the production with relative ease. The work considers who has been responsible for the change in the implementation of reasonable adjustments and shows that governmental legislation has had an impact. However, there were attempts from producers to make sets accessible before the government's intervention. Location shapes who can be involved in a production, but disabled people are not only affected by the geography of the set but also by the set itself; an inaccessible location limits a disabled actor's involvement in the programme, reducing their hierarchy within the production team.

The disabled person's position in the team is also an important consideration and brings me to Bank’s second trend, which this research will consider: insider/outsider. Here the “conditions of television production dramatically affect the agency of an individual media worker”, but how those practices affect the individual is unique to each individual (Banks, 2015, p.123). The term insider/outsider refers to how “certain media practitioners are in positions of greater professional and cultural advantage” (Banks, 2015, p.123). The findings of this research will show disabled creatives are calling for further integration to hold more positions of greater professional and cultural advantage, believing that disability behind the camera will uphold authenticity. There are also calls for the types of roles given to disabled actors to change. For example, Shaban and Vee were vocal about wanting to play a human protagonist instead of an alien antagonist.

Bank's third trend considers authorship, which is the use of terms like "'producer' or 'maker'" to "identify a specific media practitioner that is in a position of power and creative control" (Banks, 2015, p.124). Such terms elevate some practitioners but marginalise others in a collaborative industry (2015, p.124). Bank's observations apply to roles behind the camera, but as this work shows, there is little inclusion of disabled people behind the camera. Instead, I will consider the hierarchy of the term actor. For example, Jimmy Vee was hired as a monster operator but identified as an actor. Vee's casting asks what differences distinguish a puppeteer from an actor and whether these terms suggest a hierarchy. Do puppeteers not have as much creative input into their characters as an actor? Vee's and Shaban's roles cast doubt on their positions in production; indeed, they regard themselves as actors, but their treatment and lack of progression shows that the production saw them as outsiders and treated them as puppeteers rather than the actors they aspired to be.

The last trend Banks suggests is a vital consideration when undertaking production studies is self-theorization. Self-theorization attempts to gain a deep understanding of the "lived realities of practitioners", where the scholar undertakes an "examination of the self-theorization of makers about their own creative and craft labour" (Banks, 2015, p.126). The examination considered the "routines and rituals" of production mapping "political and cultural forces that shape media-making" (Banks, 2015, p.126). In this case, the work considers the experiences within and beyond production to understand how socio-political factors have impacted an individual's career. To fully explore the socio-political factors that have shaped their careers, contributors have discussed their influences, their experiences in education, their difficulty securing employment in other sectors, and the criticism they faced from peers and employers in becoming actors. Fernandez discusses the problem she faced in leaving secondary school to find accessible courses at polytechnics. Shaban reflects on his time at school and the pressure he faced to secure office work. The ablism they experienced was not restricted to just the television set. As attitudes in broader society altered, the inclusion and representations of disability on television also changed. The shifting attitudes towards disability has been documented through the creation of inclusive initiatives created by broadcasters to improve the amounts of disability on British television, more recently working to improve the types of roles given to disabled people, be that actors or presenters.

The most recent initiatives launched by broadcasters have been a response to the criticism of disabled activists and campaigners (see pages 1 and 2). They support this research's calls for improvements in how disabled actors are sourced and hired and the need to employ disabled talent behind the screen (BBC, 2021). Inclusive processes differ from broadcaster to broadcaster, and from production to production, there needs to be cooperation between broadcasters and productions, to ensure cohesion for disabled people. To fully understand the impact of a broadcaster's policies, government legislation, and legal requirements, the research will use document analysis of the policies to consider their impact. It will also use interview material with practitioners to understand the advantages and limitations of these inclusive policies and whether they are implemented in a manner that supports disabled people. The interviews will give an insight into the lived experiences on set and behind the scenes to understand how production cultures and broader society have shaped representations and inclusion.

It is important to note that despite the development of policies, legislation, and legal requirements on and off screen, there has been meagre improvement with regard to representations of disability. For example, according to the latest Diamond report from the Creative Diversity Network, in their "deep dive into representation[s] of disabled people in UK television" they found small improvements in inclusion on and off the screen, were limited to "a few areas of production. Off-screen, these areas are in non-senior roles and dominantly in children's and factual programmes"' and "In all other areas, representation [of disability] is static or has declined" (Diamond, 2022).

### 3.3 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews "make better use of the knowledge-producing potentials of dialogues by allowing much more leeway for following up on whatever angles are deemed important by the interviewee" (Brinkmann, 2013, p.21). By ensuring relative freedom, the interviewees shared their knowledge and experiences of ableism that have been crucial in shaping their careers. The space afforded to the participants allowed them to fill in gaps in knowledge by recounting their lived experiences (Manson, 2002, p62). The participants' accounts were previously excluded from the research and were not available elsewhere. Semi-structured interviews were the only option to allow people to tell their accounts and the

"only way to generate the kind of data" (Mason, 2002, p.66) crucial to understanding the relationship between production processes, inclusion, and the representations of disability.

It is important to note that I gained ethical approval before conducting any interview. From there, as suggested by Gelleta and Cross (2013, p.46), upon meeting a participant, I would reiterate the purpose of the interview and how the interview would contribute to the study. I would explain the structure of the interview but note that they had the freedom to discuss any narratives they deemed relevant to the themes of the study. It was also crucial to clarify that they did not need to answer a question if they considered it too personal or if they felt it could impact their career. I conducted the interviews online; therefore, participants signed the release forms after the interview. The release forms were sent with a copy of the transcript, allowing the interviewee to read their account and make any amendments. It was made clear to all the contributors that they could withdraw from the study at any time and that any data collected would be destroyed upon withdrawal. During this exchange, I established a "level of comfort" for the participant (Galletta & Cross, 2013, p.46). Setting this comfort also meant establishing the tone of the meeting, that it was an informal discussion or, to use Burgess's term, "conversations with purpose" (1984, p.102).

Rather than a formal question-and-answer format, I produced a set of incomplete questions unique to each interviewee, but all shared the themes of the research. The incomplete questions or the *"aide-mémorie"* is a supporting document that reminds the interviewer of the topics and issues they want to cover (Mason, 2002, p.73). I referred to the incomplete questions to ensure I remained on task. Each interview began with a broad question to "warm up" the interviewee. For example, with Nabil Shaban, I opted to speak about his work at Graeae. Interviewer: "Can you give me a bit more of a picture of why you found it necessary to find the Theatre Company during that time, were you trying to do something that others were not doing?". It was a broad question which created openings for him to recount his experiences (Galletta and Cross, 2013, p47). There was not always enough information to frame the questions in this way. As was the case with Jimmy Vee, instead, the broad opening question was: Interviewer: "Can you tell me how you started in acting? How did you become an actor?".

The nature of the research and its interest in personal experience and the nuances of ableism meant that a one size fits all approach could not work. Such questions added context to the

discussion, shaping the flow of the conversation, and I could refer back to previous questions further into the discussion. For example, when interviewing Cheylee Houston, she explained that disabled people make up 19% of the population, but on television, the inclusion rate fluctuates "between 1 and 3%" (Houston, 2021). I thought it was interesting that Houston was concerned with the amount of inclusion rather than the types of roles and decided to probe further, asking, Interviewer: "when I asked you about representation, your head went straight to figures, numbers, and statistics, do you think it is a numbers game that we have to worry about first or do you think its the types of roles that we have to worry about as well?". Here I am "taking cues from the ongoing dialogue with your [sic] interviews about what to ask them next rather than to go into the interaction entirely scripted" (Mason, 2002, p64). This freedom has allowed me to follow lines of investigation that were not "anticipated in advance, in a highly organic way" (Mason, 2002, p64). In the statement above, I also probe "beyond clarification to meaning-making on the part of the participant toward the research topic" (Galletta & Cross, 2013, p.50). I move the discussion away from quantifying disability on television to instead focus on the representations of disability, allowing Houston to reflect on her answer and add further context. I am working to "support" the interviewee to create "meaningful responses", allowing the participant to reflect critically on their experiences in the industry and the content of the interview (Galletta & Cross, 2013, p.51).

The incomplete questions were also used to investigate specific storylines, narratives, or performances to aid the post-structuralist textual analysis or to add context. For example, I asked about a storyline from *Coronation* Street where Houston's character has become addicted to cannabis to treat her chronic pain, a condition Houston and her fictional character share. The question is trying to ascertain how the storyline came to be. Whether by being around Houston, the writers began to produce narratives that reflected Houston's disability accurately, or instead, were the writers aware of the ongoing political discussion and reflected that in the programme:

> Interviewer: I want to ask you about a particular storyline, and that being Izzy's storyline and her use of cannabis for her pain. I only ask because I know that your disability causes pain. I wondered where did the idea come from for that. Is it something that you'd have been speaking to them about?"

I had undertaken research before the interviews to ensure the participants accounts supported textual analysis and provided some subjectivity. Despite using my *aide-mémorie,* I need to quickly identify and follow issues I had not anticipated (Mason, 2002, p.73). An example of this is when Jimmy Vee revealed that originally his character Bannakaffalatta in *Doctor Who* was never intended to be an alien. This revelation contradicted my research and meant Vee was originally going to play a human character. I was unsure of the validity of his claim and proceeded to probe further. Instead of disagreeing with his testimony and risking offending Vee, I approached this line of enquiry with sensitivity and respect as I attempted to anticipate the "social dynamics" of the interview (Mason, 2002, p.75).

The power dynamic of the interviews shifted constantly, and I had to ensure that I was respectful in my questions but able to ask questions that may be uncomfortable for some. Mason writes that it is crucial to "be related to your interviewee's circumstances, experiences and so on, based on what you already know about them" (2002, p74). One way I attempted to relate to the interviewee was by disclosing my disability and, at times, referring to my own experiences. The decision to disclose my disability shaped the relationship between the researcher and the participant. I will now move on to consider that impact and whether disclosing my disability was necessary to gain valuable data for my research.

### 3.4 Reflexivity and Disclosure

As a researcher exploring the images of disability, it feels imperative to note my connection to disability. Disclosing my disability is an automatic impulse to defend myself to the reader and those I interview in a bid to gain permission and validation to discuss disability. Like the scene from Freaks (Browning, 1932), in stating my disability, I become "one of us", accepted by the disabled community, gaining full autonomy. Reflexivity demands I look inwards at my identity and outwards, questioning my relationship with the research and the "wider world" (Rose, 1997, p. 309). I have a congenital heart defect called Hypo-Plastic Left Heart Syndrome Mitral Valve Atresia. The nature of my disability is hidden, meaning many would assume from my physical appearance that I am able-bodied. Throughout my childhood, teachers and adults said I looked "normal". Normal is an ablest term (Van Aswegen, Shevlin, 2009 and Campbell, 2015) was an attempt by those adults to draw on our similarities and to connect with me. Ironically, in disclosing my disability, I have done the same in this research.

Although many of my participants and I are disabled, we have different impairments, and as a result, each will have different experiences of disablement (Brown, Boardman, 2011, P24). I manage my disability through medication; I do not need equipment or assistance daily. Actors like Nabil Shaban, Cherylee Huston, and Julie Fernandez use electronic wheelchairs to help with mobility, and Ellie Wallwork uses a cane for her visual impairment. I do not experience the same issues around mobility and access as these participants. However, I share similar energy levels as actors of restricted height, such as Jimmy Vee, Fran Mills, and Rachel Denning, although I will still have a completely different experience of disablement. It is not a case of one being more disabled than another but acknowledging the similarities and differences between our disabilities and how they have shaped our lived experiences and our interactions during the interview process.

My social characteristics shaped the interviewing process. Pragmatically disclosing my disability helped me secure interviews. Sheldon notes the disabled rights movement as "nothing about us without us," and "when applying this principle to research, it suggests that disabled people need to be intimately involved in the processes of research on and about disabled subjects" (2007). My research does this twofold, not only by involving disabled people – as ten out of eleven participants had a known disability – but also by being undertaken by a disabled person.

It is important to note that complete reflexivity is not possible (Rose, 1997). Although I must attempt to acknowledge all aspects of myself, to critically reflect on my own intersecting identities, which have had broader implications for my research, as argued by Jones: "intersectional reflexivity requires one to acknowledge one's intersecting identities, both marginalized [sic] and privileged, and then employ self-reflexivity, which moves one beyond self-reflection to the often-uncomfortable level of self-implication" (2010, p122).

Other characteristics beyond my disability, such as age, gender, and race, also need to be considered, and these aspects will have also shaped the power dynamics in the interview process. The fluidity of power between the researcher and interviewee makes it impossible to reflexively code the power dynamic in interviews (Rose,1997). The axis of power shifted from interviewee to interviewee and during the interviews. Ultimately, I am unlikely to know which aspects of my positionality influenced the axis of power.

Most of those I interviewed were female, with only two of the ten participants being disabled men and a third male with no known disability. I made the assumption that the number of women included in the study reflects the British television drama industry and that there are more roles for disabled women than for disabled men. Nevertheless, I must also consider that my positionality was instrumental in shaping this assumption; doing so would run the risk of "failing to consider and highlight[ing] the impact researchers have on fieldwork, analysis and publication" I run the risk of producing "an illusion of objectivity that is potentially deceptive" (Brown, Boardman, 2011, P24).

I interviewed an eighth female actor for the research, and they gave an insightful account of the ablism present in the British television industry. The actor later decided to withdraw from the study.

In the case of younger participants, or participants of a similar age, there was a tendency to assume knowledge from both parties. A particular example of this was when actor and writer Ellie Wallwork explained her stubbornness on and off set when facing ableism:

> Interviewer: Yeah, good for you. I had something like that, I have a heart condition, and at school, everyone was doing abseiling; they wouldn't let me do it, and someone said, "Well, if you think you can do it, you can do it," and I did it.
>
> Wallwork: Yeah, no, I completely get that energy like. I do exactly the same thing. I get really annoyed when people tell me I can't do things, so I kind of do it out of spite, which is quite funny. (Wallwork, 2020)

Instead of pushing Wallwork to unpack her feelings further, I have assumed I share similar experiences of ablism because of my own lived experiences. We both assume that one another's experience is similar but never truly verbalise the nuances of that ableism.

In our discussion, both Wallwork and I are negotiating our knowledge; in doing so, our social identity is "made and remade through the research process" (Rose, 1997, p315). I have elected to remain in touch with those I have interviewed via email, phone, and social media. Maintaining communication with participants helps ensure their statements, such as the one above, cannot be misconstrued and allows them to alter their statements. This constant

communication allowed actor Fran Mills, upon seeing the transcript, to amend her original answers to the questions to clarify her statements and her positionality.

It is also important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the interviews. Originally it was conceived that the interviews would take place in person. The first interview with Rachel Denning occurred in February 2020 in a café outside Liverpool Street station in London; this was the only in-person interview. In March 2020, the pandemic took hold of Britain, and the government locked the country down. As ordered by the government, disabled people remained indoors, avoiding the virus. The pandemic could have negatively affected my interviewing process. However, the usually busy disabled actors found that the pandemic had emptied their schedules. Moving the interviews from in-person to online made the research and the interviewees more accessible from the comfort of their own homes.

Hosting interviews online did impact the data collection. Mason explains that interviewees communicate through body language and that reading a subject's body language is an important consideration. Non-verbal cues aid our understanding of "the social situation, its visual and spatial dynamics, and the mood of your interviewee(s)" (2002, p.75). These cues can help shape the direction of interviews and the interpretation of the data. Interviewing online has hampered the ability to identify and interpret those social cues. Camera quality meant, at times, it was difficult to see facial features; some participants appeared out of frame, and some elected to turn off their webcam completely. There is a reliance on the interviewee's dialogue in directing the interviews and interpreting the data. The accounts remain insightful and contribute new knowledge. However, it remains important to note the bearing the pandemic had on the results of the interviews, face to face interviews may have yielded different results.

I remain unsure as to whether the decision to disclose my disability was the correct one, although it helped secure interviews and allowed a closeness with interviewees. In revealing my disability runs the risk of supporting the ideology that disabled academics can only undertake disabled research, and to do so, disabled academics must disclose their disability. I also understand how my decision shaped the outcome of the interviews. Still, I have attempted to negate those issues by remaining in contact with interviewees, allowing them the opportunity to amend their contribution and using a mixed methodology to ensure objectivity.

The following section will investigate the representations of disability in the British telefantasy drama *Doctor Who*. The section will present a then-and-now comparison to understand changes in inclusion and representations. It will note stereotypes, but through genre analysis, I will produce a more profound analysis to demonstrate the relationship between a programme's codes and conventions and its portrayal of disability. The interviews with disabled actors and those involved in the production will allow for an understanding of the production cultures and exploring practices conducive to disabled inclusion. The section works toward the aims and objectives of the study, which are to identify changes in production practices and representations by creating a historical overview that demonstrates the freedoms and restrictions placed on representations of disability by a programme's genre and working to give a voice to disabled actors, allowing them to discuss their lived experiences to deepen analysis further.

## Chapter 4 Telefantasy,

As stated in the literature review, it is not the intent of the study to consider every disability featured in one programme or across television. The case studies featured in this work are examples of images of disability which have seen no or very limited academic analysis to date. There are also commonalities between the case studies, with four featuring actors of restricted height and Featuring actors with two visual impairments. The work compares the changes in production cultures and representations of similar disabilities.

There have been some roles excluded from the analysis. For example, in *Doctor who*, the alien scientist Davros, who has been played by Michael Wisher (1975), David Gooderson (1979), Terry Molloy (1984-1988), Julian Bleach (2008-2015), and Joey Price (2015). Davros is the programme's first disabled character, played by non-disabled actors. Davros first appeared in "The Genesis of the Daleks" (1975) and can be described as a wheelchair user. Disabled actor Deep Roy who is of restricted height, played the android Mr Sin in "Talons of Weng Chiang" (1977). Davros is an example of a non-disabled character playing a disabled character, and Mr Sin is a character with no speaking lines and does not appear often in the episode. Although I am aware of the images of disability above, I am devoting the space to unpacking the overlooked images of disability that offer more data for analysis. However, there may be room to consider such representations in future studies.

Beginning with Nabil Shaban's portrayal of Sil in "Vengeance on Varos" (1985) and his reprisal in "Mindwarp" (1986), I will explore the programme's reliance on disability to further its representation of the fantastic but how this limited Shaban's performance and inclusion. I will demonstrate the conflict between Shaban and the programme's producers over Shaban's typecasting. I will conduct a close analysis showing how the role easily fits within the stereotypes defined by academics like Barnes (see page 31) and how the portrayal subverts them. I will demonstrate a relationship between genre and representing disability, similar to how Wohlmann & Harrison demonstrated a relationship between format and disability (see pages 32-34). From there, I will consider images of disability in contemporary episodes, comparing the roles of Jimmy Vee, Warwick Davis, and Rachel Denning against

one another and Shaban's role. Comparing the roles will allow me to explore those changes in production cultures and their bearing on performance.

I will also consider the portrayals of visual impairments by Peter Capaldi and Ellie Wallwork. Interestingly Capaldi is not visually impaired, whilst Wallwork is. I will compare the representation of disability here and consider how the actor's authenticity informed the performance. I will explore how a different disability presents a different set of challenges for the production and the actor's task of educating their colleagues whilst working on set. It will become clear that productions have attempted to be better prepared for disabled actors. However, the learning process is constant because of the lack of engagement with disabled actors previously.

The section works to produce a historical overview that demonstrates the relationship between genre and the representation of disability. The work does not argue that these changes are progressive or that one role is more favourable. Instead, it identifies how changes in production cultures and changes in genres have shaped images of disability. It will become clear that disabled people are less frequently relied on to further the programme's representation of the fantastic, and disabled actors are now more likely to be considered for various roles and not monstrous aliens. However, I will also consider whether this change is an over-correction from programme-makers that limits disabled people in an attempt to avoid stereotypes.

### 4.1 Nabil Shaban as Sil

It is important in understanding the changes in genre and production cultures that I give context into making the episodes "Vengeance on Varos" and "Mindwarp"—particularly noting the supposed reluctance from the programme's producer, John Nathan-Turner, to explore socio-political issues. Philip Martin's commission to write "Vengeance on Varos" led to what he called "the most political *Doctor Who* there's ever been" (Barnfather, 2016). Martin was a well-established writer who had previously penned *Gangsters* (BBC, 1976-1978). With *Gangsters,* Martin earned the title of a serious writer, Dunleavy terms "serious [as] the 'treatment' of a given subject, and to the pursuit of the 'no holds barred' creative attitude" (2009, p.29). Then *Doctor Who* script editor Eric Saward relished Martin's involvement describing his script as the type of "story I was encouraging". Saward saw

Martin as a distinguished writer stating ", I wasn't going to take someone like Philip and start telling him what to do, there's not much point" (BBC, 2012a).

Saward sought to support Martin, whilst Nathan-Turner apparently wanted to push him out. Martin noted in his interview with Barnyard how insulted he was to be asked by Nathan Turner to produce a scene breakdown; typically, inexperienced writers are requested to write scene breakdowns. Martin saw the request as an attempt to push him out of the programme: "he thought, no way will Philip do this. So that's the end of that. I'm off the hook. I don't need to bring this writer – this bullshit writer – into my show" (Barnfather, 2016). Martin sought to explore the contentious topic of "video nasties" with his script. Video Nasties were unregulated low-budget horror films that were released straight to video. In "Vengeance on Varos", Varos is a dystopian planet that exports videos depicting the torture of rebels to turn a profit, like the video nasties. Martin states video nasties informed the "nuance of the show", it questioned "what does it mean we can just have stuff on tap… this constant drip, drip, drip of violence and sex, and what have you, what will it do to the viewer?" (Barnfather, 2016).

Martin's script demonstrates the fluidity of the genre; his script diverged from the norm. Those producing the programme had concepts of the programme's identity which conflicted with the identity established with the audience in previous years. According to Saward both he and Nathan-Turner pushed for darker storylines; Saward argued:

> Doctor Who never came out of the children's department. It always came out of series and serials, as it was called then, and so when I came on board, nobody said, bear in mind it's a children's programme, you know, keep the vocabulary simple, the stories simple. It was just following in the long line where I think it had always been made as an adult's programme, with a fun an awe and an excitement element for children that was there and a bit for the adults above it. (BBC, 2012c)

Saward and Nathan-Turner weighted the programme towards an adult demographic and shifted the programme's format from a 25-minute run time to 45 minutes. A 25-minute run time is typical of a children's programme such as *Grange Hill* (BBC, 1978-2008). Dramas typically ran around the 45-minute mark, Such as *Gangster* and *The Sweeney* (ITV, 1974-1978), which both ran for 50 minutes. Although Saward and Nathan-Turner agreed on darker storylines, they disagreed on whether the programme should be politically motivated.

It is clear audiences situated the programme differently, struggling with the changes in genre. Martin's episode resulted in complaints, arguing that the programme had become a violent departure from the series' original values. Below is an example of the complaints Martin's episode drew. This complaint was titled "Inhumanity":

> Please convey my horror and deep distress at the opening scenes of the 19 January episode. I refer to the spectacle made of a man being tortured. Thirty-nine or so years ago we were being made aware of the terrible inhumanity and lack of compassion shown by the enemy to prisoners of war and concentration-camp victims. To see such cruelty now made part of an "entertainment" I find most repugnant and irresponsible. I was appalled at the callousness of the script. (M. A. Murrell Cited by the BBC, 2012).

Martin recalls the episode being "generally well received" and describes the letter above as "a bit much, really" (Barnfather, 2016). However, Martin did accept that the programme should have "gone on later, and I acknowledge that now" (Barnfather, 2016). Despite the programme's new runtime and darker themes, the decision was made for the programme to air at 5:45 pm on a Saturday night. A slot typically reserved for family viewing, which *Doctor Who* did fit before the changes implemented by the programme's producers. The difficulty between the programme-makers, the audience, and the BBC demonstrates the generic instability of the programme. "Vengeance on Varos" is an atypical episode. It targeted mature audiences and sought to explore socio-political issues. Those changes in values impacted the series as a whole and resulted in the programme's eighteen-month hiatus and, ultimately, its cancellation in 1989. The shift in tone also shaped the image of disability in this episode, with Sil being used as a device to explore socio-political issues and to horrify audiences through his characterisation and monstrous aesthetic.

I will now introduce Nabil Shaban, beginning with how he got involved with acting and how he was scouted and hired for the role of Sil. I will then begin to textually analyse his first appearance as Sil unpacking the characterisation and aesthetic I outlined above to demonstrate the relationship between genre and images of disability. By considering Shaban's introduction to the British television industry, the research can understand the

production cultures that ultimately shaped Shaban's career, their career progression, and even Shaban's performance in *Doctor Who*.

Nabil Shaban had aspired to be an actor from a young age but was aware that biases towards disabled people would limit his career aspirations (Shaban, 2020). In our interview, he recounted his rejection from the "British Drama League" summer school. Shaban grew up in care and called the home "the dump" (Shaban, 2020). Money was hard to come by, so saving up for summer school was an arduous task. Having saved the amount required, Shaban forwarded the school a cheque with a letter detailing his disability, osteogenesis imperfecta, also known as brittle bone disease. Osteogenesis imperfecta causes restricted growth, and Shaban is a wheelchair user. The school explained in a letter that they could not cater for such a disability and returned his cheque. However, Shaban rejected their rejection and sent them the cheque again, which began an exchange of letters between the two. The school ended the exchange and wrote to the head of Shaban's home. The head gave Shaban an ultimatum either write a letter of apology or face expulsion. Leading Shaban to write an insincere apology: "Look, I've been forced to apologise, so I'm apologising, but I don't mean it" (Shaban, 2020).

The difficulty continued for Shaban at school; his career advisor warned him against an acting career and told him to focus on administrative skills (Shaban, 2020). Shaban opted to write to around sixteen drama schools, all of which sent rejection letters, with a majority having "nothing to suggest, one or two suggested that I join amateur dramatics, or set up a play reading group" (Shaban, 2020). Disabled comedy singer Michael Flanders had written in response to one of Shaban's letters offering advice. Flanders was one of the comedy duo Flanders and Swann, and he had become disabled after contracting polio. Flanders seemed to admit it was easier for him to enter to industry because he "acquired" his disability post-fame. Flanders suggested that Shaban worked to produce original work (Shaban, 2020). Flander's advice daunted Shaban, just a young man about to leave school; he felt he had no stories to tell.

Such anecdotes give an insight into an aspiring disabled actor's difficulties. Ablism restricted entry to the industry and opportunities to part-take in training. Shaban was refused several opportunities at a young age for being disabled, and when he sought equality, he was forced to apologise. The anecdotes illustrate Shaban's determination, but despite that determination,

he has faced barriers because of his disability. Cumberbatch and Negrine identified this issue in their work. They consider why a production may prefer to hire a non-disabled actor in a disabled role, and they reason it is a lack of experience:

> The first relates to opportunities for actors with disabilities to train in their art. If they are excluded from television, how can they show their skills and how will they then be noticed? The second reason is closely allied to this. Where are the opportunities for training actors with disabilities in mainstream theatre and television? Unless such actors are granted access to 'windows of opportunity', they will not be able to break into the wider media world. The circle is both vicious and closed. (Cumberbatch and Negrine, 1999, p.117).

Although Cumberbatch and Negrine are speaking specifically about actors not gaining experience in television and theatre, Shaban's experience tells us the difficulty is not just in gaining experience, that the closed and vicious circle begins at training opportunities—the barriers faced in gaining training stifle disabled people's acting careers before they even begin. I will return to these barriers when considering the casting process of Sil and demonstrate how the lack of training opportunities available to disabled people has altered the way production source talent, with productions using unique methods to find experienced disabled actors.

Flander's words resonated with Shaban because he went on to create the Graeae (pronounced grey-eye) theatre company. Shaban cofounded Graeae with his lecturer Richard Tomlinson, together Shaban and Tomlinson "started to devise sketches" and plays before touring with their first show, Ready *Salted Crips,* from 1974 to 1975 (Shaban, 2020). Their success led them to form Graeae, launched in 1981. The year was proclaimed the International Year of Disabled People (IYDP) by the United Nations General Assembly. Shaban and Tomlinson timed their debut in order to gain exposure. The International Year of Disabled People sought to increase "public awareness; understanding and acceptance of persons with disabilities; and encouraging persons with disabilities to form organizations [sic] through which they can express their views and promote action to improve their situation" (UN, 2020). Interestingly the UN concluded the year by arguing that the "image of persons with disabilities depends to an important extent on social attitudes; these were a major barrier to the realisation of the goal of full participation and equality in society by persons with disabilities" (UN, 2020).

They argue that social attitudes shape images of disability, and the images of disability limit social cohesion. Full participation in society can also be applied to producing images of disability; if disabled people are involved in the representation of disability, those depictions would be created with a more accepting social attitude. Full participation would see disabled people involved in other production roles, such as writing and directing.

Graeae granted Shaban and other disabled people to fully participate in the representation of disability. As Shaban explains:

> All our shows, in the beginning, were semi-auto-biographical. They're about disabled people talking about their experiences, whether it was in education, in medical matters, family, sex, or how you became disabled, and dealing with it, and so on. (Shaban, 2020).

Graeae became a space where disabled people could represent a disability and explore disabled stories as the company was formed and run by disabled people. Significantly it was a space that finally allowed Shaban, and other disabled people, to practice their art and gain the experience deemed essential by mainstream theatre and television. It is doubtful that without Graeae, Shaban would have been able to gain work in mainstream television; the founding of Graeae ultimately led to his casting in *Doctor Who*.

There are two conflicting stories as to who is responsible for casting Shaban as Sil. The BBC claim his casting was part of an inclusion drive made by producer Alan Shallcross. Shallcross supposedly sent a memo to his fellow producers asking "that when casting roles in television drama, producers should keep less able-bodied [disabled] performers in mind. He specifically mentioned Graeae" (BBC, 2012). The timely memo landed on Nathan-Turner's and Director Ron Jones' desks. The pair struggled to cast the alien Sil; according to "Vengeance on Varos" DVD, Jones had considered several "dwarves and midgets for the part, but the problem was that most lacked acting experience" (BBC, 2012c). The limited training opportunities for disabled people resulted in difficulty finding an actor to play the role of Sil. The difficulties experienced here illustrate Cumberbatch's and Negrines' aggressive closed circle, where the lack of opportunities has limited disabled actors' ability to gain essential experience and production are not granting "windows of opportunity" because the actors lack that essential

experience. Shallcross's memo led Jones to audition three disabled actors from Graeae, Shaban being one of them.

The second story of how Shaban came to be cast comes from Shaban himself. He claims he was recommended by Martin Jarvis' wife, Rosalind Ayres. Martin Jarvis had been cast as The Governor in "Vengeance on Varos" and was aware of Nathan-Turner's and Jones' difficulty finding an actor to play Sil. Shaban claims Ayres had seen a documentary on Graeae and recommended Jarvis put Shaban forward for the role, and it is from there that Jones contacted Graeae (Barnfather, 2019). Although it is unclear which version of events is certain, both narratives suggest Nathan-Turner and Jones could not find the calibre of actor they expected—demonstrating that disabled people could not gain the experience necessary for such roles due to exclusion from specialist training. Shaban had impressed Nathan-Turner and Jones at his audition, having been honing his craft at Graeae for around three years. However, both stories demonstrate that the BBC has been working towards being an inclusive broadcaster for some time, and producers were at one time responsible for creating windows of opportunity for disabled performers.

Shaban explains in his interview with Barnfather that he "wanted desperately to be in *Doctor Who*"; he first wrote to the BBC in 1973 in an attempt to join *Doctor Who.* Upon hearing of the death of Roger Delgado, who played the evil Timelord, the Master, Shaban's urged the programme-makers not "to end the character"; instead, to let Shaban play the character (Barnfather, 2019). In this letter to BBC, reminiscent of his letter to the summer school, Shaban tells of his disability. He argues that the disability does not need to be a plot point "I know I'm little, I know I can't walk, but that doesn't matter; he can be floating around like the Mekon in a sort of hover shield" (Barnfather, 2019). The Mekon is the villain in the *Dan Dare* (Hampson, 1950-1967) comic books. The Mekon sits on a levitating chair or board due to having a large head and a small body. Shaban gives the BBC the benefit of the doubt: "We can excuse them not doing that because BBC special effects at that time were shit, and they didn't have, you know, the CGI that we have today" (Shaban, 2020).

Shaban's second attempt was another letter to the BBC asking for them to consider him for the leading role of the Doctor:

> [The Radio Times] were asking you for your suggestion as to who could be the fifth Doctor, so, of course, I put my name, and I sent that off [to the BBC] with a little story about how the Doctor got turned into me. (Barnfather, 2019).

Previously Shaban negated his disability, arguing it did not need to be pivotal to the story; this time, he presented a rationale for why the character is disabled. The letters give some insight into Shaban's flexibility and openness in playing various roles, and he seems indifferent about whether disability needs to be rationalised. The flexibility may be due to a lack of job security. Such openness may be because Shaban is beginning his career and seeking a window of opportunity. Shaban believes he had "no hope in hell of really them taking my idea seriously" and remembers Nathan-Turners calling the concept "very amusing" in his response (Barnfather, 2019). I will return to discuss how Shaban continued to push for Nathan-Turner to consider him for various roles whilst employed at the BBC and how, despite being a skilled actor, Nathan-Turner apparently continues to reject Shaban. It is important to highlight there is no record of Nathan-Turner's opinion towards disability, and with his death in 2002, he is unable to comment. The discussion around disability has been from the lived experience of Shaban, although these experiences are true to him, we remain unable to understand everyone's perspective and why such decisions were made at the time.

Although it is essential to note that some showrunners may be more open to casting a disabled person in such a prominent role, Writer Russell T Davies novelised his script of the episode "Rose" (BBC, 2005). In this novelised version (2018), Davis refers to a future incarnation of the Doctor who uses a wheelchair. Davis acknowledges that within the confines of the programme's realism, such an image of disability is possible without confounding the programme's created realism. Therefore, the argument is not is it possible, but who will make it a reality. The social attitudes of the time towards disability shaped the production cultures; biases decided which roles could be and could not be played by a disabled person. Sil was deemed to be a character that only a disabled actor could play. Shaban understands that biases were ultimately shaping the production cultures of that time:

> He [Nathan-Turner] wasn't seeing beyond, and you know, unless I could be playing a monster, which was carried about… he couldn't – I suspect he couldn't face the idea of someone who's obviously disabled playing a heroic part, and that's always been a problem with the BBC, or with mainstream film and television. (Shaban, 2020)

Shaban argues that it is not just the case with *Doctor Who* and Nathan-Turner, but such attitudes are systemic throughout the BBC and the broader media industry. Shaban accepts that the only way he could have been cast in *Doctor Who* is as a villain, as an alien, and as an impaired character. The following section will analyse the image of disability. It will show how Sil fits neatly into several stereotypes, but I will also produce a more nuanced analysis to understand the relationship between this representation and genre. It will demonstrate how the production cultures of the time affected Shaban's performance and, ultimately, how attitudes at the time limited Shaban.

In "Vengeance in Varos", the Doctor (Colin Baker) and Peri (Nicola Bryant) negotiate a broken-down TARDIS to the planet of Varos for repairs. They discover the barbaric planet executes politicians and tortures renegades live on air; the subsequent recordings are traded as a commodity. Sil is a money-driven villain concerned that the Doctor and Peri will reveal to the Governor the true price of the planet's other resource, Zeiton Ores. Sil plans to exploit the Governor and buy Zeiton Ore for a low price, whilst on Varos, Sil indulges in watching the popular torture videos.

Shaban believes in positive and negative representations of disability; he actively avoids "negative" representations and only takes "negative" portrayals if they are contrasted with a "positive" representation of disability (Shaban, 2020). Shaban's earlier letters to Nathan-Turner suggest that this is not fixed or that perhaps he has taken to the binary labelling of roles later in his career. Shaban admits to taking the role of Sil before his "anti-body fascism phase. Where I would be critical of an ugly, deformed, facial disfigurement representing evil" (BBC, 2012a). He is not discussing Sil here but Nicolas Chagrin character Quillam. Quillam has a scar covering his left eye and right cheek; the facial disfigurement was caused by Quillam's experimentations with the "transmogrifier", leaving him blind in one eye.

Interestingly the normalcy fallacy exists in production cultures with practitioners labelling roles as positive or negative. The research will show that Shaban is not the only disabled actor guilty of this. However, the labelling of roles is entirely subjective, varying from actor to actor. Darke argued that such labelling might reveal more about a "writer's social and attitudinal position than it does about disability" (Darke,1998, p,183) (see page 16); the same can be said for disabled actors.

Shaban positions Sil as neither negative or positive; instead, he argues that Sil is not a representation of disability:

> Sil is not disabled… I'm not going to be seen as me, a disabled person. I'm going to be seen as some kind of weird-looking creature from another planet, so I justified playing the part to myself that it wasn't necessarily a negative portrayal of a disabled person. (Shaban, 2020)


Figure 1. Sil (Nabil Shaban) in "Vengeance on Varos".

Sil's race are called the Mentors and can be described as a cross between a slug and a reptile. They sit upright with a leach-like slimy body, tail, and frills decorate their necks and wrists. The top of the head is adorned with a boney frill similar to that of the head of a triceratops. The prosthetic here, the horn, the tail, and the frills, work to hide or rather veil the actor's disability. As the characters size is distinguishable and the actor's restricted height was crucial for the character, the actor's disability is also identifiable, or rather unveiled.

It is useful here to consider, as Shakespeare did (1994), a feminist-inspired approach to consider how the prosthetics veils the disability. Jane Marie Todd (1986) considers veiling when building upon Freud's concept of the uncanny to consider representations of women. Freud describes the uncanny as an experience where "primitive beliefs which have been surmounted seem once more to be confirmed" (Freud, 1990, p.372). Todd critiques Freud's application of the uncanny to Hoffman's 1816 novel *The Sandman* and criticises Freud's analysis claiming:

> Throughout the [Freud's] essay, something is out of place or perhaps missing. The examples Freud chose seem to lead into one another; the same images and themes keep recurring; yet he continually focused on the other aspects. Two motifs, in particular, are regularly pushed aside by Freud: the central figure of woman in many of his examples and the related theme of seeing and being seen. (Todd, 1986, p. 521)

*The Sandman* tells of Nathanial's obsession with the Sandman. Nathaniel believes the Sandman "is a wicked man, who comes to children when they won't go to bed, and throws a handful of sand into their eyes, so that they start out bleeding from their heads" (Hoffman, 1896, p. 2). Nathaniel reasons that a family acquaintance, the lawyer Coppelius, is the Sandman. In his effort to find the true identity of the sandman, he falls in love with his professor Spalanzani's daughter, Olympia. Olympia is an automaton that Nathanial believes is human until she falls apart. Nathaniel takes his own life, and the story ends with his fiancee Clara having children sometime later.

Veiling and unveiling are closely linked to the castration complex, which causes uncanny feelings (Todd, 1986, p.522). Freud argued that the loss of the eye was a substitute for the castration of a man (Freud, 1990). Todd argues that Freud disregarded "the theme of the doll Olympia" and "failed to see that the question of woman is inextricably connected to Nathanael's fear of castration" (Todd, 1986, p. 523). Todd argues that "it is the loss of her eyes that makes Olympia a creature less than human" and that " Olympia's 'castration' signifies nothing other than this social oppression of women. She is denied life, power, and autonomy, all symbolized [sic] by the eye/penis" (Todd, 1986, p. 525). Todd reasons that the story examples how a man would rather blind and unveil a woman as uncanny/unfamiliar rather than "risk being castrated, to risk becoming woman" (Todd, 1986, p. 527).

Although the discussion concerns literature, the writers offer us a valuable tool for analysis. However, both have failed to identify the association between disablement and castration, that losing one's eyes symbolises becoming less than human. The castration complex can be substituted for the view that disabled people are “evidence of the constraining body; and their status as constant reminders of mortality” (Shakespeare, 1994, p.292). Revealing a disability serves as a reminder of a person's mortality or the indiscriminate nature of disability; anyone can become disabled. It is better to veil disability, as women were veiled, rather than risk castrating men or reminding a non-disabled person of their fragility.

Casting Shaban as an alien allows the producers to veil his disability with prosthetics; the character is not disabled and cannot remind the audiences at home of their mortality. Shaban continued to press Nathan-Turner after his casting to be considered for other roles. At lunch with the producer, Shaban suggested once again:

> Maybe someday, in the future, I get to play the Doctor, and I presented, you know, why it could be possible and so on, and he looked pretty horrified at the idea, and all he could suggest as to why it wasn’t going to be possible was they’d be too many problems with that. (Shaban, 2020)

Shaban continues to explain that the reason he could not be hired to play such a role was because of his appearance:

> Allegedly I seem to be quite a good actor, and I got a favourable response for Sil… he can’t claim that you know, my acting probably wouldn’t be up for it. So clearly, he’s got other issues regarding, you know, me, my kind of look, my kind of persona. (Shaban, 2020).

Shaban was othered (see page 21) by only being considered alien or rather dehumanising characters. Shaban fails to acknowledge the dehumanising aspects of the character and instead contextualises Sil as not disabled. In his mind, the role cannot be assessed as a disabled character. The programme-makers, to avoid unveiling the disability, recontextualise the actor's disability into the diegesis of the programme.

One could also argue that Sil is, in fact, a disabled character, counter to Shaban's argument. Sil's race, the Mentors, hail from Thoros-Beta; Sil's home planet comprises water, and he is a fish out of water on Varos. Being an aquatic creature, Sil depends on his guards to negate Varos. Sil's guard's primary objective is to defend Sil, at least within the diegesis of the programme. There is a more practical reason for their inclusion in that they support Shaban and allow him to negotiate the set, although such movements are limited. Sil sits upon a plinth-like tank; the tank is a glorified cabinet on wheels. Comprised of wood, it is clear that when the tank is pushed, it is unstable. Typically Sil stays seated on the tank with little to no tracking shots. The shots are mostly static, whilst there are dynamic movements for the non-disabled actors, and the camera tracks them. Shaban's shots are mostly static because of his inability to manoeuvre around the set. The guards do allow for some examples of movement, but this is rare, and it may be because the plinths lack the stability that Shaban was fixed for most of the programme. In the DVD outtakes, the guards lose the balance of the tank, causing it to tip, and Shaban is nearly thrown from the plinth.

Figure 2. Sil (Nabil Shaban) on top of his green tank.

The tank that Sil sits upon also raises the character to an equal height to the rest of the cast. The tank means that the shots do not look down on Shaban. Instead, he is shot at either level with his co-stars or above the camera, with the perspective that he is towering over the audience. The plinth aids the characterisation of Sil; without it, Shaban would be lower than

his co-stars and appear less intimidating. The height of the plinth adds to the character's menace and allows the director to shoot the character in a way that denotes superiority to the audience, placing power with Sil. Without the plinth, the framing may instead look down on Sil, shifting the balance of power to the audience and giving them superiority; instead, the plinth has been used to overcome accessibility issues, and the programme's narrative has been shaped around that. With Martin originally envisioning Sil was only carried initially (Barnfather, 2016), the guards and the tank were likely added after Shaban was cast to aid his mobility and ensured the framing represented the character's power.

The guards and the plinth add to Sil's characterisation; they reflect Sil's importance. Reminiscent of the film imagery of Egyptian or Roman slaves serving their master, Sil is pushed around Varos. However, in creating these additions to ensure Shaban's inclusion, the veil around Shaban's and Sil's disabilities begins to slip. Sil's disability is not medical but social. Sil cannot navigate Varos and depends on others or interventions, such as his wheelchair come tank, to support him. The inaccessibility Sil experiences are reflective of Shaban's disability and need for reasonable adjustments. Shaban's medical and social disablement causes Sil's social disablement. By Shaban being cast in the role, the character inherits his mobility issues.

The case could be made that the role is another example of the disabled person as evil stereotype, a role which relies on body differences to dehumanise and denote monstrosity. Sil indulges in watching the video nasties that Varos trades as a commodity; Sil does not exact the torture. A voyeur fetishism which is compulsive for Sil, he glorifies violence and seemingly receives sexual gratification from the material. When negotiating with the Governor over the price of the Zeiton Ore, Sil threatens to withdraw the contract completely unless the Governor accepts the new lower price. The Governor explains that the planet has had success in entertainment and communications, telling Sil that they sell tapes from "the punishment dome". The Governor in this is well-lit; the light shines from left to right, and his features are distinguishable. The lighting aluminates his grey uniform and military red sash on his right shoulder, but the background is entirely black.

Meanwhile, Sil is not as lit; because of the dark green costume and the black background, it is difficult to distinguish Sil. The decision to light Sil in this way creates some ambiguity for the audience; the inability to distinguish his features creates some unease, whilst the lighting of

the non-disabled character offers safety in its familiarity. Sil becomes a shadowy evil figure speaking from the dark, while the Governor is foreshadowed to be the hero in the light. The confession from the Governor about the planet's new venture excites Sil into laughter—the laugh cannot be described as a chuckle or a cackle; it is a skin-crawling roll of the tongue. Sil opens his mouth, gesticulates his tongue and laughs, "that is enterprising", he admits, wriggling in excitement and clenching his fist. As Sil wriggles, his tail lifts, a deliberate choice by Shaban to signify sexual arousal: "For example, whenever Peri came on a scene, I deliberately did this sort of cheeky sort of erect tail" (Barnfather, 2019). There is an intake of breath as he asks, "Are they really disturbing these videos you sell?". Sil is shot from a long shot for this exchange, showing his tail and a third of the tank. As Sil's excitement grows, the shot cuts to a close-up as he asks, "Torture, blindness, executions?" The close-up allows the audience to distinguish the character from the background and his features, his teeth glint as he smiles at the idea of torture. Cutting to a close-up of the Governor, he frowns and sternly states, "All the functions of the Punishment Dome are recorded as warnings to miscreants everywhere". Aware of the Governor's unease, Sil presses on, "Oh. But they entertain as well as instruct" his eyes widen with excitement. However, the Governor changes the conversation, uncomfortable with Sil's excitement.

Returning to the conversation of the Zeiton, Sil begins to shout, spitting in anger, demanding the Governer lowers the price, admitting that his "patience has been exhausted and spent totally", whilst rocking back and forth and throwing his hands in the air before clenching his fists again. Chief Office (Forbes Collins) enters beside the Governor to enquire how negotiations are progressing. Sil answers in a long shot, wide-eyed, gripping the base of his tank, "Stalemates! On contract, royalties, everything!". With that, he gestures to his guards from behind him, who are distinguishable in the long shot.

The Governor, aware that no deal with Sil would result in an election which could lead to his death, walks over to Sil and asks if there is any way they compromise. In this two shot, Sil is on the left with a guard standing between the Governer on the right. The left side of the screen is dark, and the right is well-lit. Sil, on his tank, is taller than the Governor, the set-up of this two-shot denotes that Sil is the villain, and the Governor is the hero. However, the height difference shows the dynamic between the characters, that Sil holds the power as he decides the cost of the Zeiton ore. As Sil and the Governor cannot compromise, there will be a vote of confidence in the Governor. Sil reminds the Governor that a vote of no confidence

will result in him being “obliterated”, laughing loudly. The scene ends with a close-up of the Governor as Sil’s laugh can still be heard.

The scene above introduces the audience to Sil and shows the character as a repulsive alien who gains sexual gratification from watching the torture of others. The Governor, a man who boasted about the success of the sale of the planet's violent videos, is repulsed by Sil. The camera emphasises Sil’s excitement about the video nasties, and Shaban’s performance works to create discomfort through his movement and unique laugh. The lighting denotes Sil’s villainy while creating ambiguity about his appearance. Shaban’s disability is not the focus but is an aesthetic that furthers the othering and monstrosity of the character, allowing the audience to distinguish him as evil and inhuman. Such a description is accurate but not a complete picture; it is a reductionist approach that fails to consider the intent and interpretations of those involved in creating the character.

The character has been revisited two times since his original appearance in “Vengeance on Varos”. “Mindwarp” from series twenty-three changed the characterisation of Sil because of a change in the programme's genre. Sil became a comedic device in “Mindwarp”; elements of the character once considered grotesque became comedic. The character was viewed by Martin and is viewed as Shaban as complex. In the third outing of the character in *Sil and the Devil Seeds of Arodor* (Barnfather, 2019), Sil is the story's protagonist. Sil’s final outing sees him facing a death sentence, his “devious, vile, underhanded, ruthless, and amoral business acumen to survive” (Barnfather, 2019). Due to licensing issues, the spin-off film is not an official part of *Doctor Who* canon. However, the spin-off starred Nabil Shaban as Sil and was written by Philip Martin. Their commitment to the role suggests they viewed the character as more complex than a disabled stereotype.

Shaban describes Sil as an “intergalactic Arthur Daley” (Shaban, 2020). Arthur Daley (George Cole) is a con man and a main character in the popular TV drama *Minder* (1979-1994, ITV). Arthur evades the law whilst trying to turn a quick profit, while his minder Terry McCann (Dennis Waterman), the muscle of the operation, reluctantly defends Arthur when necessary. There are undeniable similarities between Sil and Arthur Daley; both are money orientated and rely on others for protection. Shaban describes Sil as a “Thatcherite”, “driven by profit”, and as a “product of that era” (BBC, 2012c). Cooke’s analysis of *Minder* concludes that Arthur Daley; “was in many ways a working-class conservative and a

Thatcherite" and that such a character may not have existed at that time under a labour government (Cooke, 2015, p.161). Both characters were reactionary to the political climate and Thatcherism. Martin aimed to reflect the political climate in the UK at that time, "there was the miners' strike, Handsworth riots, the political situation between left and right" (Barnfather, 2016). Cooke labels the crime drama/situational comedy *Minder* as progressive because of its "sympathetic portrayal of his petty criminal activities" in a typically conservative genre (Cooke, 2015, p.161).

Although I would be reluctant to call Sil progressive, "Vengeance on Varos" explored themes ahead of their time. As Martin noted, the "constant drip, drip, drip of violence and sex, and what have you, what will it do to the viewer?" (Barnfarther, 2019). Violent and age-restricted material has become more accessible through online streaming. Martin explores the theme through Etta (Shelia Reid) and her husband, Arak (Stephen Yardley), who watch the episode unfold simultaneously with the audience. They comment on the events as they watch, similar to *Gogglebox* (2013-), a meta-programme where audiences watch others watch the television of the week. It is through Etta and Arak's commentary that we learn they also enjoy watching the violence and anticipate it, even will it, similarly to Sil. The story concludes with the Governor ending the filming and torture of Varos citizens, leaving Etta and Arak staring at the static on the television and asking, what now? Although Etta and Arak enjoy the violence on their television, they are, unlike Sil, redeemable. "Mindwarp" symbolises a change in the programme's genre, a shift away from progressive storylines, and a return to *Doctor Who's* traditional structure and themes. The generic shift alters Sil's characterisation; he becomes a redeemable but pitiable character with comedic undertones, similar to the characterisation of Authur Daley from *Minder*.

Series twenty-two was problematic and received complaints for its dark themes; Howe, Stammers, and Walker explain:

> Even the Doctor's actions did not entirely escape reproach [from viewers], attention being drawn to his shooting down of some Cybermen in Attack of the Cyberman, his engineering of the killing of Quillam and the Varosian Chief Officer with poisonous vines in Vengeance on Varos and his asphyxiation of Shockeye in the Two Doctors. (Howe, Stammers & Walker, 1996. p.80)

Then BBC One Controller Michael Grade and Producer Johnathan Powell announced the programme would not return in 1985 (BBC, 2012B). The cancellation was "to help alleviate a financial crisis within the BBC" (Howe, Stammers, and Walker, 1996. p.82). A backlash resulted in a U-turn; instead of a complete cancellation. After an eighteen-month hiatus, *Doctor Who* returned in 1968, but with more pressure on the production, producers sought to silence its critics by being less violent (BBC, 2008). The serial strand linking the episodes was "The Trial of a Timelord". "The Trial of the Timelord" placed the Doctor on trial for his crimes of interfering, which often resulted in the deaths of others. The concept was metaphorical, or as Martin said, "as the programme itself was on trial, they would reflect on that in the programme" (BBC, 2008).

The programme's writing was fraught with issues; the overarching storyline meant this series of *Doctor Who* was a collaborative effort, but the collaboration was not welcome by all. Martin explains he was uncomfortable with the jokes in "Mindwarp": "The jokes were not as elegant as I would have liked" (BBC, 2008). These jokes were the work of the script editor Saward; because of Saward's involvement, the tone of "Mindwarp" is very different to the "Vengeance of Varos" despite them sharing a similarly structured. Martin admits there is a "certain amount of Eric [Saward] in Mindwarp; 80% of it is me [Martin]" (Barnfather, 2016). Martin admits he "didn't know what the hell was going on, and nobody else did" (Barnfather, 2016). As Martin explains: Holmes, who had written the first block of stories, had passed away, the block of stories after "Mindwarp" "kept changing", and the writer of the final four episodes kept changing (Barnfather, 2016). Colin Baker's statements support this: "I think you [Martin] were the only constant from the original intention of the series" (BBC, 2008). Martin even warned Saward that his script would need a lot of editing because he did not know what "the strands" were (Barnfather, 2016). Martin did not spend the same amount of time writing "Mindwarp" as he did "Vengeance on Varos" Martin explains this meant the world he created for "Mindwarp" was not as "deep" as "Vengeance on Varos" (Barnfather, 2016).

"Mindwarp" is set on Sil's home world, Thoros-Beta. The Doctor is investigating the sale of advanced weaponry to underdeveloped civilisations by the Thorosians. The Mentor's leader Kiv (Christopher Ryan), is on the brink of death. A mutation causes Kiv's impending death; Kiv's mutation is superior intelligence, which has caused his brain to enlarge and compress against his skull. Kiv has hired a mad scientist, Crozier (Patrick Ryecart), to overcome his

chronic pain to transfer his consciousness into another body. The Doctor and Peri become embroiled in a game of cat and mouse, as their bodies could be perfect for the procedure. The story ends with Kiv's transferring his consciousness to Peri's body; the Timelords apprehend the Doctor for his trial, and in the process, he fails to save Peri, and consequently, she is killed. Martin explains that Sil is "one of nature's number twos" and that Sil is "very worried that he might have to take over… he loves being number two but should old Kiv not make it, he's more than worried" (BBC, 2008). Sil in "Vengeance on Varos" held a position of power, which is made clear through the narrative and the framing of the character. "Mindwarp" sees a shift in the power dynamic and a repositioning of Sil and Shaban to a supporting role; Sil is no longer the antagonist. Before considering the change in genre, character, and power dynamic, I must consider the distinction between Shaban's and Ryan's casting and the limitations placed on both of them by the costuming, referring to Shaban's experiences on "Vengeance on Varos" and comparing them to his experiences on "Mindwarp".

Despite being set in the Mentor's home world, Sil is still disabled by society, and so is Kiv. Sil and Kiv rely on their guards to move them around Thoros-Beta; Sil is carried in a chair this time, not pushed on a tank, even more like an Egyptian Pharaoh. Kiv is fireman lifted around the set; because Ryan is too heavy to carry around like Sil. Instead, the guards carry an empty Kiv costume. It is unlikely that the production could have been able to realise an underwater world, and the social disablement, like in "Vengeance on Varos", is a result of the limitation of the production. Whereas in "Vengeance on Varos", the social disablement of Sil was related to Shaban's disability, the same not can be said for "Mindwarp". Kiv is disabled by his surroundings. However, Ryan is not an actor of restricted height or with any known disability. Ryan, known for his work on *The Young Ones* (BBC, 1982 – 1984), is a famously short man, measuring around 5 feet tall. Ryan appeared in a sitcom after *Doctor Who* titled *A Small Problem* (BBC, 1987), in which the UK's class structures are based on height; Howard (Ryan) is short, so he is a second-class citizen. Ryan returns to *Doctor Who* in 2008 as a Sontaran, an alien race shorter than humans.

Kiv's immobility is not due to Ryan's size but because of the costume design. Ryan would have his torso covered in prosthetics and his legs hidden in a box; affixed to the top of the box was Kiv's tail. Shaban's costume differed in that his costume was a singular piece. Unlike Ryan, Shaban could place his legs into the tail, and because Shaban has partial mobility, he could move Sil's tail. Shaban likened his costume to "putting on a very large

rubber glove" (BBC, 2012). Shaban noted that audiences mistook him in "Vengeance on Varos" for a "normal actor" "standing up with a fake tail strapped to his waist" (Shaban, 2020), a technique the production undertook with Ryan. The costume limited both actors regardless of disability, and the costumes led to both characters being disabled by their environments in the diegesis of the programme. Between takes, the costuming was less restrictive for Ryan than for Shaban.

The costume in "Mindwarp" was considered an improvement on the first rendition of Sil's costume in "Vengeance on Varos". Sil's costume was originally a one-piece suit, despite the director Jones specifying the costume needed to be a two-piece suit which would allow Shaban the freedom to turn his head. Jones, the director, unhappy with the costume, took a "hacksaw" to its neck on the set and added frills to hide the joins. After separating the head from the body, they glued the prosthetic head to Shaban. The glue would unstick and run under the heat of the studio lights. Shaban claims he sweated "like a pig" because of the suit and the studio lights (Barnfather, 2019). The glue would run and cause the prosthetics to cover Shaban's face during takes; according to the DVD outtakes, the crew would have to reapply glue between scenes and retake scenes completely when the mask would slip and cover Shaban's face. To alleviate Shaban's discomfort and sweating, Jones took a knife to the costume and stabbed some "air holes" into the back of the suit (Barnfather, 2019). Another way Shaban attempted to keep cool was by having his friend on set fanning him as they filmed scenes (BBC, 2012B).

Ryan did not face such difficulties because he was not covered entirely in prosthetics. He remained mobile between takes and combated any heating issues quickly. Shaban could not remove the costume for "Vengeance on Varos", meaning "once the suit is on, I'm there until the end of the day". Filming lasted eleven hours; by the end of the day, Shaban "would be desperate for a loo" (Barnfather, 2019). Despite those difficulties, Shaban still considers himself lucky "because they didn't cover my face. Whereas normally, you know, the poor actor has got his face covered as well"; he examples other *Doctor Who* villains like the "Cybermen" or the "Ice Warriors" (Shaban, 2020). However, with Shaban and Ryan playing characters of the same race, we can compare the production cultures of non-disabled and disabled actors playing the same type of character.

Jones worked to make reasonable adjustments during the production to ease Shaban's discomfort and production. Instead, Shaban used his discomfort during "Vengeance on Varos" to inform his performance:

> Sometimes, you know, discomfort can be an aid with the performance because it can either make you angrier or more forceful as the character, you know, so for example, if I was getting pissed off with Martin Jarvis or Colin Baker, I could use the discomfort of the suit, or the desire to go to the loo and not being able to, use that as energy, you know, help the performance. (Shaban, 2020)

Shaban uses a method of acting technique to inform his performance and to endure his discomfort. Shaban's method of acting is an abstraction of Stanislavski's "system", a practice where the actor embodies the character. Stanislavski "found that if he thought what the character would think, the external form of the characterisation appeared" (Whyman, 2013, p.20). There are three principles which make up the "system" those are "action, emotion, and the subconscious", the action must be purposeful, emotion "means that the actor must create a real emotion onstage", and "the subconscious will produce material and engender experiencing" (Whyman, 2013, p.20). Shaban has continued to practice Stanislavski's "system". For example, in his stage play *I am the Walrus* (Shaban, 2001), Shaban "deliberately scratched" his chest with his nails, creating pain and drawing blood for the sake of "the performance" (Shaban, 2020). Shaban's experimentation with method acting later in his career is a purposeful choice. In *Doctor Who,* a lack of reasonable adjustments meant Shaban had no option but to undertake such a practice. It was also because of his disability that Shaban felt pressure to work through the production with little to no complaint to demonstrate to his colleagues that inclusion is not a "messy business", as Ross described it (1997. p.671):

> I did feel tremendous pressure on me due to my belief that I had a responsibility to other disabled actors… Most people in the business, certainly at that time, had never worked with a disabled person before, and they'd never worked with a person in a wheelchair, so they're going to have quite low expectations. That's always the thing that I found… they are worried about being patronising… We had a saying when we started Graeae. We didn't want people saying, "didn't they do well considering". So, I felt a tremendous responsibility to wave the flag and to present a good example of we

> are just as good as actors as anybody else, which meant I had to work hard. (Barnfather, 2019)

Shaban identified a feeling shared by other disabled actors, which the following chapter will explain. Shaban felt the need to prove to his colleagues that including disabled actors is not disruptive and that disabled actors are as skilled as non-disabled actors. Shaban believed, as do others, that asking for reasonable adjustments runs the risk of being labelled as difficult and unintentionally would create barriers for other disabled actors from entering the industry. Shaban saw the role as an opportunity to further his career and to educate others working to improve inclusion. The feeling of pressure Shaban experienced was not the creation of the production, nor his own making, but is caused by the lack of disability on the screen and demonstrates the scarcity of disability on the screen and how rare such an opportunity was.

"Vengeance on Varos" implies that the Mentor race are all the same size, but in "Mindwarp", Martin explores the Mentor's "mutations". Martin explains that Kiv's mutation is his intelligence, but other mutations have led some Mentors to become "like giant tadpoles" (BBC, 2008). The narrative Martin has created here presents a rationale for the different sizes between Sil and Kiv. One could argue that hiring Ryan as Kiv limited opportunities for other disabled people to be incorporated into the production. Hiring more actors of restricted height could have demonstrated a progression from the production, having learned about the ease of inclusion from working with Shaban. However, Shaban welcomed Ryan's casting and felt the hiring of a non-disabled actor supported his reading of Sil as a non-disabled character:

> I was relieved in a way… it made the point that the characters, or those types of beings, could be played by anybody and because even, you know, the character Kiv, that Chris [Ryan] was playing, is not described as being disabled he was in the same boat as me, in that he was having to exist in a non-water world, so I felt it kind of vindicated my feeling that it wasn't about disability. (Shaban, 2020)

Shaban acknowledges that some disablement does exist within the narrative because the characters are disabled by their environment, a constraint caused by the limitations of the production. The disability is not central to the narrative of "Vengeance on Varos", but arguably, it is in "Mindwarp". Kiv's mutation has become debilitating, with his brain compressing against his skull Kiv sufferers from chronic pain that causes painful headaches,

eventually leading to his death. Kiv, unable to cope with the pain, has hired Crozier for an experimental surgery to transfer his consciousness.

The narrative is an example where technology cures a disability; Elliott & Byrd argued that such depictions were positive representations. Schalk analysed such representation in American filmed and argued that such representations supported the idea that "the most valued disabled people are those who would do anything, including risk death, to be non-disabled" (Shalk, 2020, p.416). In "Mindwarp", Kiv has gone to unusual lengths in hiring a surgeon for experimental surgery, risking death to cure his disability/mutation. Shaban has overlooked these themes of disability, believing that because the characters are alien, the programme does not tackle such themes. This oversight may be because the telefantasy genre creates distance to explore socio-political issues, as De Yarza argues (See pages 26 & 27).

Kiv is disabled by his environment because of his issues with his mobility, but also by his impairment. However, his chronic pain is the individual model of disability, underpinning the personal tragedy treatment of disability. Kiv often screams in pain, holding his head, and talks about wanting the pain to stop. Such a depiction can be defined as 'the disabled person as pitiable and pathetic' (Barnes, 1992, p.7). Not only that, but Kiv's extreme attempts to cure his disability include kidnap, murder, and experimentation in order to transfer his consciousness into an unwilling party. The evil acts of Kiv are only undertaken because of his disability, so the narrative also underpins The Disabled Person as Sinister and Evil stereotype (Barnes, 1992).

Kiv's efforts to transfer his consciousness are eventually realised, and his consciousness is transferred into Peri's body. Upon waking up in Peri's body, Kiv compares his new body to his old body. Calling the transformation "wonderful", excitedly, he begins to note his: "legs. Toes. Toes wiggle. Strong neck, strong. Head free of pain. Colours. Warm blood inside. Oh, I like this". Kiv's identification of his body difference first notes his mobility. Kiv considers his body inferior to the conventional human form. "Mindwarp", therefore, does consider disability, in that the characters are disabled by their environment, but also reinforces the medical model of disability because of Kiv's headaches and because he views his body to be a loss "of physical… or anatomical structure or function" (WHO cited in Oliver & Barnes, 2012, pp.17); evident in his comparisons between his new body and old body.

Sil and Kiv are not the only Mentors to feature in this episode. Whilst lost exploring Thoros-beta, the Doctor and Peri catch a glimpse of two other Mentors and Sil. Walking in a procession, two guards enter the frame holding a stretcher with a Mentor. Two more guards push another Mentor on top of a tank similar to the tank in "Vengeance on Varos", and another two guards follow, carrying Sil in an extravagant chair. Sil laughs as the procession makes its way past the camera. The first two Mentors do not appear to be played by anyone. Both Mentors are completely still; their arms are placed on their laps, with no movement as they pass, apart from the rocking caused by being carried. The lighting is dark and moody, making it difficult to distinguish their features as they exit the screen. Sil is at the right height to catch the light and is clearly identifiable; the whites of his eyes are visible, and so are his teeth and tongue as he laughs. The lack of movement from the other Mentors suggests that the guards are carrying empty Mentor costumes, and the dark lighting works to obscure the empty costumes. The other Mentors sit higher than Sil in their chair and on their tank; this may represent a power shift but is more likely a production choice to avoid illuminating the costumes and exposing them to be empty.

The programme introduces Kiv in a dimly lit meeting with Sil. The pair sit across one another on a metal bed frame decorated with green foliage. A green crystal centred in the foreground splits the screen. Sil is left with two guards cross-armed behind him, whilst Kiv sits on the right. As the synth music fades between the scene transition, Sil is heard gesticulating his tongue and slurping his food. It becomes clear that Sil is not just disgusting to Varosians but also considered repulsive to other Mentors. Kiv asks, "Must you bring your lunch in here?". Sil continues eating, admitting to not wanting to waste a moment of Kiv's time on generating profit. The camera tightens on a medium close-up as Sil updates Kiv on the status of Cozier's experiments. Sil continues to eat Marsh Minnows, a green jelly-like substance from a petri dish, and when questioned, he talks with his mouthful, sniffing, snorting, and laughing as he devours his food. Kiv taps and talks into his computer working, annunciates and remains business focused.

The scene introduces Kiv and establishes the relationship between Kiv and Sil. Sil is grotesque, second in charge, and reluctant to hold any power; he serves Kiv as he pays for Sil's lifestyle. The power dynamic between the two is evident when Kiv finishes making a deal. Kiv switches off his computer and tells Sil the deal should "keep you in marsh minnows for a while". Sil rolls his tongue between gulps of food and replies, "How lovely,

magnificent". Although the medium close-up shot for both characters is level, Sil looks up to talk to Kiv, and Kiv looks down at Sil; the shots reflect their power dynamic.

In another scene, Cozier enters the meeting to explain that one of the test subjects, who may have been a candidate for Kiv's procedure, has been murdered. As Cozier enters, the camera tracks from a medium close-up of Sil to a medium-full shot. Cozier stands on the left side of the screen, with three guards standing behind Cozier and Sil. Sil leans on his left side and twists his neck upwards to his right to speak to Cozier. The camera tracks Cozier as he moves past Sil and towards Kiv. Instead of standing over Kiv as he did with Sil, Cozier sits on the edge of the bed beside Kiv. Although Kiv is doubled over in pain from his head as he talks to Cozier, the camera levels the two characters, one is not given prominence over another. In "Vengeance on Varos", Sil was placed on a tank that gave him height and reflected his power within the narrative. In "Mindwarp", Kiv holds power and is framed accordingly. Although described as number two, Sil is not framed with the same consideration.

In hiring Ryan, the production worked to hide his height through costuming; with Kiv being the character who holds the power, Sil has lost the use of his tank, which gave him the height that made his character equal or greater in height. Sil now looks up to every character, regardless of the power dynamic. Sil has become powerless because of the accommodations for Ryan, and all other actors now stand over Shaban, unlike in "Vengeance on Varos". Sil's loss of power is not the only change in his characterisation; previously, he was a darker villain who loved to watch others in pain. Although some of those elements continue, Sil is utilised as a comedic device. The comedy derives from the notion of the grotesque. In "Vengeance on Varos", the notion of the grotesque creates discomfort and unease; in "Mindwarp", the notion of the grotesque is used for comedic purposes.

One example of the change in characterisation is the scene where the Doctor and Sil have bonded over a business opportunity to celebrate Sil offers the Doctor some of his Marsh minnows, a type of greenish food, from a petri dish. The following scene occurs after Kiv has transferred his consciousness into a new temporary body; he is yet to awake from the procedure. The Doctor smiles, takes a handful of the jelly, and drops it into his mouth. The Doctor licks his fingers whilst Sil slurps his food; the noise of Sil's eating draws the Doctors attention. The Doctor's smile drops into a scowl, there is a cut to a high-angle medium close-up of Sil as he stuffs food into his mouth. Enjoying his marsh minnows, Sil grins with glee up

at the Doctor as he mashes the food in his mouth. After swallowing and clearing his throat, Sil refers to the business deal " The Lord Kiv will be most pleased with me for my great foresight". Slurping another handful of marsh minnows, he continues: "I must ensure that I am the first face familiar face he sees with his new eyes". The Doctor widens his eyes and avoids looking at Sil; sarcastically, the Doctor replies, "Well, that should be comforting for him", before dismissing himself, clearly disgusted.

In "Vengeance on Varos", Sil is disgusting because of the gratification he gains in watching the torture of others; in "Mindwarp", Sil is repulsive because of his lack of manners. The character has become less sinister, and the notion of the grotesque now elicits a laugh from the audience rather than a shared repulsion. The scene above foreshadows another joke where Sil is the first face Kiv sees post-operatively. The jokes payoff comes two scenes later when Kiv begins to wake up in his new orange Mentor body. Kiv blinks into consciousness, there is a cut to an out of focus-point of view shot. Kiv blinks again, and his eyes focus on the green blob. Now in focus, the viewer, and Kiv, are confronted with an extreme close-up of Sil, who wiggles eagerly. Sil exclaims, "My lord", and smiles, his teeth covered in marsh minnows. Kiv screams and he asks, "Have I died and gone to the great Plague Halls of Mogdana?" Sil, startled, answers, "My Lord, it's me, Sil", and Kiv pouts his bottom lip. Kiv, revolted by Sil, questions whether he has died and gone to hell. Sil is excluded from the joke, unaware he is grotesque to the other characters; Sil's change in characterisation results from the reactionary writing to the criticism of the previous series. The series sought to be lighter, so Sil became a character to laugh at rather than fear.

Sil is a complex case study. Shaban considered it to be a role that did not hinge on disability, but Shaban's disability was crucial to his casting. The disability of the actor began to bleed into the production; with Shaban's mobility issues, Sil inherited those same issues and became a character disabled by his environment. The programme inadvertently represented disability, despite attempts from producers to keep Shaban's disability veiled. Despite Shaban arguing that Ryan's casting proved that disability was unrelated to the role, Kiv is also a disabled character. Kiv is disabled by his environment and by his medical condition. The narrative of "Mindwarp" revolves around Kiv trying to cure his disability and again fits under Barnes's definition of a negative stereotype. The production relies on the disability of an actor to dehumanise and denote monstrosity. The reprisal of Sil in "Mindwarp" was a

deviation from the original character. Pressured by the controversy of the previous series, the producers edited the tone of the series and sought to return to the family-orientated roots of the programme. The fluidity of the genre saw Sil move from a villain of prominence and power to a comedic device, thus demonstrating the relationship between genre and representations of disability.

I am not arguing that Sil is a negative stereotype as either a comedic device or villain, but demonstrating how the representation could be interpreted. The analysis considers the inadvertent representation of disability. Those involved in the production argue that Sil is not a disabled character but an essential character within the narrative, removed from disability. Sil was intended as an alien who happened to be small. Ryan's hiring as Kiv, a non-disabled actor portraying an alien of the same race, demonstrated to Shaban that disability was not crucial to his casting or the narrative. This section has produced multiple readings of the programme by considering the opinions of those involved with the production.

The production was gruelling for Shaban, who had no reasonable adjustments. Shaban's size allowed the costume department to produce a prosthetic that allowed Shaban to use his legs and move the character's tail. However, the costume was restrictive, uncomfortable, and hot for Shaban. Shaban was unable to remove his original costume, and he could not go to the toilet or regulate his temperature. Shaban used his discomfort to inform his performance and practised method acting. Method acting was not as much Shaban's choice but a decision he was forced to undertake to endure the discomfort of the costume. Shaban also opted to undertake method acting to avoid being seen as challenging. Feeling immeasurable pressure on him, Shaban viewed the role as a rare opportunity to educate how easy and undisruptive inclusion of disability could be. However, the role offered a degree of liberation, as it was not written as disabled. Shaban saw his casting as an opportunity to improve inclusion by breaking barriers for disabled people new to the industry.

Shaban was under pressure as he felt he was representing the disabled community. There is no way to measure whether Shaban successfully educated his colleagues on the ease of inclusion. Although there were not any other disabled actors hired in the following series, despite the opportunity to do so with the introduction of other Mentors, the production welcomed Shaban back. It may be that the difficulty the production faced in finding a disabled actor to play Sil continued in the pre-production of "Mindwarp". Nathan-Turner and

Jones struggled to find disabled actors with enough experience to play Sil and had to use unusual means to source and audition Shaban. Shaban had a unique position, having his own disabled-led theatre company, to practice his art and develop his skills. Other disabled actors had limited opportunities and faced barriers in the industry, demonstrating the need for support at the point of access.

Shaban faced barriers throughout his time on *Doctor Who*; he clearly desired to play a heroic and human character. Alleged biases Nathan-Turner held meant that the conversations between the pair never led to any meaningful resolution. Shaban felt recognised as an actor of a good standard but felt that the aesthetic of disability limited his involvement in the programme because of the producers' beliefs. Shaban was typecast as an alien, with it being less than likely that he would appear in the programme as anything other than an alien. In the subsequent case study, Jimmy Vee similarly desired to play a human character but is again restricted and becomes typecast as an actor who can only play an alien.

### 4.2 Jimmy Vee as Various Characters

*Doctor Who* struggled to recover from the imposed eighteen-month hiatus in 1985, leading to its cancellation in 1990. It was not until 2005 that the Doctor returned to our screens, this time in the shape of Christopher Eccleston. Showrunner Russell T Davies, known for programmes such as Q*ueer as Folk* (Channel 4, 1999-2000) and *Casanova* (BBC Three, 2005), had been lobbying for the programme to return, so when Jane Tranter, the controller of drama commissioning, and Julie Gardner, the head of BBC drama Wales, asked Davies to head the show. *Doctor Who's* reboot was a reinvention of the series format and another shift in the programme's genre with episodic storylines, an overarching secondary serialised plot, and a running time of forty-four minutes, the series structure is more in line with series 22, but the programme continues to target a family-orientated demographic.

The disabled actor Jimmy Vee, who is of restricted height, has played several characters in the new *Doctor Who* series. Unlike Shaban, Vee played various characters, including the Moxx of Balhoon, Alien Pig, Bannakaffalatta, and Skovox Blitzer; he has also appeared at the BBC Proms in character, in a *Doctor Who* video game and in the *Doctor Who* spin-off *The Sarah Jane Adventures*. The characters are rarely villainous and are a change from the representations present in the classic series of *Doctor Who*. However, like Shaban, Vee was

restricted to only playing alien characters. Similarly to Shaban, the production uses prosthetics to transform Vee into these alien characters.

As with the classic *Doctor Who*, the new *Doctor Who* uses a combination of non-disabled and disabled actors to create aliens. For example, Jamie Hill played an alien called Silence because of his tall height. Hill went on to play other tall creatures such as the Foretold, a Monk (an alien race), a Cybermen, and an Ice Warrior. Hill was not an actor but a fan of the programme who was approached by a producer in the street for the role, cast simply because of his height. Vee describes himself as an actor, but his function is similar to Hill's to further the aesthetic of the alien's appearance because of Vee's body difference. Vee, like Shaban, would like to appear as a human character but has also been typecast; according to Andy Pryor, *Doctor Who's* casting director, Vee's specialism has seen him regularly return in such roles because of the programme's dependency on his experience in prosthetics.

The following section will explore Vee's lived experience whilst working on *Doctor Who*, again considering how production cultures have shaped his inclusion and their relationship with the representation of disability. The work will also consider the programme's genre and its relationship to the representations of disability by drawing comparisons with Shaban's experiences on *Doctor Who. The* research will demonstrate the changes in production cultures and changes in representations, noting that Vee is cast regularly in roles which are not villainous or evil.

Vee's acting career began after seeing an advertisement in a newspaper for an audition. While waiting for his audition, he was mistaken for Warwick Davis, the star of the film *Willow* (Lucas, 1988) (Vee, 2020). From there, he was offered the role of Davis' stunt double for the film. Vee had no acting training; he entered the industry through the effects department (Vee, 2020), and his casting here led to further employment. Millennium FX was a commercial effects company (FX) which worked on *Doctor Who's* FX. In a Toyota advertisement, Vee was required to dress as a "baby dinosaur", the costume made by Millennium FX. The company passed Vee's details onto the *Doctor Who* team (Vee, 2020), which led to his first casting as the Alien Pig in 2005s "Aliens of London". Vee puts his casting in *Doctor Who* down to luck, stating it is "lucky that I knew the prosthetic guys and they gave me the role there, and it just kept going, it was role after role after role" (Vee, 2020).

Unusually, instead of negotiating with an agent and auditioning, Vee's hiring is rather casual and can be likened to hiring a tradesperson who finds employment through word of mouth. Shaban's casting as Sil was unusual in the means used by producers to source disabled talent, but there was still an audition process. Unlike Shaban's casting, the producers were not as concerned with Vee's acting ability; instead, Vee was the right size for the role. Vee confirms his size was a crucial factor in his employment: "It's the size they wanted to watch on that one, playing the creatures, because they just wanted somebody that was agile enough to move in the costumes and be able to do it" (Vee, 2020). *Doctor Who's* casting director Andy Pryor also confirms in this case, size was more crucial than acting:

> I think it was the size and his experience at the time and, you know, a lot of prosthetics involved, and you know there was, you know, some actors that were able-bodied and disabled that have done a particular kind of work, be that work be a particular kind of movement work or prosthetics work, that had a bit of experience in that aren't going to be a fish out of water in that environment, and so you know you call it a specialist skill, it's the specialist skill that he had that was right for that at the time. And he went on to play other characters in the Doctor Who canon. (Pryor, 2020)

Vee's size and prosthetic experience led to his eventual casting; again, Vee's casting contrasts Shaban's. Shaban was hired on his acting ability, then placed in prosthetics, a "special skill" with which Shaban had no previous experience. Vee's prosthetic experience meant he did not experience the difficulties that Shaban had endured. Vee states he was able to detach from the prosthetics, "the weight might be a bit difficult sometimes, but its still, you get used to it. Once you're in it a couple of hours, it just goes straight out of your head" (Vee, 2020). Vee is used to the challenges associated with prosthetic work, the heavyweight, a lack of mobility, impaired vision, and overheating, but the costume process has also progressed, and the FX department worked closely with Vee to ensure practicality and comfortability:

> We get full body cast, head cast made in the suit, and then you put the suit on once it's ready to try out. If it needs adjustment, then the guys will… cut it again and then shorten it. They get it as comfy as possible. (Vee, 2020)

Millennium FX worked with Vee to ensure his costumes were well-fitted and comfortable. Shaban had had a costume fitting, but the department rushed the fitting due to issues with his paperwork (BBC, 2012c). The development in the process and technology meant Vee was not under the same strain as Shaban; making the costumes comfortable allowed Vee to concentrate on his acting, an area in which, unlike Shaban, Vee lacked experience.

Vee's first broadcast appearance was as The Moxx of Balhoon in “The End of the World” (2005). “The End of the World” was the second episode of the series and is a continuation of the last episode. In the episode, Rose (Bille Piper) accepts the Doctor’s offer to travel through space and time. The Doctor takes Rose to a space station where the wealthiest aliens of the galaxy have gathered to watch the Sun supernova and destroy the Earth. Rose and the audience are still new to the Doctor’s world, and the episode works to introduce Rose and the audience to the aliens which occupy the *Doctor Who* universe. The Moxx of Balhoon is a little but mean-faced blue alien with a large round head, two small holes for a nose, sharp cheekbones and sharper teeth; he sits naked on a hoverchair. The series producer Phil Collinson likened The Moxx of Balhoon to a small dog (BBC, 2005a). Collinson may have taken this description from the episode’s script, in which Davies writes, “Like Spit the Dog, the Moxx spits, hoik – tuh!” (Davies, 2005, p.57). The Moxx of Balhoon greats Rose and the Doctor by spitting at them when he meets them on the platform.

When designing The Moxx of Balhoon’s appearance, they begin with his voice (BBC, 2005a). The alien's voice is high-pitched, especially compared to Vee’s low-pitched thick Glaswegian accent. The production opted to dub Vee’s lines with Silas Carson’s voice to achieve the high-pitched voice of The Moxx of Balhoon. A process similar to previous aliens and monsters, such as the Daleks and the Cybermen. By not using Vee’s voice, there is less demand for Vee’s acting ability, and his employment is purely to aid the character's aesthetics. Therefore, Vee’s role here resembles a puppeteer or monster operator. Vee aided the character's aesthetic and operated the hoverchair The Moxx of Balhoon sits upon. Like Ryan’s costuming in “Mindwarp”, the prosthetics only covered Vee’s torso. The chair covered Vee’s legs, and Vee walked as usual to move the chair. The production designed the hoverchair to be low off the ground, so it would hide Vee’s feet and create the illusion it was floating (BBC, 2005a). Despite its simplicity, the chair remained challenging to operate. *Doctor Who Confidential* (BBC, 2005a) shows an outtake where Vee, unable to control the

chair, bounces into the set's wall. To help Vee steer the hoverchair, a production team member sat behind the camera and helped Vee steer with a piece of string.

The coverage of The Moxx of Balhoon in *Doctor Who Confidential* focuses on the technical aspects and the aesthetics of the character and less on the characterisation, demonstrating the productions distinguished the role as a puppet/monster operator. The production focused on the prosthetics and practical effects and less so on the acting ability of Vee for the creation of The Moxx of Balhoon. It is clear then that Vee's disability was critical in his casting because his body difference allowed them to create and operate the hoverchair. There is a clear distinction between Vee and Shaban; Shaban was foremost an actor, and the production hired Vee because of his specialist skill.

The hoverchair allowed The Moxx of Balhoon to move independently without the assistance of guards. In the previous section, I demonstrated how Shaban's disability informed the character and led to Sil's social disablement, but The Moxx of Balhoon veils Vee's disability. It is unclear whether The Moxx of Balhoon uses his hoverchair because of a disability or because it symbolises his wealth. With his mobility and independence, it is difficult to define the character as disabled. The Moxx of Balhoon successfully separates impairment for the character and the actor, as was the intention with Sil. However, The Moxx of Balhoon achieves what Sil could not because of the inaccessibility of the "Vengeance on Varos" and "Mindwarp" sets for both the actor and the character.

The Moxx of Balhoon has little involvement in the episode's plot; the aliens serve as a plot device; they make Rose realise the gravity of her decision to travel with the Doctor. Cassandra (Zoë Wanamaker) describes herself as the last pure human being. Having undergone countless surgeries, she no longer resembles a human but is a piece of stretched skin with her brain in a jar beside her. Two guards in hazmat suits push her around the space station; Cassandra depends on her guards for mobility and to "moisturise her". Cassandra is more like Sil than The Moxx of Balhoon is. Her surgeries have rendered her immobile, and she is also disabled to an extent socially because of the inaccessibility of the space station. She also demands the guards "moisturise her" with spray cans; otherwise, she will dry out and die, again like Sil. In Sil's final scene of "Vengeance on Varos", he spits and screams angrily, forced to accept a low price for the Zieton-7 ore. His guards spay him with water, and the Doctor quips, "I think he needs more than water, Peri, eh?". Although The Moxx of

Balhoon veils disability, the similarities Cassandra shares with Sil, distinguishes her as a disabled character.

Cassandra is in the centre of the shot, with her guards at either side. On the right side of the screen stands Rose beside two aliens in red robes. On the left side of the screen, The Moxx of Balhoon's head is in the foreground; in the background, a blue alien stands beside another cloaked alien, and a small blue alien in a helmet is next to them. Two small aliens in helmets push a jukebox into the centre of the room. Child actors play these smaller aliens, not actors of restricted height (BBC, 2005a). Cassandra calls the jukebox an "iPod" and commands the smaller blue aliens to "play on", and with a push of a button, the song *Tainted Love* (Soft cell, 1981) plays. The shot cuts to the Doctor, who bobs his head in time with the music, unphased by the other aliens and the death of the Earth, the light of which shines in from a window on the right of the camera, illuminating the left side of the Doctors face, serving to remind the audience of the destruction of Earth is on going behind him.

The camera contrasts the Doctor's ease with Rose, who is anxious and overwhelmed. The camera slowly tracks towards Rose as she looks around the room; the camera shakes, reflecting Rose's unease, cutting to a point-of-view shot, the camera whips from right to left, showing groups of aliens across from Rose as the line "sometimes I feel I've got to, run away" plays from the juke-box. The song choice allows an insight into Rose's thoughts, overwhelmed she wants to run away from the situation. Cutting back to a medium shot of Rose, she shuffles away from the two aliens who stand directly behind her, clearly uncomfortable being near them. There is a cut back to Rose's point of view and focuses on The Moxx of Balhoon, who is making his way from the left of the camera to the right. The camera drops down to simulate Rose looking down at him. The camera returns to the shaky tracking shot of Rose, now at a close-up, her eyes dart from left to right, and she bites at her lip. Continuing to scan the room, Rose quickly exits the room via the left side of the screen. The Doctor notices she is leaving, his smile drops, and he follows her.

The Moxx of Balhoon is another alien in the crowd aiming to incite Rose's inner conflict. Once having helped provoke this internal conflict, The Moxx of Balhoon is killed nearer the end of the episode. The Doctor discovers Cassandra is responsible for the robot spiders which have been murdering the space station's guests. Cassandra has also dropped the space station's shields and teleported off the ship, trapping the other guest in the supernova. As the

Doctor attempts to repair the shields, The Moxx of Balhoon is exposed to the heat of the collapsing star. The final shot of The Moxx of Balhoon is a high-angle medium shot, and the lighting is over-exposed due to the sun's light. The action cuts back to the Doctor repairing the shields. Once he has fixed the shields, there is a cut to a long shot of the space station viewing platform. In the foreground, aliens huddle around The Moxx of Balhoon's empty smoking chair.

The aesthetics of The Moxx of Balhoon were crucial to Vee's casting. The character is a plot device to incite conflict, and once it had performed its role, the character was killed. Christopher Eccleston explains his belief that the alien characters in *Doctor Who* are not included only for aesthetic reasons but are dimensional characters because they build a relationship with the Doctor and Rose:

> With aliens in Doctor Who, there's a danger of relying on them visually. They just think if we just roll them in with three heads, yeah, that's enough, it isn't. They all have a relationship with the Doctor and with Rose, and they're opportunities for great actors to come in and do great things for the series. (BBC, 2005a)

The programme intends to create dimensional characters, but The Moxx of Balhoon is an example of a character whose aesthetics is put before narrative and characterisation. The purpose of The Moxx of Balhoon is to incite inner conflict within Rose and deepen the programme's lore with the audience, adding depth to the programme by demonstrating the variety of aliens in the programme. The focus on aesthetics means the role was not an acting opportunity for Vee but an opportunity to develop his specialist skill of working with prosthetics. Vee could be categorised in this role as a puppeteer or a monster operator, as he had limited opportunity to act, especially with another actor dubbing the character.

Vee's second broadcast role was as the Alien Pig, but it was the first he had shot (Vee, 2020). The Alien Pig appeared in "Aliens of London". In this episode, a spaceship crashes into the Houses of Parliament, confirming the existence of aliens. Alien Pig is a small creature with the head of a pig, wearing a space suit and is a diversion made by the real aliens, the Slytheen, to distract the government as they infiltrate number 10. The alien pig only features in one scene; after sneaking into Albion Hospital to investigate the body found in the wreckage, the Doctor accidentally stumbles into a room of army officers, they hold their guns

to him, but upon hearing the screams of a lab technician the Doctor charges through them and leads them to find the source of the screaming.

The Doctor tends to the lab technician, who he finds on the floor with a cut on her forehead. He asks her to describe the alien but hears a rattle in the room and realises the creature is nearby. The scene is dimly lit with blues, and a coroner's table is centred in the shot. The light shines from the top right of the camera, and shadows of the coroner's tools stretch across the floor. The scene's tone is sinister as the Doctor searches the room; the music is constantly ringing, adding to the scene's tension. The Doctor drops to his knees and crawls around the room cautiously, and he peaks around a desk; at the other end of the table, the face of a pig appears, and it grunts. The tension is broken momentarily as the Doctor, with a smile, kindly says, “Hello”. The pig, frightened, makes its way down the hall grunting as it runs. The Doctor yells, telling a soldier not to shoot as he gains chase. The Alien Pig runs through a doorway and is confronted by a soldier who has not heard the Doctor's orders; the soldier aims and fires a single shot killing the Alien Pig. The Doctor turns the corner, shaking his head as he walks. Cutting to a close-up to show the anger on his face as the Doctor shouts, “What did you do that for? It was scared”. The Doctor drops to his knees, and as the camera tracks in, he repeats, “It was scared!”. There is a cut to a high-angle close-up, as though the view is seen from the Doctor's point of view. The Alien Pig lets out another soft grunt as it dies. There is another cut to a long shot showing the Doctor on his knees with the soldiers behind him, standing over him and the dead Alien Pig. The lighting remains dim because of this. The audience never gets a clear look at the creature, and a sense of ambiguity remains over the character's appearance.

Again, Vee’s character is a plot device that furthers the other characters' characterisation. The Alien Pig’s death aided the Doctor's characterisation. The audience learns the Doctor is compassionate for all living things. As Eccleston explains, the Doctor is “fond of the human race, but equally, if the human race behave unpleasantly towards an alien, he takes it very personally, obviously” (BBC, 2005b). The scene develops the Doctor’s characterisation but is again relying on Vee’s disability to aid the characters aesthetic, with the outcome being once again the death of the character. Vee’s experience with prosthetics has resulted in a reliance on his body difference from the programme-makers and limited Vee’s opportunity to practice his craft of acting. The following role was a more substantial opportunity for Shaban, but similar trends occur, and the lines between actor and puppeteer begin to blur.

“Voyage of the Damned” (2007) sees the Doctor (David Tennant) on a spaceship replica of the Titanic, which after being struck by a comet is crashing towards Earth; this is no accident the Titanic’s owner Max Capricorn (George Costigan) has instrumented the disaster. The Doctor has no companion and instead befriends a group of people, and together, they work through the wreckage to get to safety. Vee plays Bannakaffalatta, an alien cyborg whom the Doctor helps. When the Doctor arrives on the spaceship Titanic, he and the audience are made to believe it is the ship of the same name that sunk in the Atlantic Ocean. The costumes and the décor are that of 1912, but the Doctor and the audience are confused when Bannakaffalatta walks through the foyer. Seeing the red alien with spikes on his face, the Doctor investigates the window, and it is revealed to the audience this is a spaceship also called Titanic. Davies describes this episode as a shift in the programme's genre, defining it as a disaster movie. The change in the programme’s genre has a bearing on the representation of disability, particularly Bannakaffalatta’s ending. I will go on to consider the relationship between genre and the representations of disability. I will also discuss Vee’s desire to play a human character but demonstrate that production cultures still typecast people of restricted height.

Figure 3. Bannakaffalatta (Jimmy Vee) as featured in the promotional photography.

Bannakaffalatta misdirects the audience and the Doctor for a second time when he, the Doctor, and some other passengers teleport to Earth for a shopping trip. Being Christmas

Eve, the Doctor panics at Bannakaffalatta walking the streets of London. The Doctor argues, “But it's Christmas Eve down there, late night shopping, tons of people. He’s like a talking conker, no offence, but you’ll cause a riot because the streets are going to be packed with shoppers”. To the Doctor's and the audience's surprise, the streets are empty; the humans have decided to take shelter in case of another Christmas alien attack. Bannakaffalatta misdirects the Doctor and the audience to add an air of mystery to the narrative.

Bannakaffalatta also foreshadows the programme’s ending, as Bannakaffalatta is a cyborg, and on his home world of Sto, droids are persecuted. Bannakaffalatta confides in waitress Astrid waitress Astrid (Kylie Minogue). Astrid is aware of the prosecution of androids, and she tells Bannakaffalatta to remain optimistic that androids are getting “equal rights now” and that they can even “get married”. The episode's villain Max Capricorn is revealed to be a cyborg; his plan to crash the Titanic is revenge for being kicked out of his own company for being outed as a cyborg. Without Bannakaffalatta, the reveal that Capricorn was a persecuted cyborg would have confused the audience; Bannakaffalatta is crucial for an effective payoff.

As Davies is a gay writer who often explores gay rights, the episode may have been a metaphor for homophobia. Still, analysis demonstrates that this episode explores disability and ableism. Both Capricorn and Bannakaffalatta have had an accident or illness that has resulted in the need for medical intervention. Body parts have been replaced with machines to secure a better quality of life. Bannakaffalatta is “ashamed” of his impairment and has kept it hidden through fear of persecution. The medical and social models of disability are present in Bannakaffalatta’s narrative; the disability is individualised with Bannakaffalatta being ashamed of his disability; he views it as his responsibility. By being ostracised by Sto, he is also disabled by the social model. Bannakaffalatta keeps his impairment hidden to avoid stigma, only revealing his disability to Astrid when he has injured himself. Capricorn has also hidden away to avoid stigma. Capricorn’s entire body has been replaced with a steampunk-esque life support machine, and his head sits in a perspex box on top of his robot body. Capricorn to ostracised, but by his colleagues, this has led him to become the evil avenger. The disability has become inexplicably tied to the character's evilness.

Bannakaffalatta is the pitiable disabled person and his “Own Worst and Only Enemy” (Barnes, 1992) stereotype who rises to the challenge to prove his self-worth. The Doctor and his group of survivors reach an impasse, a chasm with a rickety girder acting as a bridge over

the gap. The Doctor looks over the chasm, and the camera tracks into a close-up as steam blows in the foreground. There is a cut and the camera tracks out under the girder to show the magnitude of the gap. The group evaluate the steadiness of the beam, the floor gives under the weight of Morvin Van Hoff (Clive Rowe), and he falls to his death. The group begin to panic amongst themselves as the gravity of their situation sinks in, and they start to argue among themselves; as the episodes, villains, the ship's hosts, robots dressed like angels gain chase, working for Capricorn to ensure no survivors. Although it must be noted Bannakaffalatta has little to no lines until the Doctor orders Bannakaffalatta to cross the column, Bannakaffalatta nods, declaring, "Bannakaffalatta small" as he steps onto the temporary bridge. Bannakaffalatta begins to make his way across the gap, but the camera focuses on the Doctor as he orders the others to start heading over to the other side.

There is a cut to a long shot of the three survivors crossing the bridge. Moving to a medium shot, Bannakaffalatta can be seen holding Astrid's hand; both are unsteady on their feet. The scene has an orange glow from the fire at the bottom of the chasm. The camera shakes with the ship and adds to the tension. In a high-angle media close-up, Bannakaffalatta panics, "Too many people!". The Doctor orders him to "keep going", and Bannakaffalatta grunts as he moves along. The group fall as the ship rattles, and the camera shows close-ups of the girder as the weight of the survivors weighs it down. The banging from the angles attempting to break down the steel doors has stopped. The Doctor wonders where they have gone for the knocking to stop. Mr Copper (Clive Swift) points to the angels above, using their wings to hover above the chasm. The angels use their halos as weapons, throwing them at the survivors on the bridge. The survivors use metal bars to bat away the discs but get hurt in the process. Seeing the others injured, Bannakafalatta throws his bat to the ground, declaring, "Bannakaffalatta stop!" in a close-up, he looks down at Asrid and states, "Bannakaffalatta proud!". Bannakaffalatta looks up to the angels, grabs his tuxedo shirt, and tears it open, shouting, "Bannakaffalatta … Cyborg!". Cutting to a medium shot, a blue ball of light emits from Bannakaffalatta's chest immobilising the angels.

The angels fall from the sky, and the camera tracks from right to left as Bannakaffalatta falls to his knees; a beeping noise emits from his chest. Astrid tends to him, and he asks, "did good?". Astrid tells him he saved their lives, and he responds, "Bannakaffalatta happy". Astrid is desperate to save his life, but he admits it is too late; she reminds him he still owes her a drink. Bannakaffalatta calls her a "pretty girl" as he closes his eyes, dying in Astrid

arms. Bannakaffalatta is the third character of Vee's to be killed by the end of the episode. Vee continues to play a character who is a device to advise the plot or aid characterisation. However, it is essential to note that "Voyage of the Damned" was described as a disaster movie, and only two of the six survivors live until the episode's end. The contrast between Shaban and Vee is clear. Shaban plays a recurring villain who remains alive by the end of the plot, and Vee plays sympathetic or heroic characters who meet their demise by the end of the episode.

Vee positions Bannakaffalatta as the closest he has come to playing a "normal" character in the drama. Similar to Shaban's views on Sil, on the surface, the character is not inherently disabled or explores disabled themes but rather is a character who happens to be small.

> It was almost playing a normal character. He had the lines, the cheeky lines. He could answer back; you know what I mean. It wasn't like just a creature where you've got growls to do or certain things … Banna was actually part of, what, shall I say – the community on the ship. So, it was more or less you were just playing a normal person. (Vee, 2020)

Again the role is viewed fondly by the actor because of its uniqueness. Because it does not centre around disability, Vee demonstrates his preference to play roles that are not alien or centred around disability in the quote above. Vee enjoyed the human qualities of the character and stated that to him, he was playing a "normal character", "You couldn't see the prosthetics – well, I couldn't see them, so it was nothing there in my mind, I was just being me, as in myself" (Vee, 2020). Vee also stated that initially, Bannakaffalatta was not intended to be an alien but was originally devised as Vee's first human role. The decision to change the part to an alien, according to Vee, was to ensure his future with the programme:

> They [the programme's producers] knew the other things coming up. They wanted to keep me in it, to keep bringing me back, so they came up with the idea. What can we do that will show his face but not put him out there as something that they could kill off and – you know what I mean – never come back. So, they came up with the idea of the prosthetics, spiked prosthetics head and painted face. (Vee, 2020)

In his book Russell T Davies explains the role was specifically written for Vee, writing: I don't often think of specific actors, but maybe Russell Tovey… And Bannakaffalatta? Jimmy Vee. Oh, the thought of little Jimmy and Kylie in a scene together!" (Cook, Davies, 2008, p.85). He also included the script's first draft, written in May 2007. The description of w Bannakaffalatta reads as follows: "An alien – BANNAKAFALATTA – strolling past, in a black tie; three foot tall, head like a spikey blue football" (Cook & Davies, 2008, p.85). The colour of Bannakaffalatta's skin had changed from blue to red, but this seemingly suggests that Bannakaffalatta was always intended to be an alien. Furthermore, Davies sketched an illustration of Bannakaffalatta that supports Davies envisioned Bannakaffalatta as an alien from the beginning.

Vee considers this role the closest he has come to playing a "normal" or rather human character in *Doctor Who*. Although Bannakaffalatta is alien, he is likable, and the audience is made to feel some sympathy for his plight. The characterisation added to the characters humanistic qualities even though the character is once again dubbed. The character was once again dubbed, like Vee's previous appearance. The production relies on his body difference for the character's aesthetics and removes acting duties by dubbing over his lines. The production continues hiring Vee as a puppeteer or monster operator, despite Vee describing himself as an actor who desires roles without prosthetics. The next and final case study of Vee's characters demonstrates this point further and, interestingly, is the first time Vee is cast as a villain.

Vee's final appearance in *Doctor Who* was as Skovox Blitzer in "The Caretaker" (2014), whereas Bannakafalatta felt like a progression for Vee as he got closer to an acting role and an almost human role, but Skovox Blitzer could be considered a return to his typical castings and demonstrates the continued typecasting of disabled actors in the telefantasy genre. The Skovox Blitzer costume completely covers Vee, and the character was once again dubbed. In "The Caretaker", the Doctor (Peter Capaldi) is working undercover as a caretaker in his companion, Clara Oswald's (Jenna Coleman), school to find and stop Skovox Blitzer. There is a second serialised story strand where Clara's boyfriend, Danny Pink (Samuel Anderson), discovers Clara is travelling through space and time with the Doctor. Skovox Blitzer, a soldier from space, is a plot device to explore the conflict between the trio. The Doctor judges Danny because he was a soldier, and the Doctor sarcastically substitutes Skovox Blitzer for

Danny in the dialogue to verbalise his dislike of soldiers. Skovox Blitzer incites them to discuss their conflict and work towards a resolution.

Skovox Blitzer has a wide body, held by four crab-like legs, cannons for arms, and prawn-like features. The suit, suspended from a metal frame, sits on wheels allowing an operator to dolly Skovox Blitzer in and out. The legs at the side cannot take any weight; instead, the wheels are close to the ground, giving the illusion that the legs support Skovox Blitzer's body (BBC, 2014), similar to The Moxx of Balhoon's hoverchair. Vee did not control Skovox Blitzer's leg movement; he worked the tors0 and above. Vee states he was there to "make sure the head, the arms, the guns, you know, the movements are there" (BBC, 2014).

Skovox Blitzer marked Vee's return to the programme six years after appearing as Bannakafalatta. Despite the time gap, his previous experience on the programme and its spin-off series, Vee is still hired as a monster operator. Skovox Blitzer is eventually captured by the Doctor, who sends the assassin soldier into deep space, where he cannot harm anybody. Again, Vee plays a character who dies. Still, despite these finite endings, Vee acknowledges the conventions of the genre would allow him the opportunity to reprise any of his previous characters:

> You've got Banna, who still can come back; he just needs a recharge. You've got Skovox Blitzer, who is floating about in space. He never died; he was sent – he was fired into space. So, he's going round about there somewhere out there, so what's to say if someone does something and it draws him back in, you know what I mean, so he can come back as well. (Vee, 2020)

The genre's codes and conventions would allow any of his characters to be revived. However, it seems unlikely that any of these characters would be revived as they were not significant characters that were integral to the plot. Instead, they were characters that served as a plot device or added the characterisation of the main characters. Arguably, the production typecast Vee because his body difference allowed them to create visually exciting aliens. In doing so, it could be argued the production viewed Vee as a puppeteer or monster operator. The role of Bannakaffaltta demanded more of Vee but did not the creators did not entrust him to voice the character. There remains a clear desire by Vee to reoccur in the programme and to play a role which does not require prosthetics. Despite that, Vee fondly

looks upon his time on *Doctor Who*, and views his roles as Shaban viewed his, a character removed from disability who happened to be small. Vee's casting in *Doctor Who* upholds the typecasting of actors of restricted height as alien characters, with neither actor being allowed to play a human character, but Vee played various aliens during his tenure.

The reinvention of the programme under Davies saw a change in the programme's genre, with a structure similar to the "Vengeance on Varos", but Davies continued the legacy to appeal to family audiences. Repeatedly the genre saw Vee's characters used as plot devices to further the characterisation of the main characters, working to create depth in the characters and the universe. Vee, therefore, played characters whose deaths worked to develop sympathy and drama, with all of Vee's characters being killed by the end of the episode. The conventions of the genre cause the repetition of such characters and their deaths. Vee's casting in *Doctor Who*, through Millennium FX, continues to suggest productions do not know where to source disabled talent and rely on word of mouth, and highlights the need for a more straightforward entry point for disabled actors with a range of expertise.

Shaban and Vee are yet to be cast as human characters, but I will now consider the first appearance of an actor with restricted height who did not use prosthetics. I will note that Warwick Davis's size was relevant to the plot, and this suggests that for a disabled actor to appear as a human character, their disability needs to be rationalised. Davis's casting signifies that a disabled actor must trade off to appear as a human character. They must be willing to acknowledge their disability to be cast as a human character, whereas alien characters do not need to rationalise their size.

### 4.3 Warwick Davis as Porridge.

Disabled appearances are scarce during Matt Smith's tenure as the Doctor, with only two possible examples, the first being Ada (Rachael Sterling) in "The Crimson Horror" (2013), who is blind and disfigured because her mother has experimented on her. Sterling herself has no visual impairment, and the character is a device to aid the Doctor as he stops Ada's mother's evil plans. The second representation of disability during Smith's era is Warwick Davis' portrayal of Porridge.

Davis is a household name known for presenting on the teatime quiz show *Tenable* (ITV, 2016), which is possibly the only quiz programme to be presented by a disabled person in the UK currently, but Davis began his career in film. Davis's first role was in one of the largest and most profitable science-fiction franchises in the world, *Star Wars* (1977, Lucas), specifically *The Return of the Jedi* (Marquand, 1983); Davis played an Ewok called Wicket. Davis, who was eleven at the time, got the role after his grandmother had heard a casting call on the radio for actors of restricted height. Davis' entry into the film industry is unusual, just like Shaban's and Vee's entry into the television industry. The role in *Star Wars* as Wicket the Ewok required Davis to be covered in prosthetics, dressed as a bear-like creature who walked on its hind legs. Despite his young age and *Star Wars* being his first role, Davis worked with Lucas again on *Willow* (Howard, 1988). This film saw Davis appear without prosthetics and as the film's main protagonist. The film saw Willow (Davis) reluctantly protect a baby from a queen who is hell-bent on destroying the world. Davis also appeared in the *Harry Potter* (Columbus, Cuarón, Newell, and Yates, 2001-2011) film series as Professor Flitwick, interestingly a role which required prosthetics but then was redesigned entirely in the later films without prosthetics. He also played Griphook, another character who required prosthetics. He is the only actor of restricted height to play the main character in the British sitcom *Life's Too Short* (BBC, 2011-2013).

In *Life's Too Short,* Davis plays a fictionalised version of himself, running an agency for actors of restricted height, as Davis does in real life. The fictional version of Davis is obsessed with fame and prefers to keep the notable jobs for himself. Many of the disabled actors Davis represents or works with in real life appear within the programme, such as Rachel Denning, who will be discussed in the next section. Davis' career began, like Vee's, in prosthetics. Unlike Vee, Davis has secured work where prosthetics were not necessary earlier in his career, and his film career has led to him becoming a household name. As Davis' career progressed, the amount of prosthetic work has lessened. *Doctor Who's* "Nightmare in Silver" is an example where Davis is not in prosthetics. His casting in *Doctor Who* may be because he is recognisable, his acting ability and his height.

When Davis was cast in *Doctor Who,* he was an established name, and his celebrity could have aided his casting, like Ryan in "Mindwarp". Davis explains he had the desire to be in the programme for "as long as he could remember" (BBC, 2013), but it seemed at times to be an "unattainable" goal (Red Carpet News TV, 2016). Davis likened his casting as Porridge to

winning “the jackpot” (Jeffery, 2013) because the episode was written by the novelist Neil Gaiman known for works like *Stardust* (1997), *American Gods* (2001), and *Coraline* (2002). Gaiman also worked on the popular *Doctor Who* episode “The Doctors Wife” (2011). Davis also likened this episode to winning the lottery because it featured the Cybermen. In a “Nightmare in Silver”, the Doctor, Clara, and the children Clara babysits, Angie (Eve De Leon Allen) and Artie (Kassius Carey-Johnson), arrive at a ran down amusement park in space, and their presence awakens a Cyberman. The Doctor must battle the Cyberman physically and mentally as they attempt to take over his mind and upgrade him to become the Cyberplanner.

Interestingly Davis helped inform the character's costume. Upon being cast, the costume department presented him with a selection of watches and let Davis select one of the designs for his character (Flicks and the City, 2013). Choosing a watch helped Davis feel “immersed” in the story (BBC, 2013). It was a unique opportunity for Davis, with neither Shaban nor Vee being consulted about their costume. Davis’s experience is unique here, and maybe because of his position in the production as a guest star, the treatment Davis received points to his casting relies less on his disability and more on his recognisability. The actions of the production here draw a distinct line between a monster operator and an actor, as they work in cooperation with Davis to aid the characterisation but do not do the same with Vee.

Porridge is an emperor on the run and the hero of the story because he is the only one able to activate a bomb that implodes the theme park planet to destroy the Cybermen. Davis’s height is essential to the narrative. The theme park’s wax museum features the waxwork of the emperor, but the model is not anatomically accurate; it towers above the children and Porridge. Angie puzzles at the waxwork, and a coin also bares the emperor's image. The adults are shocked at the revelation that Porridge is an emperor. Angie continues: “Oh, come on, it’s obvious. He looks exactly like he does on the coin. And on the waxwork. Except they made him a bit taller.” Davis’s height is used as a narrative device to misdirect the audience, similar to how Bannakaffalatta is in the “Voyage of the Damned” opening. The misdirection relies on the revelation that a person of restricted height holds the position of power is unexpected by the audience; because he is small, he is unlikely to be emperor. Davis admits he has a “soft spot” for Porridge because the character is ‘multifaceted’ in that he is the emperor of the known universe but rejects the title and lives on the run (Red Carpet News

TV, 2012). Porridge refuses his role as emperor because he is lonely, leading him to ask for Clara's hand in marriage. She declines, admitting she does not want to rule the universe.

Porridge rejects his status as emperor until the end of the episode. He activates the bomb with a voice command, and in doing so, his home planet locates his, the Doctor's, Clara's, and the children's positions. Porridge explains he and the group are about to be teleported onto his ship in a medium close-up. Porridge bows his head and closes his eyes, and the camera tracks outwards to a long shot as the background shifts. Porridge has been teleported and now stands in front of a large window overlooking the theme park planet and its moon. The camera continues to pull outwards and shows Porridge standing in front of his throne, which is on top of a step pyramid. The height the pyramid gives Porridge means the camera remains at the same level as it tracks out and shifts its focus to the Doctor. Placing Porridge at the top of his throne reflects his importance as emperor, with all having to crane their necks to look at him. However, the Doctor heads up the stairs, leans on the throne and bends down to Porridge's height in a medium shot, and notably, the Doctor stays hunched, not standing over Porridge.

Porridge's character arc is accepting his place as emperor. It is by activating the bomb, which saves the day, that he is accepting his role as emperor of the universe. Previously Porridge stood below everyone else, and they looked down on him. The staging of his ship reflects his position as emperor, with it being carefully organised so that nobody stands over him. The pyramid, which his throne sits upon, works as Sil's tank did to reflect his status. The camera also begins to reflect his acceptance; after the planet explodes, he stands on his steps and gives a speech about how being emperor is the universe's loneliest job. The camera tracks in as he speaks from a low angle, cutting to show the children and Clara looking up at him as they rest on the pyramid; Clara and the children are shot from a high angle medium close up. During this scene, Porridge proposes to Clara, and she rejects him telling him she "doesn't want to rule a thousand galaxies". Angie calls Clara stupid, reminding her she could be "queen of the universe", but Clara's rejection is seen to be admirable. Despite accepting his role as emperor, Porridge would rather be in Clara's position, as she is free to explore the universe without the weight of being emperor. During their final glance at one another, Clara stands taller than Porridge; the camera is at a low-angle medium shot with Porridge in the foreground. Cutting to the point of view of Clara, the camera angles down on Porridge as he

gives a defeated smile. Clara's rejection of Porridge, her rejection of power, and her freedom is why she is the only character in the scene which stands over Porridge.

This scene is Porridge's last. With the character not being killed, Davis argues the door is left open for Porridge to return:

> My character didn't die, which is a good thing, and he just sort of goes off in his spaceship; where to? Oh, we want to know what's happening. Don't let him go. We want to know more about him, don't we, yeah? (BBC,2013)

Davis believes there is potential for his character to return. He also speculates that there is enough potential for the character to have a spin-off television show: "There's enough mystery about him that's keeping the fans keen… being emperor of the universe, he could prove very useful to the Doctor in the future couldn't he. I'm thinking spin-off, that's what I'm thinking" (Flicks and the City, 2013). However, the character has not returned to the programme despite Davis's fame. Uniquely Sil remains the only character played by a disabled actor to return to the series. With Vee's role ending in death, Porridge did allow for the opportunity for Davis to return, but it is unclear as to why that did not happen, with Davis's enthusiasm for the character.

The character of Porridge is unique in that he is the first character where an actor of restricted height has not had to use prosthetics for the role. Porridge is a complex character who rejects power till the end of the episode. However, he continues to admire those not drawn by power, and his proposal to Clara reflects the character's desire to have what he cannot, despite being an emperor. The disability of Davis is referred to in the story as it misdirects the audience and the characters. The narrative subverts the idea disabled people cannot be in positions of power. The commentary around the character from *Doctor Who Confidential* differs from the discussions of Vee's characters. Instead of exploring the technical aspects and the aesthetics of the character, as was the case with Vee's characters, the focus is on the characterisation of Porridge and using props to represent his internal conflict. The distinction between the two shows how the production differentiates between a puppeteer/monster operator and an actor.

Davis considers the genre conventions to argue for further inclusion of his character in the programme, just as Vee did. The difference being Porridge's ending is not finite like Vee's

characters. Davis has yet to return to the drama, despite his fame, enthusiasm, and character as emperor of the universe. Davis is correct in arguing the genre would allow for his return. Still, as this has not happened. Production cultures have continued to shape inclusion. The producers' attitudes typecast Shaban in the 1980s as they did for Vee during his tenure. Despite having the opportunity to explore Porridge in more depth than with previous characters played by disabled characters, the production has not taken that opportunity.

Davis's casting in *Doctor Who* is uniquely placed as he is a human-like character given a position of power and remains alive by the end of the episode, demonstrating a change from the characters of Vee and Shaban as Sil. The following representation of disability I will consider is similar in that it did not require the actor, Rachel Denning, to use prosthetics and again placed her in a position of power. With these characters, there is a clear shift away from relying on body differences to aid the creation of alien characters. The changes in genre and production cultures have brought about this shift.

## 4. Rachel Denning as Erica.

Peter Capaldi's era of *Doctor Who* features several representations of disability. "Under the Lake" and "Before the Flood" (2015) includes the reoccurring deaf character of Cass, played by the deaf actor Sophie Stone. Cass works at an underwater base haunted by voiceless ghosts, and she can read the ghost's lips and help the Doctor as he investigates their existence. The Doctor also uses Davro's wheelchair in "The Witch's Familiar" (2015). The Doctor pulls Davros from his wheelchair to use the chair as a cloaking device from the nearby Daleks.

Series ten, Capaldi's final series, features three episodes where the Doctor is blind— Beginning in "Oxygen" when the Doctor and his companions Bill Potts (Pearl Mackie) and Nardole (Matt Lucas) are exposed to the vacuum of space, leaving the Doctor visually impaired. "Extremis" (2015) continues this story strand; the Doctor is stuck in a simulated Earth created by an alien race called the Monks. In the simulation, the Monks practice their plan to conquer the world. The Doctor makes a machine which temporarily gives him his eyesight back, but the Doctor admits it may affect his future regeneration and that his next regeneration may also be blind; this dialogue reveals the Doctor can regenerate into somebody with an impairment. The third episode, "The Pyramid at the End of the World" (2015), features two representations of disability, the Doctor's visual impairment and Erica's

restricted height. Erica, played by Rachel Denning, denotes another change in the representations of disability. Unlike Davis, who plays a human-like alien, Denning uniquely plays a human character and is the first female actor of restricted height to feature in the programme.

*Doctor Who*'s casting director Pryor compares Vee's casting against Denning's and concludes that the distinction between the two is the acting experience Denning has gathered through her theatre work:

> He [Jimmy Vee's character/s] wasn't written as disabled, but he was written as small, and so we cast Jimmy, and that was very early on in Doctor Who and then by the time we get to casting Rachel, that was more about I've seen Rachel in a play and thought she was great and wouldn't it be interesting to have a scientist that looked different to the scientist we normally see on tv. (Pryor, 2020)

The casting of Denning is more traditional for the industry and is how one may expect a non-disabled actor to be cast in a role, demonstrating a change in the production culture. Denning was a member of the *Reduced Height Theatre Company member*, founded by Warwick Davis. The *Reduced Height Theatre Company* was founded and run by actors of restricted height, and they produced plays which did not explore disability. Denning appeared as Penelope Toop in the company's production of *See How They Run* (King, 1945), which toured around the country in February 2014. Pryor, in seeing the *Reduced Height Theatre Company,* is actively seeking disabled talent by engaging with the disabled community that has been cultivated with disabled-led theatre companies. Denning has also appeared in Graeae Theatre Company productions. Previously to source disabled actors such as Vee and Shaban, productions relied on word of mouth. The engagement Pryor takes demonstrates the importance of disabled-led theatre in not only sourcing disabled talent but also in giving disabled opportunities the facilities and opportunities to practice their acting skills. Counter to Cumberbatch and Negrine's argument that disabled-led theatres "cannot overcome the lack of opportunity and facilities for actors with disabilities" (1992, p.118). Pryor demonstrates these theatres present opportunities and facilities, but there needs to be an engagement with those from other industries to take advantage of the skills they are developing. Denning has sixteen credited theatre appearances and four television credits. The frequency with which Denning

appears on stage further supporting the point that disabled-led theatres present opportunities for disabled actors.

Denning recalls the casting process being unusual because she and the casting assistant were the only ones in the room. Denning describes the casting process for *Doctor Who* as the "the least painful processes casting" she has experienced (Denning, 2020). The audition was filmed, but Denning believed the fact the director was not in the room to mean the part had already been cast (Denning, 2020). However, it is common practice for the director not to be in the audition room. According to Denning, her co-star, Tony Gardner, who played Douglas, and has no known disability, underwent the same audition process. This is the first case study in this programme's history where the sourcing and auditioning of a disabled actor has been the same as that of a non-disabled actor, highlighting a change in how disabled actors are approached and auditioned for roles in contemporary Doctor Who.

It is also interesting to note that those close to Denning assumed that her role on *Doctor Who* would be that of an alien, as though the previous appearances of actors with restricted height had conditioned them into the thinking actors of restricted height who appear on the programme must only play aliens:

> When I said I had a part in Doctor Who, they'd be like "Oh, are you an alien? What will you be dressed up as?" I had that a lot …especially older generations as well. They would presume that because you do when you hear Doctor Who, you think of that sort of thing anyway. I think someone said to me, 'Are you playing a human' and I was like yeah, I am. (Denning, 2020)

The preconceptions Denning counted could be informed from the previous inclusion of actors of restricted height, with all apart from Davis playing monstrous aliens and their disability being crucial to the character's aesthetic. The comments also denote the genre's conventions, as it regularly features aliens. As the representations of disability change in the programme, it may shift the preconceptions associated with disabled characters being cast as aliens.

In "The Pyramid at the End of the World", the Monks await the end of the world, knowing the humans will ask for their help to avert Armageddon, and when the humans eventually ask, the Monks will save the planet, but in return, they will rule over the earth. The Doctor,

still blind, tries to avert the end of the world so the Monks cannot take over the planet. Erica's day begins like any other, with her loading her car as she heads to work. She wedges the front door open with her handbag as she packs her vehicle. Not seeing her bag, her husband closes the door on his way out, accidentally smashing the contents of Erica's bag, significantly cracking the lens of her glasses. The smashing of her glasses leads to Erica mistakenly mixing chemicals and creating a deadly bacteria, which could cause the end of the world. Arguably her glasses are destroyed because of her disability. Erica cannot carry her equipment to the car whilst holding her handbag and remembering to lock the front door and open her boot to her car. Instead of attempting to juggle all of those tasks, which a non-disabled person may have been able to do, Erica wedges the front door open and walks back and forth between her house and car. The scene suggests that a disabled person is necessary, as Erica's mobility issues start the events of the episode. However, as Pryor explained, Denning's size was not integral to her casting, unlike Vee. The scene may be an example of the actor's disability bleeding into the representation, as Shaban's disability did with Sil. Instead of veiling the disability, the disability is unveiled and adds to the authenticity of the character. These nuanced aspects of a disability inform the character, and these nuances usually come from having the actor's own experience of disability. It adds a dimension to the character and authenticity. It is also worth noting Erica's husband is not disabled, although their relationship could be made clearer, as the scene is fleeting. Denning also understood the pair to be married, although the narrative does not explain their relationship (Denning, 2020).

Erica's disability is not discussed in the plot by anyone, and this makes sense as Erica interacts with those accustomed to her disability. For example, her husband, and Douglas, her co-worker, have known Erica for years, so commenting on her height would not be typical for them. The Doctor is Blind and therefore is unaware of her size. Erica's workplace has also accommodated her disability. Erica works in a lab, and often the doors are sealed shut as a safety procedure. The electronic release for the locks are placed at a height that Erica can reach. For example, in the scene where Erica and Douglas discover the dangerous bacteria after it destroys a crop of plants, Erica runs out of the lab, and a medium shot of the doors button, shows Erica pressing the button for the door of the airlock. With a buzz, there is a cut to a wide shot of her easily pulling open the heavy metal door. It makes more narrative sense not to discuss Erica's size than it does to discuss it. Denning found the role to be empowering as it did not explore disability:

> I think it was quite an empowering role, and I think that it was the woman in that duo that the woman survived and ended up saving the world. That was pretty cool as well. So I do think it was quite like a good place to use a disabled role, and the way she was written, nothing was mentioned at all, and I don't think it needed to be in that context. In another context, I might have said it did need to be, but I don't think it needed to be in that. She was in her place of work, she was in her safe environment, so she was just getting on with her job. (Denning, 2020)

Erica also aids the Doctor to avert the world's end. Having identified the lab as the event which will bring on armageddon, the Doctor navigates his TARDIS to land in the centre of the lab. A long shot as the TARDIS materialises before Erica. Erica is centred in the frame with her back to the camera as the TARDIS flashes and whirls into the left-hand corner of the room. The door of the TARDIS squeaks open as and there is a cut to a medium close-up of Erica in disbelief as she says, "Oh my god". Cutting back to the long shot, the Doctor replies, "No, it's the Doctor, but it's an easy mistake to make". The Doctor sends his companion to Nardole back to the TARDIS and explains to Erica it is up to them to avert the world's end. In a medium close-up of the two, the Doctor leans over a table and tilts his head towards Erica. It is hard to say whether he is looking at her, as he is wearing dark sunglasses to hide his blindness; the glasses restore some vision.

Erica's lines between her and the Doctor are expositional, explaining the dangerous bacteria will leak out through the lab's automatic venting system in twenty minutes with no way to stop the vents from activating. The Doctor has an idea, and he begins to feel his way around the room whilst calling himself "Handsome Doctor. Adorable, hugely intelligent, but still approachable Doctor". Erica can be seen working away on a computer in the foreground as he heads towards her. Cutting to the point of view from his glasses, the camera shows a green outline of a coil of wire and the noise of the sonic sunglasses whirls. The shot reminds the viewer of the Doctors blindness and allows them to see as he sees. Cutting to a close-up of the wire as the Doctor grabs it, feeling the wire to confirm it is wire, and pulls it out of the shot. He asks Erica, "What's another way to destroy bacteria?" she says, "Sterilisation". The Doctor asks, "How do you sterilise something" Erica tells him by "Putting it in boiling water" or by putting it "In a flame". The Doctor stops gathering materials, feels for the table, moves in front of Erica and, despite his blindness, points directly at her and says, "She's got it".

The scene above features two representations of disability, the Doctor's visual impairment and Erica's restricted height. The scene focuses on the Doctor adjusting to his disability and how he navigates around the room. Erica becomes a narrative device through her exchanges with the Doctor. Erica's dialogue progress the narrative and keeps the audience informed. Erica's disability does not affect the framing, as the focus is on the Doctor's disability. It could be argued that Erica is "The Disabled Person as Normal Stereotype" (Barnes, 1992); she is a character who happens to have a disability. Whereas the Doctor is "The Disabled Person is Their Own Worst Enemy" as he rises to the challenge to prove himself as still capable despite his disability

The stereotypes offer an understanding of how such representations can be interpreted. Importantly, Denning provides an alternative reading describing the role as empowering because it does not explore disability. Denning's casting denotes, as did Davis', a change in the production cultures, with disabled actors, particularly actors of a restricted height, being considered for human roles. Pryor actively engaged with disabled-led theatre companies showing they are not only a resource for sourcing and identifying talent but a space where disabled actors are developing their craft and gaining that essential experience. The Doctor's temporary disability is a rare example of the lead character having a disability. Still, it demonstrates that the conventions of the telefantasy genre would allow a disabled actor to appear in a significant role. Mostly the representations of disability only serve the plot and characterisation, and this is tied to the changes in genre. *Doctor Who* has seen disabled characters move from villains to sympathetic characters to characters who help the heroes; as the series genre has changed, so has its representations of disability.

This section has focused on one specific type of disability and demonstrated an evident change in the representations brought about through changes in genre and production cultures. Although the discussion could end here, it is essential to show that these changes are not restricted to one disability. The Doctors blindness has been explored in the section above, and there is more room for discussion to consider how the representation is a non-disabled actor playing a disabled character. There is room to compare this representation of blindness with Ellie Wallwork's authentic portrayal of blindness that appears later in the series. I will now consider the changes in representing another type of disability in telefantasy programming.

### 4.5 Ellie Wallwork as Hanne.

The eleventh series of Doctor Who features the first female Doctor (Jodie Whittaker). Showrunner Steven Moffat has been succeeded by Chris Chibnall, with a new showrunner and a new Doctor; this era of the programme is seen as a refresh of the programme's format once again. Whittaker discusses the conventions of the genre when considering her casting, warning old fans that they do not need to be afraid of the Doctors new gender because it does not confound the expectations of the genre, as she says, "My gender isn't a fearful thing for the fans because in this world particularly there aren't rules and that's a great thing" (BBC News, 2017). Whittaker rationalises that the gender swap of the Doctor fits within the expectations of the genre, a genre where rules do not exist. Similarly to Shakespeare, gender can be substituted for disability; disability is not a characteristic fans need to fear because it does not confound the expectations of the genre; instead, it highlights its fluidity.

Chibnall's new era decided to be socio-politically motivated, which is not a new theme for *Doctor Who*, but "Vengeance in Varos" demonstrated audience reluctance for such storylines. Although Chibnall's era was not as violent, it sort to tackle socio-political issues head-on, not reflect them as *Star Trek* did (De Yarza, 2017) (see pages 26 & 27). Episodes explored pollution, race, racism, sexism, and populism, to name a few themes. Despite being socio-politically charged, disability is not investigated with the same gravity. There are two representations of disability during Chibnall's era. Benni (Col Farrell) in "Orphan 55", whose disability is not defined, but Benni carries an oxygen tank and Ellie Wallwork as Hanne in "It Takes You Away", with both actor and character being visually impaired.

Wallwork's career started at eleven years old after being cast in a Portuguese short film, after which she gained an agent (Wallwork, 2020). For her particular disability, Wallwork reasons film is more accessible "For me getting into theatre would have been more difficult, and there weren't as many opportunities there, whereas film stuff it was easier for me to find something that I liked and almost find my niche" (Wallwork, 2020). Theatre work has created opportunities for actors of restricted height, but Wallwork may have faced different barriers because of her disability. Although, it is crucial to note Wallwork does aspire to work in the theatre in the future:

> I think if I do get involved in theatre, I'll probably get involved from a writing perspective first and then sort of work my way in through there because I think that

> makes me more comfortable and also it gives me more opportunities to represent stories because I want to be able to write things that are actually representative. (Wallwork, 2020)

Wallwork has noted a distinction arguing that theatre is less accessible for visually impaired actors than for disabled writers. She has identified what she believes to be a more accessible entry point to the industry through her writing. Wallwork is attending university and is working towards becoming a writer (Wallwork, 2020), viewing it as a more opportunistic area than acting, not only in theatre but more generally. Although, she intends to continue acting where possible (Wallwork, 2020).

Wallwork was cast in *Doctor Who* at 17 years old, making her the youngest disabled character to appear. Hanne's disability is not defined in the script, and, as a result, Wallwork assumed she and the character shared the same disability, retinopathy of prematurity (Wallwork, 2020). Wallwork explains the production faced difficulty in locating a visually impaired actor for the role, but the production had ruled out considering a non-disabled person for the character:

> They were transparent in that they wanted a genuinely visually impaired actor, and apparently, they searched all over… apparently, they had been auditioning people in different countries… they really wanted to get this representation right, and Chris Chibnall, when I met him was really adamant about that. He said that it was incredibly important to him and the production generally that they get that authenticity. (Wallwork, 2020)

Unlike previous characters, this character is explicitly written as disabled, unlike Shaban, Vee, and Denning, but like Davis and Capaldi. Being written as disabled, it was critical to the production that the actor shared disabilities. The distinction between Capaldi's and Wallwork's representation of disability is their authenticity. Wallwork shared her thoughts on Capaldi's representation:

> I thought that he [Capaldi] just didn't know enough about it [visual impairment], and I don't think there was enough research done by the writers or by the directors or by anybody in there at all, and if I'm being harsh about it. I think they should have just

> scrapped it, because it was never – if they hadn't done enough research it was never going to be authentic, it was never going to be good. It's a shame because the rest of its great, the rest of it I really like, but it's just that bit. (Wallwork, 2020)

Wallwork argues that the role's authenticity affects the representation and that authenticity can also be achieved through thorough research of the disability the actor intends to represent. The difficulty with this reading is it fails to engage with the conventions of the genre, where there "are no rules", as Whittaker stated. The Doctors visual impairment is caused by being exposed to the vacuum of space, and he uses technology to compensate for losing his vision. The character becoming disabled means that it can not be authentically cast. It is unclear how any research would have informed the character's representation of the disability. However, Wallwork argues that as a person with a visual impairment, the role could be labelled as a negative and stereotypical representation.

Pryor supports the point that authenticity was crucial to the role, but from his experience, he did not find it difficult to source and cast Hanne; he found the process to be simplified:

> Actually, it didn't take long to find Ellie. We contacted various organisations that worked with blind people, and I believe I also tweeted about the role, which is a useful way of reaching people outside the usual avenues and has been helpful when looking for people from a specific demographic. In the end, Louise Dyson, who runs an agency called VisAble, which specialises in actors with disabilities, introduced us to Ellie. We work with Louise's clients regularly. (Pryor, 2020)

Pryor's casting comes again from engaging with disabled acting communities. This time Pryor is engaged with an acting agency representing disabled actors only, whereas previously, he used disabled-led theatre companies to source disabled talent. The means of casting non-disabled actors have shifted under Pryor and show that companies focusing on disabled actors have a role in improving inclusion and creating opportunities for disabled actors. By engaging with such companies, broadcasters will make an accessible entry point for disabled actors into the British television industry, and their importance cannot be overlooked. Pryor's engagement with such demonstrates the importance of broadcasters developing a relationship with disabled-led companies.

In “It Takes You Away” (2018), the Doctor and her companions investigate another universe through a mirror in Hanne’s home whilst a monster prowls outside the house. Hanne is alone in a cabin, as her Mother (Lisa Stokke) recently passed away, and her Father, Erik (Christian Rubeck), has mysteriously disappeared. The Doctor intends to discover what happened to Hanne’s father. The monster who stalks Hanne’s home is a speaker system set up by Erik to ensure Hanne does not leave the safety of the cabin. Meaning Hanne’s disability is critical to the narrative of the episode. The Doctor refuses to let Hanne into the anti-zone through the mirror (to the other universe). The Doctor may be reluctant to let Hanne help because she suspects Hanne’s father has died beyond the mirror; Hanne’s disability is another risk, as well as Hanne’s young age. The Doctor orders her companion Ryan (Tosin Cole) to guard Hanne as she, Yasmin (Mandip Gill) and Graham (Bradley Walsh) explore the unknown universe.

As the Doctor and her companions explore the world beyond the mirror, Ryan attempts to converse with Hanne. Standing in the loft of the cabin with the window lighting behind them, the camera is a medium shot of both characters; Ryan faces the camera, and Hanne is in profile as she speaks to him. Ryan asks, “Have you always been blind?” Hanne answers “Basically. I can see light if it's super close”. The room's lighting reflects Hanne’s vision, with a small amount of light bleeding through the small attic window of the cabin. Ryan shakes his head and admits, “It must be hard” Hanne snaps, “ I don’t need you to feel sorry for me”. Ryan asks Hanne, “Why don’t you like me?” and Hanne confesses it because he had suggested that Hanne’s Father had left her.  Knowing Ryan is hiding something from her, that her dad could be dead, she tries to go to the mirror. Cutting to a close-up of Ryan’s hand, he takes her arm and leads her away as she shouts for him to let go. Taking her to another room, her pushes her in, turning to lock the room's door behind him. A close-up of the doors lock emphasises Ryan has locked the door.

Hanna feels at the lock, attempting to snatch the key from Ryan, saying, “Hey, give me that key”, as she pushes at the door. Ryan hears the monster roaring from outside and investigates the noise; leaving Hanne inside, he discovers the speaker system, which has been playing the roaring animal noises. Ryan runs inside to tell Hanne about the speaker shouting, “Hanne, you don’t need to be scared anymore. There's no creature out there”. Hanne does not respond; standing in the entryway, Hanne hides behind the open door. Upon hearing Ryan, she shunts the door into him, rendering him unconscious. Cutting to a close-up of Hanna removing the key from Ryan’s inside jacket pocket. Unlike Capaldi’s portrayal, Hanne is not shown to feel

around the room and struggle to find items; she is shown to have good spatial awareness. An authentic nuance of the character who has learnt the room's layout after being stranded in the cabin for some time. Importantly, Capaldi's Doctor is new to the lab, so he has to feel his way around the room.

Hanne steps through the mirror, piercing her arm through the glass light radiates outwards. In the other universe, a close-up shows Hanne who nervously pants as she walks. The camera remains focused on Hanne's face restricting the audience's view of her path, which makes the audience feel as discombobulated as her. Cutting to a close-up of Ryan collapsed on the floor, he springs into life shouting "Hanne", realising she has stepped through the mirror. Cutting to a close-up of Hanne's hand as she makes her way through the alter world, she feels at the wall. The lighting is dark; we can just make out her silhouette. There is an emphasis on the sound of her nervous panting. She trips and stumbles as she makes her way through. Finding a piece of string, she takes hold of it. The string remains in focus in the foreground, and Hanne remains out of focus till she grabs the thread. The focus shift from the string reflects Hanne's emotion. The string offers her some security, and the audience gains a fuller picture as Hanne becomes used to her surroundings. When Ryan arrives after chasing after Hanne, the camera returns to using medium shots and begins to show the space.

Ryan and Hanne continue to make their way to be reunited with the Doctor, Yaz, and Graham. Hanne is reunited with her Father in the parallel world and, to her surprise, her Mother. Her Father tells her that Hanne's Mother is still alive in the alternate universe. Wallwork explained this was not the original reveal. Wallwork worked with the production to ensure her disability was accurately represented. Initially, Hanne felt her Mothers face to identify her, as Wallwork explains: "Originally, Hanne was supposed to touch her mother's face, and I got rather agitated about that because the stereotype is blind people or visually impaired people touching people's faces, and that's just not realistic at all" (Wallwork, 2020). Wallwork explains that this collaborative process was novel for her, and by considering her opinion, the production demonstrated care for authenticity (Wallwork, 2020).

The camera work and lighting have been used to reflect Hanne's disability. When Hanne is alone, the camera uses close-ups only to create intimacy and unease. Hanne uses touch to navigate her world, relying on small details to make a picture of her world. The camerawork limits the audience's view of the world, giving them limited information to understand the

space around them. The audience gains more knowledge when Hanne is with Ryan; having someone with her helps her navigate the world and the audience. The lighting is also dim to reflect Hanne's vision because she can see small amounts of light when it is nearby. Hanne's conflict revolves around proving herself capable to the Doctor and her companions, despite her disability. The exclusion she experiences means the character could fit into "The Disabled Person as Pitiable or Pathetic" as her disability is used sympathetically.

Hanne was a role that uniquely represented visual impairment, and the production aimed to authentically portray the disability, with previous representations of blindness being labelled as unauthentic by Wallwork. There was uniquely a consultation process between Wallwork and the episode's writer to ensure authenticity. The camera and lighting were used to reflect Hanne's disability and allow the audience to share her perspective. The representation could be labelled as a "negative stereotype", but there is an apparent attempt to represent the disability authentically and accurately. The hiring of Wallwork also demonstrates a continued engagement by the programme's casting director to work with disabled-led companies to source and create opportunities for disabled actors.

This chapter has demonstrated the changes in production cultures and genre and their relationship with the representations of disability. There has been a clear shift from using disabled actors and their body differences to create alien aesthetics to disabled actors appearing as disabled characters to represent their disability authentically. The trade-off has been disabled actors recurring in the drama less often, with disabled actors in prosthetics being the only actors to play recurring or various roles. The change in the types of roles being offered to disabled actors has also brought about a change in production cultures because the roles no longer need prosthetics; disabled actors are no longer enduring uncomfortable working conditions. The analysis has produced a multifaceted analysis that notes how characters could be labelled as negative stereotypes. However, it shows that the disabled actors behind the part view the roles as complex characters and opportunities to either avoid disability or accurately represent it. It has also demonstrated that disability can inform the character, with mobility issues often bleeding through to the production.

The change in the representations of disability brought on by changes in production cultures and changes in the genre are not only present in telefantasy but are also present in soap operas. The following section produces an analysis of the representation of disability,

beginning with *Crossroads*. Soap operas offer recurring representations over longer time periods in an attempt to represent them authentically. The same stereotypes occur despite these differences in genre. The interviews with disabled actors allow us to consider an actor's intentions and offer alternative readings beyond stereotypes. The interviews also show that some disabled actors express a desire, like in this chapter, not to rationalise or explore disability. Instead, to explore narratives removed from disability, in this genre, there is not the same ability to veil disability; a disabled actor must therefore play a disabled character.

## Chapter 5 Soap Opera.

As in the last chapter, the representations of disability in this section have received little academic attention and engagement. The chosen case studies present the unique opportunity to create multifaceted readings through engagement with genre analysis and interviews with disabled actors on a set of representations that have been overlooked. The previous chapter considered two types of disability, restricted height and visual impairment. Instead, the soap opera section will consider a broader range of disabilities because of the variety of disabilities within the genre.

The disabled characters and actors discussed in this chapter are Roger Tonge, known for portraying Sandy in *Crossroads*, Julia Fernandez, known for portraying Nessa Lockhead in *Eldorado*; David Proud and Lisa Hammond, who played Adam Best and Donna Yates in *EastEnders*); and Cherylee Houston, who played Izzy Armstong in *Coronation Street*. These images of disability are not the only images of disability present in these programmes. They are all images of disability that appeared in their respective programmes for years as opposed to the examples in the Telefantasy section, where Sil had the longest character duration, which was spread over four weeks. The textual analysis in this section may sometimes spread over several episodes, as the story strands are serialised, occurring over more than one episode. This is similar to the analysis of "Vengeance on Varos", which had the same serialised structure but had a finite ending.

There is some space dedicated to the analysis of Chris Tate (Peter Amory), a disabled character played by a non-disabled actor, an example of an actor "cripping up", similar to Peter Capaldi in the previous section who played a visually impaired Doctor, despite not having the disability himself. Chris Tate's character provides a unique representation of disability as he was a significant character in *Emmerdale* who became disabled, and the production opted to represent the disability till the character's death. Although there are other examples of disabled characters played by non-disabled actors, their disabilities are often resolved quickly, but Armory played a disabled version of Chris Tate for ten years. The representation is one of the longest images of disability in soap opera, only beaten by Cherylee Huston, who has appeared in *Coronation Street* for thirteen years.

The chapter considers the images of disability in chronological order, beginning with Rodger Tonge's appearance in *Crossroads*. Tonge appeared from 1964 to 1981. Tonge portrayed a disabled character from 1972. Tonge's character was not initially disabled but became disabled after Tonge was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. The section will conduct textual analysis to consider the characterisation. Due to the actor's death in 1981, the section relies on archive material to produce a multifaceted reading. It will become apparent, despite being an early representation, Sandy Richardson is a complex character that happened to be disabled, and without Tonge's diagnosis, it is unlike the character would have become disabled.

The following chapter demonstrates the genre's fluidity and its relationship with regard to the representations of disability. It gains insight into the production cultures of British Soap operas and notes their relationship with images of disability. As in the previous chapters, it will become apparent that changes in these areas have resulted in changes in the representations of disability in soap operas. It will demonstrate soap operas alternate between narratives that do and do not explore disabilities and offer a variety of story types to disabled actors. Sometimes, I note comparisons between images of disability in soap operas and images of disability in telefantasy, but I will unpack this further in the conclusion.

## 5.1 Roger Tonge as Sandy Richardson.

*Crossroads* was a British soap opera that centres around a motel of the same name, near the fictional village of Kings Oak, on the edge of Birmingham, centred around the motel owner Meg Richardson (Noele Gordon), her family, and her staff. As noted above, Sandy Richardson was not always a disabled character; Sandy was hit by a car in 1972 and became a paraplegic. Hobson writes this storyline was "written because the actor, Roger Tonge, suffered from a condition which made it difficult for him to stand for long periods of time, and the series handled the disability in an extremely positive manner" (Hobson, 2003, p.113). Tonge's non-Hodgkins lymphoma affected his mobility. Due to the programme's realism, they could not wholly veil Tonge's disability, and instead, the actor's disability informed the character. Although the disability informed the character, the actor and the character did not share the same disability. It is unclear why the character's disability differs, but in an interview, Paul Henry, who played Benny Hawkins, explained Tonge's reluctance to discuss his diagnosis.

> You would never have known Roger was ill at all. He never complained in any way whatsoever. They worked it so he could go and have his treatment at weekends - but he never spoke about it. If you asked how he was he always said 'Oh great'. (Jhochet.tripod.com, 1981)

It may be the case that Tonge's reluctance to discuss his disability informed the programme's representation of disability. The programme did not attempt to depict Tonge's condition accurately, and in using another disability, the programme also works to veil Tonge's disability. In doing so, there is a degree of separation for Tonge, and he does not have to explore his progressive condition through the character.

Hobosn positions the handling of disability in *Crossroads* as extremely positive. I would avoid labelling roles as either positive or negative, but it is clear the production worked to be as inclusive as possible to ensure Tonge's continued involvement. Speaking after Tonge's death in 1981, his mother, Lily Tonge, explained how the production made reasonable adjustments to continue his participation in the programme:

> He [Tonge] had to travel regularly to the Royal Marsden Hospital in London. The vital journeys meant that he had to take a break from the hectic pace of rehearsals and recording sessions. "They were marvellous about it," says Lily [Tonge]. "They arranged everything round Roger's treatment so that he could go to the hospital whenever he had to." (Jhochet.tripod.com, 1981)

The reasonable adjustments duty was first introduced under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. ITV and the programme's producers were not legally obliged to make reasonable adjustments for Tonge. Still, they were willing to implement such adjustments for a cast member who had become disabled during filming. Tonge's mother saw the adjustments as a curtsey rather than a legal obligation. Since the passing of the DDA, such adjustments have become standard for all disabled actors, regardless of whether they become disabled during or before a production.

The BBC documentary *Are You Having a Laugh? TV and Disability* (BBC, 2010) labels Sandy as a tokenistic representation. I argue against labelling a representation as tokenistic,

particularly in this case, as ITV have sincerely attempted to include Tonge in the production, making changes to the character, script, and production to ensure his continued involvement despite not being legally required. The following textual analysis will demonstrate that even for such an early representation of disability, Sandy cannot be easily labelled. It will illustrate the relationship between disability, the genre, and the production cultures. It will show that the representation should not be dismissed entirely just because it is one of the earliest appearances of disability and offers multifaceted readings, just as contemporary representations of disability do.

It must be noted that a limited number of episodes are currently available for analysis, although some have been made available through the streaming platform ITVX. Should more episodes be digitised, there remains room for further academic analysis of this representation of disability. The episodes available are after Sandy's accident, so it remains unclear if the character's disablement causes a characterisation change. The analysis instead produces a multifaceted of the disabled character. Should more material become available, there would remain room for such a comparison.

In episode number 1980 (1973), Sandy is sorting through his mother's belongings with Brian Jarvis (David Fennell) in one Crossroads office. Sandy has smart attire, dressed in a green suit with a tie. Whilst rummaging through Meg's old books, Sandy finds an old newspaper clipping celebrating the grand opening of the motel 12 years ago tomorrow. As the pair talk, the camera is placed over Brian's right shoulder, with Sandy on the right side of the screen. Sandy is sitting in his wheelchair while lifting books from the box to his right. As Brian asks Sandy to check the date of the news article they found, he moves around the desk and stands over him. The camera tracks Brian as he moves around. Sandy tells Brian not to remind his mother of the hotel's anniversary as he has an idea of his own. A cut shows Mrs Witton (Jo Richardson) enter the room from the corridor, and the audience cannot hear what Sandy is planning. The camera remains static as Mrs Witton enters before cutting to a close-up of her. In her close-up, the top of Sandy's head remains in the bottom-right-hand corner of the screen. The close-up of Sandy allows us to see his visible confusion as Mrs Witton asks to take his tray back to the kitchen. Sandy tells Mrs Witton she has already returned his tray to the kitchen for him today. Sandy asks Mrs Witton if she is "alright" Mrs Witton repeats, "Yes", as she heads back out the door. Leaving the office, the camera tilts down from a medium close-up of Mrs Witton to a close-up of Sandy. After Mrs Witton, the camera returns

to the medium shot of Brian standing over Sandy. The pair wonder what is wrong with Mrs Witton, Brian heads back to his seat behind the desk, and the camera tracks him returning to his seat.

The scene above demonstrates a change in production cultures due to the inclusion of disability. Due to Tonge's and Sandy's mobility, he cannot negotiate the small office setting. The scene begins with the pair sitting down. Because Sandy cannot negotiate the set, he remains seated throughout the scene, and the action is then shaped around Sandy. The camera incorporates shots to add variety to the scene. Close-ups offer variety and allow the audience to read the character's facial expressions. Characters move around Sandy, and their movements motivate the camera's movements. Sandy remains fixed and static throughout the scene. The disability has shaped the blocking out of the scene, and camera movement, which attempts to compensate for the lack of movement on Sandy's part.

Larger sets allow Tonge and Sandy a range of movement, although it is still limited in a later scene. The camera begins with an extreme close-up of Ronnie Jones playing the guitar. The camera tracks outwards into a medium shot of Ronnie Jones. Hearing the music, Sandy enters from the right side of the screen. The camera tracks Sandy, moving into a medium shot as Sandy stops beside Ronnie Jones. Sandy waits for the dong to finish, straightening his suit, ready to talk to the musician. Ronnie offers to play his act to Sandy, and Sandy's willing to listen, hoping to hire him for the secret party he is planning. As Ronnie stands, Sandy again moves in his chair to the centre of the screen, with his back to the camera. Ronnie's act lasts eight minutes, and the camera focuses on Ronnie, moving between close-ups and medium shots. For the entire scene, Sandy sits with his back to the camera; no shots show Sandy's reaction to Ronnie's jokes. Other characters enter the scene and speak to Sandy about the party. These are mostly medium shots, with the camera switching focus between Ronnie and those talking to Sandy. The larger set allows Sandy to enter the scene in his wheelchair and move partially around the set. The staging has again been shaped around Sandy, with characters coming to him to discuss the party. The camera cannot wholly overcome Tonge's and Sandy's mobility issues. In this scene, Sandy remains static with his back to the camera, with no shots to show his reaction or cuts to his face during dialogue exchanges. Despite the larger set, which allowed Tonge to enter the scene, the studio filming continues to restrict his mobility, and the camera cannot always get coverage of Sandy, meaning he often remains static in the scene. Sandy holds a position of power, unlike the other staff, he wears a suit and

tie. Staff also speak to him in this scene, as he watches Ronnie preform, and as for his opinion or help with issues around the hotel. However, limitations in the set design means the camera's framing does not reflect his prominence in the narrative. In soap operas, characters are typically expected to fluctuate in prominence within the narrative. As Mittell writes, in soap operas, "characters are positioned in fluid but meaningful tiers of primary lead characters, secondary supporting characters, tertiary recurring characters, nonrecurring guest characters, and background extras" (Mittell, 2015, p.123). Sandy is a primary character in this episode, but for 8 minutes of the twenty-five-minute episode, the audience only sees the back of his head. Such framing is typical of a background extra, not a lead character. Shortfalls in framing are at odds with his position within the narrative and do not reflect the character's importance within the hotel or the storyline.

There are times when Sandy uses crutches to enter a scene, but when he does eventually sit down, the camera quickly begins to rely on the movement of non-disabled actors to motivate the camera's movement, and Sandy remains fixed in the scene. In episode 2868 (1977), Meg talks to Stan (Edward Clayton) about a series of revelations. Sandy enters and pushes the door close behind with his crutch. Meg leaves, and Stan moves beside Sandy. Stan places his hand on a chair, and with his other hand, he points to it, asking Sandy if he is "sitting?". Cutting to a medium close-up from the left side of the set the camera focuses on Stan; Sandy, in the foreground, steadies himself onto the chair. Sandy passes his crutches over to Stan as they talk; Stan leans the crutch against the arm of the chair as they sit facing one another. The camera is in a medium close-up of Sandy over the left shoulder of Stan.

Sandy bites his lip in pain as he fidgets with his calipers through his trouser leg, hitting the release he rest his leg on the floor. When David Hunter (Ronald Allen) enters, there is a cut to a long shot before cutting to a close-up of David as he reveals someone has been hurt in a car accident. This illustrates the relationship between production cultures and disability. The disabled character can enter the set but is quickly placed in a static position. The non-disabled characters are used to motivate the camera's movements. The disabled character remains fixed to one spot, and the non-disabled characters tend to be the camera's focus on wider angles. The staging is arranged around Tonge, and the editing cuts between shot types for variety. The production made reasonable adjustments, allowing Tonge to balance his career with hospital appointments and treatments. However, the set was not altered to ease access, so Sandy remains static for his scenes. Alterations to the set would have made it easier for

Tonge to navigate the set and allowed the production to overcome framing challenges. Interestingly it does show some of the characters access needs, particularly when he struggles with his calipers, but the camera averts the gaze of the viewer, to focus on the non-disabled characters.

In the first episode I discussed above, Sandy was shown to be kind, thoughtful, and selfless when preparing for his mother's surprise party. In the following example, Sandy's disability has become integral to the plot, and in exploring disability, the characterisation of Sandy has changed. Sandy is set to marry his fiance´ Lynn Baxter (Stacey Gregg). Lynn works at the local hospital as a nurse. Lynn has been offered a job at a general practice, but Sandy is not happy with this job for Lynn either; in fact, he does not believe Lynn should be working after the marriage. Lynn states, "Sandy, it's perfect. No shift work, no night duty, just regular surgery hours, no travelling to speak of. You do agree, don't you?". However, Sandy disagrees, "I'm sorry, I just don't see why you should have to go on working at all", telling Lynn he would rather she concentrated on finding a house of their own. Lynn refuses as she wants to continue working, admitting, "It's not my style… and it's not yours [Sandy] either; it's totally out of character".

In episode 2893 (1978), Sandy meets with Dr Butterworth (Tony Steedman), and Dr Butterworth confronts Sandy. In a close-up, Dr Butterwoth leans forward, grabs his tea and asks, "Now, when can we expect our nurse to report for duty?". Sandy becomes dismissive in a close-up; he shakes his head, frowning, "I'm afraid you'll have to ask Lynn, not me". Dr Butterworth suggests that Lynn could start in a month, and Sandy replies, "Look, I might as well be straight with you about this. I'm not in favour". Dr Butterworth is confused as he believes it was Sandy's idea. Lynn moves from the hospital, and Sandy explains that he "is not in favour of her working at all, anywhere". Dr Butterworth, bemused by Sandy, reminds him that Lynn is a fully qualified nurse and that he "surely doesn't want her to give up all that training". Returning to the scene after an interlude, Dr Butterworth points at Sandy, telling him that he is "overcompensating. If you weren't confined to a wheelchair, you wouldn't give it a second thought that Lynn wanted to carry on with her job. You'd accept it as part of the marriage. Quite happily because that's what she wants to do". Sandy, with a sniff, calls it "rubbish" Dr Butterworth continues, "No, but as it is. You want to show them that even though you're disabled, you're still able to support a wife. You're sure that you're going to show them". Sandy disagrees, "I don't think I've been getting through to you at all"; he tries

to go on as Dr Butterworth heads for the door, but he stops beside Sandy and shouts “Your only concern is for yourself and for your so-called image, what Lynn wants is unimportant”.

The first narrative earlier in this section does not explore disability and presents Sandy as a kind character who considers other people before himself. This storyline instead has seen a shift in Sandy’s characterisation because of his disability. This representation could be easily categorised as ‘the disabled person as sinister and evil’ (Barnes, 1992). The change in the characterisation relies on the stereotype Sandy is cruel because of his disability. Hobson writes that “characters in soap operas are sometimes defined as stereotypes”. She continues that stereotypes are:

> Neither good nor bad; they are simply a tool of a dramatist. Soap operas do contain certain stock characters that will be found in all series, but they will differ in their importance depending on the function for which they are necessary to the drama (Hobson, 2003, p.83).

The writers have utilised “The Disabled Person as Sinister and Evil” (Barnes, 1992, p.11) stereotype as a tool, changing Sandy’s characterisation to create a narrative and conflict for the character. Lynn described Sandy’s motivations as out of character. The writers used his disability to rationalise his change in characterisation, but it is only a temporary change, as Mittell writes:

> While it may seem that a pleasure of serial narratives is watching characters grow and develop over time, most television characters are more stable and consistent rather than changeable entities. This is not to suggest that characters do not experience major life events, traumas, and conflicts that have an impact on who they are — surely most serial characters experience an unrealistic number of such occurrences in the high-drama realm of fiction... But even in the face of such life-changing events, television characters are mostly stable figures, accumulating narrative experiences more than changing from them. (Mittell, 2015, p.133).

The storyline sees Sandy temporarily become a stereotype, and the disability is presented as the rationale for the character's sudden change in characterisation. The example typifies the genre, as stereotypic is used on various characters, not just disabled characters. It is a practice

that is neither negative nor positive but adds complexity and depth to a character. It could be argued that it reinforces the evil avenger stereotype, but this is only temporary. The character is also shown to be kind and selfless. Sandy's shift in characterisation demonstrates the relationship between genre and representations of disability, that soap opera is a genre which relies upon disabled stereotypes but only temporarily and that it offers a range of story types. As a result, the actors play a variety of stereotypes throughout their tenure in the programme.

It has also demonstrated the relationship between production culture and the representation of disability. Reasonable adjustments allowed Tonge to continue to appear in the drama, balancing his work life with treatment for his disability. However, reasonable adjustments were not a legal requirement but a gesture of goodwill. The programme's set remained unchanged for Tonge, meaning his character could not negotiate the set. Instead, he remained seated in one position for most of his scenes. In being the first disabled character in a British soap opera, there is a degree of experimentation in shooting a disability. The experimentation resulted in unusual framing that did not reflect the character's prominence in the narrative.

Tonge is one of the genre's earliest examples of a disabled actor playing a disabled character, and despite being called tokenistic is a complex case study shaped by genre and production cultures. Tonge passed at the age of only 35 years old because of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in 1981. It was not till the casting of Julie Fernandez as Nessa Lockhead in the BBC's new drama *Eldorado* 11 years later in 1991 that a disabled actor played a returning disabled character in a prime-time soap opera. Like Tonge's time in *Crossroads,* reasonable adjustments were still not a legal requirement, but the broadcaster worked to be inclusive and consider Fernandez's needs. I will not go on to analyse her appearance in *Eldorado* using interviews with Fernandez to create multifaceted readings of the character and to explore the relationship between genre, production cultures, and the representation of disability.

### 5.2 Julie Fernandez as Nessa Lockhead.

In the early nineties, the BBC was threatened with privatisation, and the BBC's flagship soap opera *EastEnders* battled for ratings against ITV's soap operas *Coronation Street* and *Emmerdale* (0swproductions0, 2010). The BBC created and launched a new soap opera *Eldorado* to win over viewers. Uniquely for a British soap opera, *Eldorado* was not set in Britain but in Spain, and it centred around a village of ex-pats adjusting to the area. The BBC

had invested millions into the production, expecting the programme to succeed, having been penned by *EastEnders* creator Tony Holland. One of the programme's regular reoccurring families was the Lockheads. A nuclear family consisting of a father, Drew Lockhead (Campbell Morrison), a mother, Gwen Lockhead (Patricia Blake), the eldest child, Blair Lockhead (Josh Nathan), and the youngest child, Vanessa Lockhead, played by Julie Fernandez, AKA Nessa Lockhead. Like Fernandez, Nessa is disabled and a wheelchair user.

Like Nabil Shaban, Fernandez has Osteogenesis imperfecta, also known as Brittle Bone Disease. Fernandez called her childhood "difficult" because of her disability, and she has had around "100 fractures and 60 to 70 surgeries" (Fernandez, 2021). Her career in acting began at Trealors, a boarding school specialising in educating people with physical disabilities (Trealor.org.uk). Fernandez recalls her time at the school fondly but explores the difficulty she experienced when it came time to leave:

> My only criticism of Treloars is it was too good, almost, you know, like, everything was catered for us, everything. You know, they even had their own driving instructor with half a dozen vehicles that were all differently adapted. So we could learn to drive. I mean, everything was catered for us. So when we left Treloars, as students, we just assumed that the world was accessible and understanding and would support us in the same way as Treloars did. And it really didn't. And, and it was, it was a hard lesson to learn… we left [Treloars], and what we realised is the world really was nothing like being at Treloars. That was a bitter pill to swallow. (Fernandez, 2021).

As Fernandez transitioned from the school, she began to apply for further training in a range of subjects, from "business studies" to "hotel management"; Fernandez claims she applied to "something like 40 or 50 different poly's [polytechnics]" (Fernandez, 2021). Fernandez was unsuccessful in her application because the courses were not accessible for her (Fernandez, 2021). The BBC had contacted Treloars to enquire whether the school knew of "a young girl in a wheelchair to play" Nessa Lockhead in their upcoming soap opera. Interestingly Traloars was the first school which allowed disabled students to undertake a drama GCSE, as Fernandez recalls:

> We used to put on big productions like Bugsy Malone, West Side Story, My Fair Lady. So it was just a part of being at Treloars; drama was a big thing. And

> interestingly, myself, included in my class, were the first group of disabled students to ever take drama GCSE. And it was interesting because the adjudicators were a little bit unsure how to apply the rules of testing us. So we were kind of like the trial run. (Fernandez, 2021)

Fernandez explains before casting her as Nessa, the production considered cutting the character from the programme. That producer Julia Smith was particularly keen to have a disabled actor play the role: “If we can't find a disabled person to play the role of Vanessa Lockhead, then we're cutting the character. So, she was adamant that it had to be a disabled person” (Fernandez, 2021). The production difficulty in sourcing a disabled actor demonstrates the importance of theatre groups, community or school-led, to allow disabled people the opportunities to practice their art and in presenting broadcasters the chance to source experienced disabled talent. The reliance on disabled-led theatre companies by TV broadcasters demonstrates a possible entry route for disabled actors to join the television industry but also highlights the need for a continued relationship between broadcasters and those companies.

Fernandez was cast as Nessa before she turned 18 and as she prepared to take her A-level exams. The BBC organised flights back and forth between the UK and Spain to accommodate Fernandez's exams to ensure she could attend rehearsals and still undertake her exams. The reasonable adjustments are not for Fernandez’s disability but to ensure she could continue her education. Despite travelling back on forth between Britain and Spain whilst undertaking exams and preparing for her role, Fernandez relished the opportunity to travel and remains grateful to the BBC for making such accommodations “The BBC were really good. They knew that they had to support me in doing that. And they were just really good about it and sorted it all out for me” (Fernandez, 2021). The programme made reasonable adjustments with Fernandez to ensure her continued inclusion in the drama. The following section will consider the production cultures around the role and will show despite the programme's efforts, there remained room for improvement, according to Fernandez.

The casting of Fernandez is unique from previous castings I have discussed, as the BBC had approached a school to source disabled talent, demonstrating that there is no typical way for disabled actors to enter the industry. The school had allowed Fernandez to train and practice her art and uniquely gain a qualification. The theatre, again, although not a disabled-led

theatre company but a school production, has allowed disabled actors to train and gain opportunities in the British television industry. The importance of theatre cannot be overlooked as it has been fundamental in most disabled actors' careers in preparing them for work and attracting the attention of broadcasters. The BBC specifically seeking a disabled actor shows the character was created and was always intended to be disabled, unlike Sandy, who became disabled because of the actor's circumstances.

The following section will investigate the production cultures on the set of *Eldorado* and how the programme's set was built after Fernandez's casting, allowing the unique opportunity to make the set accessible for the actor instead of making adjustments after hiring a disabled actor. It will become clear despite the attempts of broadcasters, the sets were not always accessible for Fernandez, and this limited the character's involvement in the drama. It will show a clear relationship between the production cultures and the representations of disability. It will also consider how the genre shapes the types of stories afforded to Fernandez's character; unlike Sandy in *Crossroads,* there is no reliance on stereotypes to shift the character's characterisation.

According to Fernandez, the set of Eldorado was built in "Corinne, which is quite high up out into the mountains". The set was "accessible up to a certain point", with "the Lockheads bungalow" and the "swimming pool area" being "relatively accessible". However, the set modelled after an old Spanish village was "A bit more tricky", Fernandez continues pointing out that there was no legal obligation for the broadcasters to make a set accessible till 1995. "We're talking about the early 90s. And, you know, the DDA [Disability Discrimination Act] wasn't in effect at that point. It was a few years later. So they did, they didn't do bad, from the filming point of view" (Fernandez, 2021). Fernandez positions the accommodations made by the BBC as a courtesy because they were not legally obligated to make such adjustments. The adjustments allowed Fernandez to navigate some of the sets and allowed for greater coverage, unlike *Crossroads,* whose set was too small for Tonge to navigate.

Taking the role also saw Fernandez move from her UK home and live in Spain while filming the programme. She describes the aftercare as not "brilliant", that "in terms of where we were living and, and the kind of support that I needed that that was a little bit tricky. They didn't kind of get that. So that was a little bit of a struggle" (Fernandez, 2021). Fernandez did not go into detail about the difficulties she experienced. Instead, she discussed how the production

hired a full-time support worker “that the BBC paid for to help me to get everywhere and get changed and get to wardrobe and makeup and on set and around set. So that when you think about it, they were ahead of the game at that time” (Fernandez, 2021). Fernandez had a unique experience; previously, the actors in this study had to deal with access needs during filming but could return to homes which may be designed to meet their needs. Fernandez had to move to a different country and into a new home, and her accessibility issues continued beyond filming because of her relocation for the role. Again the BBC worked to make reasonable adjustments, but this was a courtesy, not a legal requirement. As a result, not all of Fernandez’s needs are catered to.

*Eldorado's* first episode (1992) introduces the drama's characters and the Lockhead family's dynamic. Gwen returns home to see Blair and Nessa eating breakfast at the kitchen table. Gwen unpacks her shopping beside Drew, who is working on fixing a kitchen appliance. Gwen tells Blair she saw him in the old town at 7 AM talking to the undesirable Marcus Tandy ( Jesse Birdsall). Blair explains he was only delivering a letter on Tandy’s behalf and was only “doing him a favour”. Gwen tells Blair that Marcus Tandy is not to be trusted and that he will only take “advantage” of Blair. Cutting to a medium shot of Blair, Nessa is now in the shot to Blair’s left; he replies, “I’m not stupid”. Nessa quickly lifts her head from the bowl and asks, “Can we take a vote on that one?”. Gwen reprimands Nessa by calling her name, then continues telling Blair not to be swayed by Tandy’s supposed wealth, that he is a “crook”. Blair gives a reluctant “Ok” as Gwen then begins complaining, to Drew, about the neighbours and their loud party the previous evening, stating she does not “enjoy listening to some drunk sing ‘My Way’ at 3 AM … Even if it is my own husband”.

In this scene, one could identify several stereotypes: Gwen is a matriarch and a gossip, Blair is the rebellious teen, Drew is a drunk in a fractious marriage, Marcus Tandy is a criminal, and Nessa is the comedic relief. However, Hobson states, “The reality is that the characters and the people they represent are so much more than the categories into which we attempt to fit them; they could all fit into many different categories” (Hobson, 2003, p.82). The programme employs stereotypes to allow audiences to familiarise themselves with the characters. Familiarity enables a degree of intimacy for regular viewers in soap operas, and the programme’s endlessness will enable audiences to become “familiar with the history of certain characters and has [have] access to knowledge which is well beyond that given in a particular episode” (Geraghty, 1991, p.14). Being the first episode means there is not that

familiarity for the audience. The programme, therefore, relies on stereotypes to help the audience familiarise themselves and create a sense of history between the characters. As the programme develops its familiarity with its characters, the characters become more complex, as is the case with Nessa, who in earlier episodes of *Eldorado* is a comedic device, only having a line or two about her brother's dealings with Tandy. Nessa becomes more complex as the programme progresses, and begins to explore her relationships with her family, her disability, her sex life, and the paternity of her father.

The characterisation of Nessa continues in the episode, showing her to be more than a comedic device but also a typical teenage girl. In one scene, the camera tracks a server who brings Blair and Nessa a couple of orange juices to their table on the beach. Sitting across from Nessa are three Spanish locals, one boy and two girls, and Blaire asks, “What shall we do this afternoon then?”. One of the Spanish girls looks to the left; seeing her mother wave from the ocean, she excuses herself. Blair asks her to stay, but she tells him she must “help her mother” make lunch. As the girl exits, walking past Nessa, the camera tilts down to a medium shot of Nessa as she laughs at Blair, saying, “It must be your sparkling personality”. The remaining Spanish boy and girl also dismiss themselves, inviting Nessa and Blaire to the tennis club after lunch. As the pair leave, there is a cut to a medium shot of Blair and Nessa; Blair now tells Nessa, “Looks like you’ve blown it, sis”. In a close-up, Nessa watches the pair leave the beach over her shoulder, clearly disappointed. Although Nessa is again mocking her brother in this scene, as in the previous scene, she is shown to be a typical teenage girl interested in boys and sex. This scene suggests that there is more to Nessa than her sarcastic humour and disability, which is not referenced in the episode. Fernandez supports the point that the character is complex, and disability is only one part of that complexity:

> She was disabled. I am disabled. That's part of life. But it wasn't everything. It was just a section of it, and I was involved in lots of other storylines that had absolutely nothing to do with my disability, and that's why I think it worked so well. I think that's what people need to do more in the media industry is, you know, like you need a disabled actors playing characters where the disability is irrelevant. (Fernandez, 2021)

Fernandez positions the role as complex because of the variety of stories given to the character; she calls for representations where disability is only an aspect of the character and not the defining feature. The first episode of *Eldorado* works to position Nessa as a funny

teenage girl and does not address her disability. Although such a representation could be labelled as “The Disabled Person as Normal” stereotype, where disabled people are shown to be “as 'ordinary' or 'normal' - people who just happen to have impairments” (Barnes, 1999. p.18). Stereotypes are not fixed in soap operas, and that fluidity aids the character's complexity.

In “The First Episode”, Nessa appears only twice in the drama. She is in her wheelchair for both scenes and appears on two sets. In the first scene, she remains in the kitchen and in the final scene of the episode, she also remains seated at the table. During her first scene, the camera remains static on all characters, with a combination of medium shots and close-ups on mainly Gwen and Blair. The second scene tracks the movement of other characters to motivate the camera's movement and introduce Nessa. The shots on Nessa alter between medium shots and close-ups. With the character remaining still at the table, there is no clear distinction between how Tonge’s disability was shot against Fernandez. However, the “Christmas Day 1992” episode shows that, unlike Tonge, Fernandez can negotiate the set, and the shift from multi-camera filming to single-camera filming has changed how disability is framed.

In the “Christmas Day 1992” episode, the town's residents attend the church's Christmas Day services. Beginning with a close-up of the organist playing a hymn, cutting to a medium shot of the cast singing, the camera tracks down the pew. There is another cut to a point-of-view shot; Nessa is filming the congregation on her portable camcorder. Cutting in front of Nessa, she moves down the aisle in her wheelchair, her head crooked into the camera's eyepiece, filming the congregation. Reaching the altar, she heads towards the organist on the right of the screen and tilts her camera up towards the priest who stands above her at his lectern. The camera tracks her movement, panning as she does to the priest. As the priest delivers the services, there is a cut over his shoulder. In this high-angle shot, Nessa can be seen in front of the pews, continuing to film him. The priest stutters, realising he is being filmed; Nessa drops the camera away from her face and smiles, making the congregation laugh. Unlike *Crossroads*, this set has allowed Fernandez to negotiate the set. The change in production cultures from multi-camera studio filming to on-location single-camera filming has meant the cameras can track and film a variety of angles of Nessa, where *Crossroads* was limited and could not get complete coverage of Sandy.

When the church service is over, the congregation exit and the church doors lead to a set of stairs upwards into the old town. Gwen is filmed chatting as she heads to the stairs, the camera following her as she walks. Panning, the camera shows Nessa at the top of the stairs, filming as everyone filters out of the church. Upon reaching the top of the Stairs, Olive King (Faith Kent) stops to talk to Nessa, asking if her camera is a "Christmas present?". Cutting to a high-angle medium shot, Nessa explains the camera's functions. Cutting to a low and medium shot Olive tells Nessa that the camera "sounds too technical for me. But, I really shouldn't use it in Church". In a medium to a shot of their profiles, Nessa asks Olive what she received for Christmas; the camera remains static as Gwen enters from the left side of the screen. Gwen and Olive discuss plans for Christmas, and it becomes apparent Olive is alone for Christmas. The scene ends with the low-angle close-up of Olive, as she admits she is "quite relieved" when Christmas is all over.

In the scene above, Nessa is not shown to make her way to the top of the stairs but is positioned at the top of the stairs before the scene begins. The programme shows Nessa moving freely on the sets but does not show how she moves from one area to another. Nessa remains enclosed in a particular space. Although there is movement, she does not transition from one set to another like other cast members. Instead, the programme relies on cuts and does not represent her access needs. It could also be interpreted that between her interaction with Olive, the camera is placed at high and low angles to represent Olive and Nessa's perspectives. However, the low-angle does not shift when Olive speaks to Gwen, and after Gwen leaves and Olive talks to herself about the relief she will feel when Christmas is over, the camera remains in a low-angle close-up. Despite the fact in the previous shot, Nessa is distracted by her camera and no longer looking at Olive. Likely, the framing is not to show perspective but rather to overcome the shadows on Olive's face from her sun hat. The framing is not intended to reflect the power dynamic but an artistic decision to ensure the performers' faces are clear.

In episode 156 (1993), Gwen and Drew have elected to move back to the UK to mend their failing marriage. They have opted to tell Nessa and Blair the move is to get a fresh start. The episode begins with Drew moving bags outside the bungalow. Nessa sits brooding on a sunlounger in her sunglass, and she is reluctant to leave because it means leaving her boyfriend. Nessa confronts her dad as he moves the bags. She tells him, "You bury your head

in the sand and hope everything will go away. If you don't talk about it, it doesn't exist. That's your philosophy". Drew disagrees, but Nessa continues:

> It is Dad. You did it with your drinking, and now you've started smoking again. That's so stupid. I mean, you even did it with me, didn't you? Wheelchair? 'What wheelchair?' 'There's nothing wrong with my daughter. She's fine, isn't she?' and now you're doing it with the family.

The scene ends with a close-up of Drew exiting to the left side of the screen, unable to look or respond to Nessa. Later on, Drew attempts to talk to Nessa with Gwen, but Nessa calls Drew "selfish" and Gwen reprimands her. But Nessa doubles down: "It's true. When has he done anything for anyone else other than himself?". Gwen shouts, telling Nessa to apologise. Nessa turns inside the camera cuts, showing her move from outdoors to indoors through the double patio doors. Gwen tries to reason with Nessa; grabbing her wheelchair, she pulls Nessa close as she sits down. Gwen asks Nessa, "Why won't you ever remember the times when he sat up all night with you? The times when he walked for miles, pushing your wheelchair, just trying to find something to make you smile? If only you knew. The times where he said he'd give up anything, anything at all, just to have you walk properly", Nessa cuts in, "Oh, and I'm meant to be grateful, am I?". Gwen snaps back, "Yes!". The pair shout at one another, and Gwen confesses that Drew is not Nessa's father. Gwen leaves Nessa, who is in denial, Drew is standing outside the bungalow after hearing the fight, and he asks why Gwen told her the truth. Gwen replies, "Dunno, I just did. She can be so spiteful", but Gwen eventually admits she felt guilt about Drew being blamed for the move.

In the airport, the Lockheads wait for their plane. Nessa apologises to Drew, telling him she has no interest in finding her real father and that Drew is her "real dad". With that, Drew apologises to Gwen and asks that they return to the bungalow. Gwen agrees to stay, and Drew embraces her. The camera pans down to his hand to reveal Nessa holding onto him, smiling. The next scene shows the family returning from the airport with their bags. Cutting to a long shot, Nessa turns the corner shouting her boyfriend's name, Razor (Kevin Hay). She moves down a ramp towards him, explaining she's not leaving and that her "dad saw sense" Razor drops to his knees, and they kiss.

The episode above demonstrates that Nessa is multifaceted; she is kind, cruel, forgiving, bitter, hopeful, and determined and cannot be placed into a specific category. Disability is not critical to the storyline but is discussed by the characters, and there is a sense of history. Although the way Gwen speaks about disability is pitiable and positions disability as a problem they wish could be cured, and Nessa should be thankful for their pity. The treatment of disability certainly reflects the thoughts of many families who have experienced disability. The programme does not concentrate on disability but treats it as unresolved family trauma, along with Gwen's affair and Drew's addiction. Nessa accepts her disability, and it is her Gwen and Drew who have struggled with it. It is them who need to deal with their issues, not Nessa. The character is also shown to be in a romantic relationship with a non-disabled person.

The soap opera represents the longevity of disability and the profound effect it can have on a family. Still, it also allows for various storylines that do not revolve around disability and, in doing so, works to represent disability realistically. The episodes above also demonstrate that the larger sets allowed Fernandez to move freely around them, but some accessibility issues continued, and the programmer makers relied on cutting to overcome some access issues, such as the exterior church scene. The fact some accessibility issues continued, any consultation process between Fernandez and the broadcaster were limited. Fernandez explains that inaccessibility is not just regulated to filming but also behind the scenes:

> [When] you're in a drama or comedy most so there's always like a wardrobe area, and then you go into makeup, the vast majority isn't accessible, your lunch isn't accessible, often they'll, they'll have outside people bringing the lunch in. And that often is a double-decker bus that's been converted to have tables and chairs without a lift to get in. So you ended up being either a billy no mates on your own somewhere, or you drag yourself up the stairs and try and integrate with everybody. And again, for things like makeup and wardrobe, you know, the amount of times I've been on set, and I've ended up being in a skanky toilet getting changed when all the other actors are in these nice like campervan style venues getting changed, that can be tricky and a little frustrating. (Fernandez, 2021)

Although Fernandez is not stating these experiences were on the set of *Eldorado*, they point to a more significant problem: inaccessible sets and hostile production cultures ostracise

disabled actors on camera and behind the scenes. Fernandez experienced difficulty moving to Spain and felt the aftercare could have been improved; although the filming was more accessible, there were times when access needs shaped the filming. Fernandez offers insight into how an accessible set should worm from her time on *The Office* (BBC, 2001 -2003). Fernandez explained that because the programme's producer Ash Atella was disabled and had been working on the programme from the beginning when she joined in series two, she did not experience the accessibility issues she often dealt with on sets:

> When I came on board, on The Office, on the second series, there were no awkward moments. There were no awkward questions. Everyone who was there that was not disabled, cast and crew, they were used to working with a disabled person because of Ash. And so it was just seamless. It was it was amazing. And for me, that just showed how easy it can work, but non-disabled people need to have experience working with disabled people to understand that concept. (Fernandez, 2021)

Fernandez struggled with access needs on and behind the camera in *Eldorado*, she was the only disabled person on set, and her needs were not always catered for. Joining a production where one of the producers was disabled meant she did not experience such access issues. The difference may be because Atella was in a prominent position for show and could ensure reasonable adjustments were made. It may also be that the Disabled Discrimination Act, had came into effect in 1995, made reasonable adjustments a legal requirement. The act saw reasonable adjustments shift from a gesture of goodwill be production to a fundamental right, and as a result, access needs must be met in all aspects of a production. The shift may be, as Fernandez notes, non-disabled people working with disabled people and understanding the complexity of their needs.

Nessa is another example of a complex disabled character who can be read in several ways. The character should not be viewed as tokenistic as the programme attempts to fully incorporate her into the narrative, offering a variety of story types, as typical of the genre. The production cultures have shifted, and as a result, a disabled actor is given more action and stage direction than was the case for Tonge, where the action happened around him. Although there are limitations in the set with regard to access, Fernandez struggled with access outside the production, behind the scenes and at home. This is unique as Fernandez is the only disabled actor to be cast in a British programme filmed outside the UK. The change

between Tonge and Fernandez is evident in the production cultures worked to adjust the sets and incorporate Fernandez into the programme's staging, but issues behind the camera risked isolating Fernandez.

The following case study considers Peter Amory's portrayal of Chris Tate in *Emmerdale* and is an example of a non-disabled actor playing a non-disabled character. The analysis of Tate will focus on how a disabled character is filmed and demonstrates how it was once viewed as acceptable in production cultures for a non-disabled actor to pay a person with paraplegia. The representation can be easily dismissed because it is not an authentic portrayal. However, this representation of disability is the second longest representation in British Television Drama. The portal is multifaceted and demonstrates the relationships between production cultures, genre, and the representation of disability. It will become clear that non-disabled actors continue to play disabled characters in soap operas alongside authentic representations of disability.

### 5.3 Peter Amory as Chris Tate.

It is not rare to have non-disabled actors play disabled characters in soap operas, as in the BBC documentary *Are You Having a Laugh? TV and Disability* (2010) notes that typically when a non-disabled character becomes disabled in a soap opera, it is short-lived and is a narrative device that allows the character to learn the error of their ways. The documentary examples Nick Cotton's (John Altman) temporary use of a wheelchair in *EastEnders*. Better known as Nasty Nick, Nick had fallen from a viaduct during a feud with Mark Fowler. He used a wheelchair for three months before moving on to crutches, and the disability was "karmic comeuppance" (BBC, 2010). Although I disagree with this description, the character did not learn his lesson. During his recovery, Nick tampered with Mark's bike, which led to the death of Nick's son Ashley (Frankie Fitzgerald), who stole and lost control of the motorcycle. Such reading again fails to investigate the representation thoroughly. Comedian Richard Herring positions that disabilities are short-lived in soap operas because of the difficulties in accurately represent them:

> It is that kind of laziness, especially, I guess, those lighter soaps, where they're kind of thinking, "Oh, this will make an exciting story – an interesting story", and then "Oh, now we have to – now if we do this he has to be in a wheelchair, and that will be

> really annoying. We'll have to fold up the wheelchair and put it in the car every week, and he won't be able to go upstairs and oh – let's get him get better" (BBC, 2010).

Amory also played the character of Chris Tate in *Emmerdale* as disabled for ten years, so the disability cannot be described as short-lived. However, it is perceived similarly as a stereotypical representation, with cast mate Jeff Hordley, who plays Kane Dingle, describing Chris Tate as "the evil man in the wheelchair, sort of Ironside with a bad twist" (Chris Tate clips and moments, 2021). However, the Tate family were added to the drama to rebrand the soap opera from its afternoon slot, shifting away from storylines around agriculture to a prime-time soap opera that could rival the drama of *EastEnders*; or as actor Claire King, who played Chris Tate's stepmother, Kim Tate, put it, "It was quite strange coming in as this powerful different family into this very-quite rural soap… cliff-hangers prior to that were will Annie scones burn?" (ITV, 2020). The introduction of the Tates in 1989 aimed to "spice up *Emmerdale* to improve the programme's ratings" (ITV, 2020). The family were partly inspired by the American soap opera *Dallas* (CBS, 1978 -1991) and the fictional family of oil barrens, the Ewings. Both are wealthy families who put money before family. The Ewings traded in oil, and the Tates dealt with farms, stud farms, haulage firms, cottages, and the veterinary practice (ITV, 2020).

Keith Richardson explains that Chris Tate "was never introduced as a bad person, but he was always going to be slightly sullied, I think is the word, because his father was a hugely successful businessman, and he wasn't". Ian Hyland similarly states that Chris has always had a "chip on his shoulder, and that chip is Frank, his father. You know, he has lived in Frank's shadow all his life" (ITV, 2020). The introduction of the family did not improve the ratings, and in 1993 *Emmerdale* was in crisis with falling ratings and its future in doubt producers turned to *Brooksides* Phil Redmond" (ITV, 2020). Redmond explains his plan to save the programme was to "drop a plane on the village" (ITV, 2020). It was during the plane crash Tate became disabled. Redmond explains his decision to give Chris a disability: "We never really had a disabled person in the show, and we thought actually it would be quite interesting for a rich man or rich man's son if he was paralysed. We thought there were good storytelling opportunities there" (Chris Tate Clips and Moments, 2021).

The writers saw the character's disability as an opportunity to develop the character but not to change his characterisation. It was planned that Tate would remain the same, that being selfish, money-oriented, and strategic, as Redmond explains:

> [It is a] difficult moment when you're talking to an actor saying, oh well, you have been a lothario this that and the other, but now actually this is what's going to happen, but your character won't change, and in actual fact, you'll have a couple more layers to add on whatever you do. (Chris Tate clips and moments, 2021)

Before becoming disabled, Chris Tate was already a complex character. In one episode from 1990, disgruntled ex-employee George Starkey (James Noble) is confronted by Chris. After George's dismissal, he sprays painted "Frank Tate killed his wife" on the wall of the local pub, The Woolpack. George meets with Eric Pollard (Chris Chittell) to discuss the possibility of employment. Chris enters unexpectedly. Seeing George, Tate becomes violent, grabbing him by the collar and pushing him against a cabinet. Taking Georges's hand, Tate sees paint and asks, "What's this then? Been out doing some sketching, doing some lettering?". Letting go of George, he points and warns him to "stay away from my yard, or I'll tear you apart" before shoving George into the cabinets again and asking, "Got it?". This scene shows Tate as a violent individual, not afraid to take action into his own hands, but also a dutiful son who wants to protect his family. The complexity continues when Tate becomes disabled. However, his villainous acts are not caused by his disability but are because of the change in the programme's genre, and that villainy was present before his disablement. The programme has shifted from a rural soap opera to a prime-time soap opera that uses melodrama to compete with other soap operas.

One storyline explored in the documentary *Emmerdale Bad Boy Chris Tate Bows Out,* filmed in 2003 (Chris Tate clips and moments, 2021), is Tate's attempted rape of Linda Glover (Tonicha Jeronimo). Coming home from work, Linda hangs her coat and sees Chris Tate sitting in the dark, waiting for her to arrive home. Tate, Linda's landlord, has let himself into her house and waited for her. He follows her from the kitchen, the light is from a high angle, and the resulting shadows on Tate's make it difficult to distinguish his eyes. The effect makes it difficult to read his intentions, and the dim lighting denotes Tate as evil. Tate offers Linda an ultimatum to have sex with him or be evicted. Linda refuses, saying, "I'll tell someone" Tate replies, "You better start packing then". In a high-angle shot, Tate edges his wheelchair

closer to Linda, telling her, “We don’t have to fall out, Linda. It could be our little secret. And who knows? You might even enjoy it”. The episode ends upon that cliffhanger, and it is only in the next episode it becomes clear Tate had not sexually assaulted Linda. One could reason that Tates violent behaviour has worsened since being disabled, but this is Tate’s second attempt, and the documentary *Emmerdale Bad Boy Chris Tate Bows Out* fails to note that during his attempt to rape his wife Kathy in 1990, he was not disabled.

Tate’s death is a dramatic exit that demonstrates the character's villainy, but his disability does not cause his evilness. Although he could be considered ‘the disabled person as sinister and evil’ (Barnes, 1992, p11) stereotype, this fails to consider the bearing the shift the programme’s genre had on the role. Tate married former sex worker Charity Dingle (Emma Atkins) in 2001, but in 2003 Tate learns Charity has grown close to her cousin Cain Dingle and is concerned the two may be having an affair. Tate’s suspicions turn out to be correct. In a confrontation in The Woolpack, Cain lists the places where he and Charity have had sex. Tate interrupts, “Aren’t you forgetting the stables? Well, that was one of her favourite haunts”; he strokes her hair as he speaks, treating Charity as a possession. Cain stands over Tate and says, “You reckon this is a joke?” Tates admits he finds it amusing because he can tell from Cain’s eyes he has been crying. Cain grabs and throws him from his wheelchair; the pub staff and customers wrestle to separate the two. As Cain leaves the pub, there is a cut to Tate lying on the floor; he tells Cain, “Safe journey home”, and laughs to himself, clearly enjoying the drama. In this love triangle, Tate keeps Cain and Charity apart. Tate, during this time, is also diagnosed with an untreatable brain tumour. He seizes this as an opportunity to get revenge on Charity for the affair, deciding to take his own life and frame Charity for his death.

The final storyline of Chris Tate continues to illustrate how the genre has changed due to a shift in realism, moving away from social realism towards emotional realism typical of the American soap opera. Ang terms emotional realism as “the recognition of a tragic structure of feeling, which is felt as 'real' and which makes sense for these viewers” (Ang, 1985, p.87). The programme’s verisimilitude is not questioned because of the audience's emotional connection to it and its characters (McCarthy, 2015, p. 78). The change from social realism to emotional realism ensues melodramatic storylines do not disrupt the verisimilitude but denotes a shift away from narratives which sought to explore everyday issues through social

realism. The death of Chris Tate is an example of a narrative which relies on emotional realism.

The disability has not caused his evilness, but a change in the genre's realism has seen these melodramatic stories being given to a disabled character. The introduction of Tates brought about the change in the genre. The programme-makers intended to add complexity to the character by making him disabled. They did intend to explore disability in the narrative, as Richardson explains:

> It was a challenge, but I think he saw the possibilities with it as a character, and in fact, it certainly added an edge, you know. When he [Chris Tate] was being threatening, and this is a measure of his talent as an actor that when he was being threatening, he was doing it from a level that is unusual. (Chris Tate clip and moments, 2021)

As shown in the scenes discussed above, Tate's disability did not change his power. He continued to be a businessman, managing the farm and letting buildings. He remained a controlling bully who sought to take whatever he wanted from anyone and enjoyed doing so. The characterisation remained consistent from before the disability and after, as exampled by his attempted rapes of his wife and tenant. The shift in production cultures is also evident in this case study, and that is, non-disabled actors playing disabled characters have become less common. The following section will show soaps now work to ensure authenticity. That is not to say that there are not examples of non-disabled actors cripping up do not occur, but instead, there has been the creation of disabled characters, specifically for the inclusion of disabled actors.

This section has demonstrated that a role such as Chris Tate, which can be easily labelled as a negative stereotype, has been shaped less by the characters found disability but more by the programme's shift in genre. Demonstrating the relationship between genre and disability and the shift in production cultures as such roles become less common. I will now move on to consider David Proud's appearance as Adam Best in *EastEnders*, which is again another example of the genre shaping the representation. I will produce a multifaceted analysis of the character to demonstrate the continued relationship between genre, production cultures and the representations of disability.

## 5.4 David Proud as Adam Best.

Proud has Spina Bifida, a degenerative disability, and he became a wheelchair user at around eleven years old (Channel 4 News, 2020). Proud explains in his interview with Krishnan Guru-Murthy that he experienced some difficulty. Proud had to fight to attend the same secondary school as his sister because there was a desire for him to attend a specialist disabled school (Channel 4 News, 2020). It was also in secondary school that he became aware that he would be unable to have a physically demanding job; the school's computer system suggested Proud work towards a career as a "bricklayer" because "he liked the outdoors" (Channel 4 News, 2020). Proud discovered wheelchair basketball through the recommendation of a wheelchair using Vicar, John O'Day. Proud was inspired by O'Day because despite being a wheelchair user, O'Day remained mobile; he drove a car and could change the tire of his wheelchair whilst only balancing on one wheel (Channel 4 News, 2020). Wheelchair basketball was liberating for Proud, as he explains:

> No one would help you out. You know, you'd have a coach go "pick that ball up", you know, "sprint over there", do this, do that; and if you lived in a world where you've been kind of a little bit protected in a bubble, suddenly you're being pushed and told "well no they can do it so you can do it" and it's liberating (Channel 4 news, 2020)

Wheelchair basketball was influential for Proud; not only did it help him come to grips with his disability, but it was also how he got his first break into acting. Proud did not receive dramatic training. When selecting his university course, he decided that acting was not viable. Instead, he went to work as a benefits administrator for the Department of Work and Pensions (David Proud, n.d). What led Proud to such a conclusion was an awareness of the lack of disability on television, as he discusses with Krishnan Guru-Murthy in a Channel 4 News podcast:

> I looked at TV, and there just wasn't any disabled actors at all. At the time, there was a disabled character in Emmerdale that was played by a non-disabled actor, and I remember writing quite a stinking letter saying, you know, "Why don't we ever see

> Chris Tate getting out of his car? Can we see how he transitions into a wheelchair?" Because it is such an easy thing to show. (Channel 4 News, 2020)

Proud was aware of a lack of disability on British television and reasoned that it would be unlikely for a disabled person like him to enter the industry. Although *Eldorado* featured a disabled actor playing a disabled role, the programme's cancellation meant Amory's portrayal of disability was one of the only reoccurring representations on television for a substantial time. Many in the disabled community dismissed the portrayal because it was not an authentic role. Proud notes his frustration at not seeing the accessibility issues associated with disability being explored in the drama. However, as discussed in the previous section, the programme's genre had shifted away from representing such everyday issues, opting for melodramatic narratives by incorporating emotional realism.

Proud's first appearance on television was in 2007 in *Desperados* (CBBC), a children's television drama about a wheelchair basketball team. Proud played the main character Charlie, who, after becoming disabled, tries to find new meaning in his life and joins a basketball team called the *Desperados*. Proud likens the casting process for Desperados to *The X-Factor* (ITV, 2004-). *The X-Factor* is an open-call televised singing competition where anyone in the UK may enter, regardless of previous experience. Proud was one of the two hundred disabled actors who auditioned for the role of Charlie, and the numbers were whittled down until Proud was cast in the leading role. Despite starring in a leading role, there were spates of months after the production of *Desporados* when Proud was unable to secure work (Channel 4 News, 2020). He was eventually cast as Blake in *The Secret Diary of a Call Girl* (ITV2, 2007-2011). Blake's story saw him hire sew worker Hannah (Billie Piper) to confide in her about his disability and his insecurities, blaming his disability for his inability to gain a girlfriend. The casting in *The Secret Diary of a Call Girl* helped secure his audition for a role on *EastEnders*.

The decision to cast a disabled actor was an intentional decision by the BBC to be more inclusive. The role coincided with the launch of the BBC's in-house directory of disabled actors, which sought to be a "nationwide talent search" seeking out disabled "actors and performers, focusing on Manchester, Glasgow, London and Cardiff" (Holmwood, 2009). The Talent Alert collaborated with other talent directories, including Spotlight and Equity (BBC, 2009). The initiative was launched by then BBC's Director of Vision Jana Bennett, who

stated it is “critical that to connect with all of our audiences, we want to authentically reflect the lives of disabled people on-screen” (BBC, 2009). The BBC had elected to launch the initiative to create an in-house index of disabled talent they could rely upon for hiring disabled talent. The scheme looked to improve the sourcing of disabled talent, but it is unclear the opportunities it will present for disabled actors and performers. The initiative did not work with agencies that specialised in representing disabled talent. It remains unclear how successful the well-intentioned initiative by the BBC was. With little writing about the scheme, it is only clear that Proud was cast through it. The need for such a scheme illustrates the continued lack of engagement from broadcasters with disabled communities, such as the communities created at disabled-led theatre companies, despite these companies demonstrating the development they allow for disabled actors.

A friend had tipped off Proud about the audition, stating the casting director was looking to cast a recurring character. Learning this, Proud decided to be “as evil and snotty and horrible as I could” (Channel 4 News, 2020) to catch the casting director's attention. Proud states that the characterisation of Adam Best was “loosely based” on somebody he knew who would “instantly go into a room and make people instantly aware of his disability like the minute he could say the word cripple, he would… Just so he had that power dynamic of feeling like he was in control” (Channel 4 News, 2020). The decision to play the role as villainous could be interpreted as Proud having an awareness of the stereotypes of disability and playing to type. That his characterisation worked to reaffirm the biases around disability, leading to his casting as the role. That is not the case but rather shows an awareness from Proud of the conventions of the genre. Although he expresses a desire for social realism, he is aware of the melodramatic tendencies of the soap opera and how no character is fixed within a soap opera.

In hearing the role is a long-term recurring role, Proud decided to change his performance to match the melodramatic tendencies of the genre. However, it is difficult to argue that Adam is anything but a villainous character, similar to Tate. With Tate, it was clear that the disability did not cause his villainy because it existed before his disability. Adam is a trickster, tricking Libby into believing that he is a kind person who would not and is incapable of hurting anyone. Montgomerie (2010) discusses tricksters in comedy, where characters pretend to be disabled, and the joke is the shared knowledge between the viewer and the audience (see pages 28-30). In the soap opera, Adam is a trickster misdirecting the other characters into believing he is innocent, but he and the audience share the knowledge of

his true intentions. Instead of being used for comedic effect, the trickster becomes a tool to build suspense and anticipation is waiting for his mask to slip.

Adam is a student at Oxford University; Adam's love interest Libby Fox (Belinda Owusu, also attends Oxford. Libby is engaged to Darren Miller (Charlie G. Hawkins), but Adam and Darren jostle for Libby's affection. It is interesting to see another wheelchair-using character in another love triangle like Tate, Charity, and Cain in *Emmerdale*. In both love triangles, it is the disabled person who is stopping "true love", with Nessa in *Eldorado* being the only example of a disabled character not in a complex relationship. Adam is shown to be a better fit for Libby because, unlike Darren, he is academic and can share Libby's love of English literature. For example, in the Fox's home, Libby has taken a short sabbatical and is unsure if she should return to her studies. Libby remains unsure despite Libby's mum, Denise Fox (Diane Parish), trying to reason with her. Using reverse psychology, Adam agrees, telling her that a degree in English literature is not a "challenging" or "worthwhile" pursuit. Libby stands in her living, annoyed by Adam. She begins to speak about the importance of "Wordsworth", "Bronte", and "Shakespeare". Adam replies, "I thought you didn't care", giving a smile to Denise, who smiles back, clearly impressed by Adam. Adam is shown to care about Libby and her studies; he is also shown to be mentally her equal, with both attending Oxford.

In an episode from 2010, Libby and Darren's relationship is strained after Libby has discovered Darren had drunkenly cheated on her with Heather Trott (Cheryl Fergison), after which she had Darren's baby. Upon visiting her family home with Adam, it becomes clear the two are dating, but Adam is controlling and cruel at times. At the entrance to her house, Libby hugs her mum and Grandfather, Patrick Trueman (Rudolph Walker). Patrick comments on her new glasses, Libby asks if they like them, Patrick opts not to answer, and Denise calls them "very grown-up". Libby tells them Adam picked them, and he tells them, "Yeah, the old ones made her look like a librarian". Patrick admits he thought the old glasses looked "fine" Adam rolls his eyes and tilts his head; shrugging, he says, "If you like that sort of thing". There is a beat as Denise and Patrick share a look of disbelief, clearly uncomfortable with Adam's opinion. They move to the living-come-dining room as Darren enters. Darren tells Libby he just wanted to say "hello", desperate to repair the damage of his affair; Libby is open to speaking to him. Darren asks if they "could catch up later" and says he "Doesn't want to make her feel uncomfortable". Cutting to a medium close of Adam beside him, he looks up

to Darren, interjecting, “Well, you are. So why don’t you just leave”. Darren refuses to look at Adam and replies, “Well, it's got nothing to do with you”, and there is another cut to Adam, who answers, “Actually, it has”, as he moves over to Libby and takes hold of her hand. The camera tilts up from Adam to Darren, who is clearly in shock. Partick asks if she and Adam are “together now?” she gives an affirmative. There is an air of disappointment from everyone, apart from Adam, who looks up to Libby, smiling, still holding her hand. Darren leaves, Libby follows him, and they share a look, but neither of them speaks. Despite the affair, it is clear that what is becoming between Darren and Libby is Adam. This is reflected in the shot's framing, and they share glances over Adam, who is staged between them as he holds Libby’s hand. Adam’s characterisation is also different to aid the conflict. Adam is controlling, exhibited through his choosing Libby’s glasses and how he discusses her looks, calling her a “librarian”.

In the pub, The Queen Victoria (also known as The Queen Vic), Darren speaks to Tamwar (Himesh Patel) after discovering Adam and Libby are now together. He tells Tamwar, “I don’t know what she sees in him. He’s proper full of himself. Can’t even walk. I’m just saying like it is. All them blokes at Oxford, and she picks him”. Tamwar has applied to Oxford University, and Darren tells him, “The sooner you get in there, the better I need someone keeping an eye on him”. Libby and her family enter the pub. She approaches Tamwar and Darren, along with Adam. She presses Tamwar about the results of his resits, and reluctantly he confesses he did not earn high enough grades to go to Oxford. Libby is called away, and she gestures to Adam to follow her. He lies, telling her he is going to the bathroom, and when she is out of hearing distance, he turns on Tamwarm. “University of East London it is then”, upset Tamwar leaves, and Adam turns on Darren. “Aw, Never mind, mate. Maybe you can get a job at the chippy together”, Darren snaps, “I’m not your mate, so don’t call me one. I bet you bad-mouthed me to Libby for months while you wormed your way in”. Adam laughs, “No need. You did all that hard work for me knocking up that local elephant [Heather]”. There is a close-up of Partick, who is close enough to hear Adam as he continues, “Out of interest. How was Heather? Marks out of ten? Nah, don’t answer that. I can already guess. See, that's the great thing about girls like Libby. What they lack in looks, they really do try to make up for in the sack”. Darren leans down to Adam’s level, and there is a beat where Adam’s smile disappears, and Darren says, ‘If only you weren’t in that chair, Adam’. Relieved Darren will not hit him, Adams's smile returns.

The scene shows Adam again as cruel, manipulative, abusive, and a compulsive liar. When Libby leaves him, he switches into a different person, the facade drops, and the real Adam appears. He boasts about his intellect, almost as a defence mechanism to compensate for his disability. Those around him are aware of his cruel nature, all but Libby. The scene in the pub between him and Darren is similar to the scene between Tate and Cain in *Emmerdale*. Cain views Charity as an object, as does Adam. He is not attracted by Libby but wants to "own" her and gets gratification from watching Darren try to repair his relationship. Both scenes end similarly with Adam smiling, knowing that Darren cannot best him intellectually and will not fight him because he is disabled.

The mask eventually slips, and Libby sees Adam for who he truly is in his last storyline (2010). Adam has been blackmailing Lucy Beale (Melissa Suffield) to have sex with her in return for him doing her coursework. There is a confrontation between Adam and Lucy's brother Peter Beale (Thomas Law). Adam is making his way home through the square. There is a cut to Peter stepping out in front of him. In their argument, Adam again gains gratification at winding Peter and Lucy, knowing they cannot act because he is in a wheelchair. Gloating, Adam tells Peter he does not understand the problem because, typically, Lucy does not "need an excuse to drop her knickers" he also reminds them that they have not had sex and that Lucy "still owes" him. Peter threatens to tell Libby; Libby is currently grieving the loss of her Mother and Father. Adam is not sympathetic and asks, "Libby? Libby, whose just lost the Mum and Dad, Libby whose only comfort is her doting boyfriend, how cruel are you". A cut shows Libby standing behind Adam. She has heard the whole conversation, Adam realises and turns to face her. Libby storms inside, and Adam hangs his head and asks Lucy, "How much did she hear?". Following on, Libby throws Adam's belongings out onto the curb. She tells him to get in his car and leave, calling him a "seedy, self-serving, little pervert", She tells a crowd of on-lookers that her boyfriend blackmails school girls for sex, and that is "the only way he can get it". Adam shouts back, "You didn't seem to mind. What was it that did it for you, Lib? This?" Adam points to his wheelchair. He says he has been used and that Libby gained "liberal brownie points" for being with him, "I'm the one that's been used, exploited". Adam pushes Libby too far and mentions her mother, she stands over him, and he asks, "What are you going to hit a cripple?". Libby does not hesitate to smack him, then tells him to leave before she finds "A nice steep hill to push you down?". The on-lookers cheer as Adam heads to his car and drives away. It could be argued that this scene shows that Adam is not a complex character, that he

is a villainous character who uses his disability as a shield and as a disguise. There is some sympathy in the final scene for Adam, and it is clear in how he hangs his head that he feels shame about how he has acted, and it is uncomfortable to watch the only disabled character in the programme being applauded as he leaves. There has also been a consistent discussion about his disability from the other characters; they often mock his disability or his wheelchair. Tate in *Emmerdale* similarly viewed himself as untouchable because of his wheelchair, but the characters did not mock his disability. Although the reading is nuanced, there is some sympathy for Adam, as he struggles with relationships and pushes others away. However, he is one of the more villainous disabled characters, with few scenes to develop that nuance about the character.

It must also be noted the ease with which Proud can negotiate the set. He appears in a number of different sets in the scenes above and is shown moving around them, like Fernandez. The size of the *EastEnders* set means he is not static, like when he grabs Libby's hand or when he turns to face Libby when she discovers he has been blackmailing Lucy. There is dynamic movement, and the cameras can give the character good coverage. Proud did express a desire to show a disabled person's access requirements, perhaps the character moving to his car. Although he is shown to be mobile, there is no exploration of access needs. For example, a cut is used when driving his car out of the square instead of showing Proud moving from his chair to his car. Again this is a result of the genre's conventions. With the programme shifting away from social realism, it focuses on melodramatic storylines, meaning such everyday issues are not as explored as they may have once been. Instead, focusing on melodramatic storylines of affairs and blackmail. Other developments in production cultures included the BBC working towards creating a database to help source disabled talent. Although the scheme could do more to engage with disabled companies which have already built such indexes, it shows the BBC's commitment to including disabled actors and performers in their work. Such an initiative works only to solve part of the problem. The BBC must continue to create opportunities for disabled actors to ensure that such databases prove fruitful.

Adam has not been the only disabled character played by a disabled actor on *EastEnders*. Lisa Hammond also appeared as Donna Yates, with her character appearing for three more years longer than Proud's. Donna is a complex character with a variety over the four years she appeared in the drama. Her characterisation is not as villainous, and unlike Adam, the programme does represent her access needs. Donna demonstrates another change in

representations of disability in soap operas, whereas the long-running appearances before her have been disabled men with villainous tendencies. Donna is a disabled woman who is complex and not easily defined as villainous, but like Adam, she struggles to hold onto relationships. I will now explore Donna Yates, considering changes in production cultures and their relationship regarding representations of disability. I will also continue to note the fluidity of the genre and its bearing on representations.

### 5.5 Lisa Hammond as Donna Yates.

Lisa Hammond has Pseudoachondroplasia, which can cause restricted growth and joint hypermobility (Hunt, 2020). Joint hypermobility is when the joints become too flexible to the point where they cause pain. Because of her disability, Hammond uses a wheelchair.
She never intended to become an actor, but the BBC held auditions at her "special needs school" for a disabled character in their children's programme *Grange Hill* (1978-2008) (Broadhead, 2010). Hammond played Denny from 1994 to 1996, but Denny. The engagement with disabled schools demonstrates the unusual methods broadcasters would use to cast disabled talent to compensate for the lack of a clearly defined entry point through which disabled actors could gain employment. However, her casting in *EastEnders* in 2016 demonstrates a clear shift in production cultures. Unlike the casting of David Proud, Hammond's character was not envisioned as a disabled character. The head of BBC casting, Julia Crampsie, knew Hammond after her time on *Grange Hill*, so when Crampsie received the breakdown for the character Donna, who was "a gobby market stall trader, a little bit feisty", Crampsie put Hammond forward for the role (ITV, 2016). The auditioning for the role of Donna was mixed ability (Harris, 2014), meaning non-disabled and disabled actors were considered, and it is not clear if Hammond was the only disabled actor to audition.

Like Shaban, Hammond views roles as positive or negative. She is selective about the roles she accepts, as she explains in an interview with Ivy Broadhead for the BBC: "I get offered parts I don't want to do, playing elves and that sort of thing; basically a warm prop. I do wonder why people would take roles that perpetuate something so negative", Broadhead continues writing that Hammond "refuses to be pigeon-holed into the standard goblin and hobbit parts open to people with restricted growth" (2010). Although Shaban positioned such roles as positive because they were not disabled characters, Hammond labels them as negative because they are roles that rely on disabilities to further their aesthetic.

Hammond has turned to the theatre to develop her practice and explore disability, particularly focusing on the variety of roles for disabled actors. Non-disabled actor Rachael Spencer and Hammond, in their production *No Idea (*2009) and its subsequent sequel *Still No Idea* (2018), show prerecorded interviews with members of the public in which they ask for them to develop a narrative of their show. Despite both women sharing similar characteristics, with long brown hair, a fringe, and brown eyes, they found the general public would struggle to suggest ideas for Hammond:

> Their responses were so interesting and revealing that the process became the show. My smallness and my chair became something no one mentioned. I disappeared from the story. When people can't even imagine a story for you, it's easy to see how equality doesn't move on. (Broadhead, 2010)

Although there is a clear discussion of disability and the exploration of public bias, Hammond attempts to distance her theatre work from disability; she states that "the show isn't just about disability, we want to entertain people, not for them to go away and think "I learned a very important lesson there about disability" (Broadhead, 2010). Hammond prioritises entertainment over education; any lessons learned are almost a by-product. Hammond states that within her work, she prioritises character over disability and would prefer to reject stereotypical roles:

> I think all actors can kind of get side-lined and pigeon-hold in certain roles, and I try not to do roles that perpetuate what I would imagine is a bad stereotype in terms of smallness or disability. I sort of want to do stuff, creative stories that say more about just who the character is than always concentrating on the issues. (Lorraine, 2016)

Despite Hammond's preference, some of her roles out of soap operas explore disability. For example, Hammond's role as Tina in *Max and Paddy's Road To Nowhere* (Channel 4, 2004). In this comedy, Tina is Max's (Peter Kay's) love interest, and her size is integral to the storyline. Max's friends mock Tina because of her size. For example, they say: "She bought a book, how to make yourself taller. She stood on it". Although Max is uncomfortable with the jokes, he succumbs to peer pressure and joins, hanging his head; he tells his friends that she got "bronze for the short jump" in the Olympics. Max's and Tina's relationship becomes

strained when she overhears him joining the laughter. Tina stands around the corner from them, tears streaking her make-up as they roll down her cheeks. Tony (Stuart Wolfenden) turns to Max and says, “Hey Max, I bet she goes up on you, doesn’t she?”. Max headbutts Tony to the ground, stating he took the joke “Too far, Tony”. This scene is a flashback sequence in which Max recounts to Paddy (Patrick McGuinness) in his jail cell, and Tina appears throughout the series. In an earlier episode, the pair reunite after ten years at Tina’s husband’s birthday party. It becomes clear Tina left Max after hearing him and his mates “slag her off”. Tina’s husband, Wolfster (Tony Mooney), has been raising Max’s son, believing him to be his. Tina confesses the truth when Max confronts her, unsure why their relationship had to end. In this confrontation, Tina expresses her distress at the jokes Max made, that she was “the punchline. Everybody laughs at my expense. Well, I had enough”. This representation of disability could easily be interpreted as a stereotype, where “The Disabled Person as an Object of Ridicule” (Barnes, 1992, p.13). The jokes work to ridicule the disability, but the programme creates sympathy between the audience and Tina; although the audience may laugh with Max, they also share his discomfort.

The role above relied on Hammond’s height to progress the narrative and used her disability as a comedic device. Hammond has expressed the belief that roles of restricted height and disabled roles are distinct from one another: “Amongst many other horrific stories, I've also been told that ‘your too tall to be small’ - ‘you can't be both small and a wheelchair user’ and earlier THIS year 2021 ‘we didn't realise she was THAT kind of disabled’.” (@lisahammondwhop, 2021). The research demonstrates that actors of restricted height are used to further the aesthetics of some programmes, as was the case in the telefantasy section. The quotation above also suggests that ablest biases continue to shape roles. She argues that she has faced rejection because of her size and disability. She argues that producers have difficulty placing her in roles because she is of restricted height and is a wheelchair user. The quotation above was a response to disabled writer Jack Thorne who spoke about how disabled people have been excluded from the industry for being “too disabled” (Waterson, 2021). Disabled actor Ruth Madeley agreed, "This happens. It's happened to me. It's happened to pretty much every disabled actor I've met. No more” (@ruth_madeley, 2021). Disabled actor Mat Fraser also tweeted:

> "Yep. If I wrote a list of the ableist shit that's happened to me in the last 26 years, it would be longer than… my legs, if you cut one off and laid them end to end, and then if the writing was quite small too" (@Mat_Fraser, 2021).

This research focuses on roles where actors have been successful. However, it is essential to remember that actors who have successfully gained employment in one programme may continue to face barriers and prejudices. According to Hammond, she continues to be rejected for roles because of her disability.

*EastEnders* was a role which did not focus on disability and offered a wider variety of story types; some explore disability, and some do not. Donna's first appearance on the square stirs trouble between her and series regulars Kat Slater ( Jessie Wallace) and Bianca Jackson (Patsy Palmer). Walford council plans to merge Walford Market, where Kat and Bianca work, with Spring Lane Market, where Donna trades fashionwear. Bianca and Kat watch Donna from a distance as she moves from stall to stall in her electric wheelchair. There is a long shot of Donna as she easily manoeuvres between stalls of the buys market. Bianca nods her head, asking Kat if she has "seen her" Kat warns Bianca not to "stare", and Bianca becomes defensive "I'm not staring, and anyway, Tiff used to have a teacher that was little like that". Bianca explains that she drew Kat's attention to Donna not because of her disability but because she often visits the market, "looks at everything and never buys nothing". As Kat explains, it is not unusual with "half the people around here do the same". There is a cut back to the longshot of Donna, who smiles at another market trader; from a distance, she seems kind and sociable. Donna makes her way to their stall, smiling at Kat and Bianca as she inspects their merchandise. Kat tells Donna, "All right, buy two, and I'll give you five off" Donna smiles and replies, "I think I'll keep looking". Kat and Bianca are unaware Donna has come to scout out her future competition, so Kat unwittingly offends Donna when she says, "If you want tat, you can get that at Spring Lane". Donna asks, "Is that right?" Kat continues "Yeah, tat in every size and colour. Most colours" Kat realises she has mentioned Donna's size, and she tries to correct herself "All sizes, probably". Donna tells Kat, "Don't think I'm the one wearing tat, darling". There is a cut to Donna, who shakes her head as she turns back around and heads down the market again. In this scene, the audience is given a brief look into Donna's characterisation. With her kind smiles to those on the market, she is shown to be warm and welcoming. When Kat offends her, we see Donna is "'flinty, aggressive and difficult" (Harris, 2014) — suggesting already that she has some complexity

and depth. The scene does position Donna as an outsider, not because of her disability, but because she does not live in the square. Geraghty explores the insider vs the outside when discussing the construction of the community:

> One further strategy in creating a sense of community is to exclude those who do not belong and to clarify the difference between those inside the community and outside it. On the one hand, the opposition seems clear and differentiates between those who live on the Street or Square and those who do not, thus employing a geographic setting as a key function. This functions most clearly when the community is threatened from the outside — by developers wanting to pull down houses for instance — or is subject to the scrutiny of officialdom. (Geraghty, 1991, p.100)

Donna is not only positioned as an outsider because she does not live on the Square but because she represents the disruption of merging the markets, which threatens the income of the market traders. However, the merging of markets also sees Donna repositioned and "brought into the community" (Geraghty, 1991, p.101). Hammond comments on how the character changes from here initial introduction:

> It was hard to launch into such a fiery character. Once I settled in, I thought, 'This is fun - people will hate me'. Initially, Donna is very opinionated. But there is a humorous side to her. I don't want her to just be a hard-faced cow. There needs to be a glint in her eye, tinged with a bit of sarcasm as well. (Walker, 2014)

The shift from outsider to insider orientates a shift in the characterisation of Donna; she has a complexity. The programme works to develop her history, relationships, and desires. In 2016 Donna attempted to have a baby, and the storyline shows how the character has moved from an outsider to a complex member of the community.

Donna decides to have a baby, but because she is single, she opts for a sperm donor and plans on raising the child by herself. She informs her ex-care worker Pam Coker (Lin Blakely), of her plans. The scene begins with Donna at home; out of her wheelchair, she walks through the kitchen into the front room and sits on the sofa beside Pam. Donna is having difficulty finding a suitable sperm donor but tells Pam she will not be deterred. Pam tells her she "Would be a great mother. I've always said so, but I wouldn't be a friend if I didn't ask. Have

you thought about the practicalities?". Donna assumes Pam is referring to her disability, and she tells her, "Women of my size have kids all the time". Pam interrupts, "I'm not talking about your size Donna. I'm talking about your lifestyle". Pam's dismissal of Donna's disability demonstrates the narrative's focus in that it will not explore disability but rather focus on the character. This becomes clearer as the conversation works to develop the character's history. Donna tells Pam that her adoptive brother Vincent Hubbard (Richard Blackwood) is supportive whilst being an "overprotective" big brother. Pam reminisces, "I remember when I took you to Claudettes for the very first time. He must have been 18, 19 years old". They laugh at how Vincent was a prankster, using a whoopie cushion on his mother, and that is when Pam "knew you [Donna] were gonna be all right living there". The exploration of the character's past creates familiarity for the audience. Achieving familiarity allows a "richness and density" (Geraghty, 1991, p. 15) and creates a degree of closeness between Donna and the audience.

Instead, Donna's baby storyline focuses on becoming a single parent. This is apparent in the scene above and another episode from the same year. Vincent is hosting a dinner party with his and Donna's mother, Claudette (Ellen Thomas), his wife Kim Fox (Tameka Empson) and his daughter Pearl (Arayah Harris-Buckle). Donna tells her family she has decided to have a baby. Kim chokes on her food at the revelation; pointing to Donna, she says, "You? Well, what about the baby daddy?". Donna tells Kim she plans to raise a child alone, Kim is visibly confused, and Donna snaps, "Yeah, it's the immaculate conception, Kim". Claudette asks Donna to wait till she is in a serious relationship. Donna is offended, but her mother continues, "How will you manage on your own" and "What about the cost?". Donna tells her mother that she cannot tell her what to do and that she is not "some bird you can put in a cage, Mum". Donna tells them she has already booked the appointment and leaves the table. There is a cut to a medium shot of Donna as she heads out of the dining room door. Interestingly, her family members do not discuss her disability; they are concerned about her raising the child alone. Although one could argue that their concern is that she will not cope as a single mother because of her disability, the programme works to avoid the conversation around disability altogether.

One could view the exclusion of disability in a drama as a positive, as the programme instead adds complexity to the role. Barnes argues that such treatment is stereotyping and negative, "The Disabled Person as Normal" stereotype (1992, p.18) portrays the person to be an

individual who happens to have a disability and is, like the social model of disability, it risks dismissing an individual's impairment (Stibbe, 2004). Hammond found in her theatre work that audiences reframed from exploring her disability when creating narratives for her show; as a result, she found that her character "disappeared from the story". The lack of exploration into Donna's disability similarly sees the character disappear from the story, even though the story could go on for years, showing Donna through her pregnancy and raising her child, but it does not. Instead, the storyline continues with Donna struggling to find a suitable sperm donor. She turns to her adoptive brother and asks him to be the father of her child. Vincent agrees to be her donor, but his decision strains his marriage as Kim is uncomfortable with the idea. Despite Kim's continued objection, Donna and Vincent go ahead with the donation. However, when the insemination fails to take, Donna begins to waver. In a scene between her and a pregnant Whitney Dean (Shona McGarty), Donna seemingly gives up on pursuing a baby. Whitney holds her pregnant stomach whilst she tells Donna how happy she is to have Leigh Carter (Danny Hatchard) by her side during her pregnancy; she admits she would not be able to raise the baby on her own. Deciding to give up, Donna is comforted by Kim, who tells her she will eventually find a man of her own. Donna had considered who would be her sperm donor for a long time, but in a single conversation with Whitney, she changed her mind. She was adamant about having a baby; her decision feels out of character and removes the opportunity for various storylines from Donna.

Donna never had a child and eventually left the Square in 2018. In her final storyline, Donna fears for the safety of baby Abi (uncredited). As Abi's mother and father passed away, the child's custody has been passed on to her Grandfather, Max Browning (Jake Wood) and her Great Aunt, Rainie Highway (Tanya Franks). Donna worries for Abi's safety because Rainie is an ex-drug addict. In an attempt to get the child placed with child protection services, Donna plants drugs on Rainie, but when she is caught, her boyfriend Robbie Jackson (Dean Gaffney) confronts her. After their argument, Donna packs her bags and leaves in a taxi. Robbie returns home to see she has gone. The storylines being explored here are not everyday issues. They are melodramatic and rely on emotional rather than social realism. Doing so has allowed the drama to move away from focusing on disability and instead work on the characterisation of the character.

There was speculation that Hammond had decided to leave the programme because she felt she had been used to "tick boxes at the BBC" and that she was "unhappy about her time on

the show and felt that she didn't get enough storylines. So when she left, she poured her energy into writing a play about her experiences" (Wetherill, 2018). Arguably the character's pregnancy storyline offered potential for future storylines, and after Donna had gained the approval of her friends and family, she quickly lost her interest. Her final story continues to show that she holds strong feelings about children and parenting, with her going to unusual lengths to secure a child's safety. Despite her desire to be a parent, the programme did not explore that narrative. It is important to note that this is only speculation. Hammond at the time of her exit, gave the following statement: "It's been so great to play Donna for the past four years…I've made lifelong friends at EastEnders and will really miss all of the brilliant cast and crew who have always been a pleasure to work with!" (Tetteh, 2018). She has also stated in other interviews that it was her love of the theatre that made her leave *EastEnders*: "It was a big change, being in EastEnders. I missed the theatre a lot – when you're in a soap you can't really pursue other projects" and that "if I had to choose between T.V. and theatre, I would choose theatre" (Clay, 2018). Hammond explains that the theatre allows for more creativity and expression, that theatre production process is more liberating than television (Clay, 2018). Hammond seems to suggest more opportunities and variety in theatre compared to television. This shows that disabled-led theatre companies have become more than an attempt to tackle inequality and offer more than an index of disabled talent.

It is also worth noting the discourse surrounding Hammond's time on *EastEnders,* which focused on her disability, often fans would ask why Hammond was not in her wheelchair in the latest episode of EastEnders (Lindsay, 2015). Hammond argues that "the main image of wheelchair users is that of paralysis', adding 'when I get out of my chair to do a scene on my feet – and that all depends on how I'm feeling – people don't like it' (Hunt, 2020). In interview with an unnamed disabled actor, they explained that they considered Hammonds role to be authentic because of the character moving out of the wheelchair:

> I think I've only ever seen it done once before by Lisa Hammond on EastEnders, when she can walk, she got out of her chair and started walking around her flat. And I was like 'oh my god finally, finally.' You know, but a lot of the time it's like if you're in the chair, you're in the chair for the whole thing, you don't get out. (Anonymous source, 2020)

Although Sandy moved between his crutches and his wheelchair in *Crossroads*, the size of the sets limited his movement. Here the sets are large, and Hammond can navigate them either by walking or in her chair; in doing so, she adds authenticity to her representation. David Proud had been keen to achieve such authenticity in his appearance on *EastEnders* but was kept from doing so. Production cultures have also shifted as Hammond is the first example of a disabled actor being considered for a character not written as disabled. Although her first casting in the television industry was because of her disability, *EastEnders* sought to put character before disability, which is also true within the programme's narratives.

The scenes above demonstrate a clear change in Donna's characterisation, brought about by the conventions of the genre. The scenes after her introduction work to develop her character, adding complexity and building familiarity. This sees her character move from an outsider to an insider. Her storylines work to develop her complexity rather than relying on her disability. There has been a clear change in the representations of soap opera, from the portrayals of Chris Tate in *Emmerdale* and Adam Best in *EastEnders*. Both genders are stereotyped in soap operas, as typical of the genre. However, the male characters have been stereotyped as villainous, and the female characters, Nessa and Donna, are “The Disabled Person as Normal” (Barnes, 1992, p.18) stereotype. This suggests that gender may also have a bearing on the representation as well.

Donna Yates appeared in *EastEnders* for four years. Beginning as an outsider, she became a part of the Walford community, and the communities acceptance saw a change in her characterisation. The drama worked to encompass her in the drama fully and did not aim to make her disability the crutch of the representation. Despite the complexity of the character, the pregnancy storyline felt short-lived, and her decision not to have a baby felt out of character. It is unclear why the storyline ended the way it did. However, Hammond alludes to a general fear of disability in British television drama and demonstrates an evident frustration at the ablism she continues to experience within the industry. Production cultures have shifted, making sets more accessible and inclusive hiring practices such as mixed ability auditions. However, limits continue to be placed on disabled actors by those higher up in the British television industry.

Cherylee Houston's Izzy Armstrong has had a variety of storylines; like Donna, she also wanted to have a baby but had to find a surrogate. The storyline took full advantage of the genre's seriality, with Izzy eventually becoming a mother. However, as I will show, the programme explores disability, unlike *EastEnders*. Houston's appearance on the programme is the longest representation of disability in soap operas and is the longest representation of disability portrayed by a disabled actor in British soap operas. Her longevity means she has a complex history and is a part of the *Coronation Street* community. The representation also shows an evident change in the production cultures concerning reasonable adjustments and accessibility. The following section will be the final case study and demonstrate the relationship between the programmes genre, production cultures and its representation of disability.

### 5.6 Cherylee Houston as Izzy Armstrong.

*Coronation Street* was not the first British soap opera, but it is the longest-running British television soap opera. Tony Warren based the programme on his life, the matriarchal figures he had grown around, and his upbringing in Pendlebury, and Eccles, which had shaped the programme. Originally titled *Florizel Street, Coronation Street* centres on a fictional Salford Street and explores real issues. The basic concept of the programme remains the same to this day, though there has been a refocusing regarding the programme's realism. As the programme has had to compete for viewing figures, the programme's stories have become melodramatic. Despite the programme's longevity and popularity, images of disability are rare, and it was not until the introduction of Izzy Armstong in 2010 that the street had its first disabled resident and its first reoccurring disabled character.

Cherylee Houston is an actor and disabled rights campaigner. Houston was diagnosed with Ehler's Danlos Syndrome at twenty-three years old and later became a wheelchair user. Elher's Danlos Syndrome affects the joints; the joints are unstable, and damaged tissue in muscles and tendons can cause "sprains, dislocations and constant pain" (O'Sullivan, 2021). Houston attended the Arden School of Theatre; in her second year of drama school, she learnt she would need a wheelchair. The revelation impacted her education and led to her being treated differently at the school:

> In [the] second year when it happened to me, then the roles got a lot less suddenly, and people started to take risks on me less, and when we were leaving, everybody was given a mentor from the industry. They couldn't find me one because they didn't know what I'd need. (Houston, 2020)

Before her diagnosis, Houston was treated like every other student, but her diagnosis changed the roles given to her at the school and saw her being included less often. It was the view of the school that her disability would ultimately shape her career. Instead of paring her with a non-disabled mentor, they ultimately decided not to give Houston that crucial guidance and offset her career. The school limited a capable actor because of their inability to see past Houston's disability. As she graduated, they failed to prepare her for working life because of their inexperience and prejudice. The discrimination Houston faced continued as she attempted to begin her acting career:

> My peers started getting jobs, and I wasn't even being seen for them. At that point, I wasn't a wheelchair user. I think I was in a wheelchair at 25, so a year and a half after college. Still, I couldn't run, walk, or stand up for long at all. So I couldn't do the jobs without telling them, and then they weren't interested. That's a hidden disability thing that's still a tricky area for people to understand nowadays as well. (Houston, 2020)

Despite not being a wheelchair user at this point in her career, Houston still struggled to gain employment because she would have to reveal her disability to explain her mobility issues. This was in 1997 after the Disabled Discrimination Act came into legislation. Despite the act, Houston experienced discrimination and a reluctance to meet the requirements of the DDA. The application process was demanding for Houston, who described the difficulty in applying for roles with paper application forms that she would have to post. She states writing and sending the applications was "A big physical job. It wasn't like a click, send, click sent sort of thing" (Houston, 2020). She would have to source the application forms, complete them, and attach any relevant information such as headshots, then take those applications to the post office only to face rejection after rejection, "Agents were saying – when I did get a response back they were saying it was difficult to represent you because there are no jobs" (Houston, 2020). It is important to note that there were jobs available, but there were not any disabled roles available. The agents are unwilling to represent Houston because of a lack of disabled roles but are also reluctant to put her forward for parts that are not written as disabled. There

we fewer opportunities for disabled people because of a lack of disabled roles, but also because it was accepted in production cultures not to hold mixed ability castings. Actors secure regular work by securing an agent, but as Houston points out, agents were unwilling to represent her. She had instead worked to gain employment by sending her applications before gaining enough experience to satisfy a prospective agency.

> I had ten or eleven television credits on my CV before getting an agent to take me on. I'd also been in lots of small guest leads and still wasn't getting an agent, but that was a different generation. I think that's still slightly sticking for disabled actors. Particularly because people's mindsets aren't on the fact that there isn't the work out there, that is very different now, I think, because we are starting to be on telly, and it feels like there is quite a massive shift in the unconscious bias towards us. (Houston, 2020)

Huston argues that attitudes have changed since she struggled for employment and an agent. There has been a shift in production cultures, no longer focusing on disabled roles for disabled actors but open to mixed-ability castings. She also notes the amount of disability on television has increased, but she also is cautious, stating that these changes are only recent. Houston argues that training is crucial in improving inclusion in television and that theatre presents aspiring disabled actors with the opportunity to train and develop their practice. She claims, "If you can't go to your local youth theatre and be integrated, then you're not building that skill path up… I think to make that change, it's about training up youth theatre leads" (Houston, 2020). She positions youth theatres as opportunities to develop skills and argues that creating more competition will help build opportunities in industries like television:

> Me and my colleague set up Big House, which is a disabled theatre company, and it was about changing the mindset or educating them on how to employ. Also, there needs to be more competition; there needs to be more disabled actors out there. We ran an audition course; we looked at how youth theatre leaders need training. (Houston, 2020).

Houston positions disabled-led theatres as an educational opportunity for not only disabled actors but also for those running youth theatres and broadcasters to learn and develop their

practices. She positions such companies as a formal network that can work to overcome the lack of opportunity and facilities for actors, contrary to Cumberbatch and Negrine, who described such companies as "informal networks of this kind are undoubtedly important but they cannot overcome the lack of opportunity and facilities for actors with disabilities" (1992, p.118). Houston, similarly to Nabil Shaban, founded her own theatre company to address the lack of inclusion for herself and other disabled actors. Houston argues that typical entry points into the industry are not as accessible for disabled actors, and theatre groups like hers helped disabled actors create a CV to be taken seriously by casting directors:

> Fringe theatre wasn't accessible. The venues weren't accessible. The mindset wasn't accessible. So it was about putting on your own show to be seen or at least having something to tell a casting director to say I am a working actor. (Houston, 2020)

Fringe theatre refers to productions that are not considered to be mainstream theatre. These would mainly be smaller theatres with limited disabled access, but despite that inaccessibility, it is an entry point into the industry for disabled actors. The inaccessibility of these fringe theatres limits the number of disabled actors who can be involved in a production. This has broader implications and can result in the lack of disability in fringe theatre, mainstream theatre, television, and film. Theatre companies like Graeae and Big House give people experience. They also create communities that work towards educating others, such as broadcasters. Such companies helped Shaban and Houston secure work and representation. Houston eventually moved on from the Big House a few years before she came to be cast in *Coronation Street* (Houston, 2020). However, she continues to work towards improving inclusion through the Disabled Artist Networking Community, also known as DANC. Houston explains DANC was set up in 2018, and "it was something for the community and the industry to make that two-way connection and introduce those conversations" that it was founded because "people didn't know where to find us [disabled actors] and you know, whenever a job happened they didn't know where to start looking, so having a centralised resource", but they also represent "disabled artist" and in doing so have "built a very rich community of different people from different art forms" (Houston, 2020).

DANC has become a resource for broadcasters to identify disabled talent, similar to talent agencies like VISable, who represent disabled actors such as Fernandez and Ellie Wallwork. However, Houston recognised issues productions faced in sourcing disabled talent in front of

and behind the camera. DANC worked with the BBC on their programme *The A Word* (BBC, 2016 -) to hire disabled runners. *The A Word* focuses on a family raising an autistic son. The autistic son is played by Max Vento, who does not have autism, but disabled actors Leon Harrop and Sarah Gordy, who both have Down's Syndrome appear in the drama as husband and wife; and appear in a spin-off programme where they play the title characters *Ralph and Katie* (2022). With disability being represented on camera, the programme-makers opted to include disabled people in the programme's production; The *A Word* producer and DANC board member Marcus Wilson launched an initiative that saw the creation of "ten paid placements for five weeks, 500 pounds a week" and in one night he received 50 applications from viable candidates, via the DANC newsletter, from there they successfully employed ten disabled runners (Houston, 2020). The scheme works to allow disabled actors and production members to form connections within the industry and expand the industry's closed circle, as "people tend to employ from their circle of knowledge sometimes in TV and film if you haven't got a disabled person in that, that never happens" (Houston, 2020). DANC plans to roll out such initiatives across other productions and is working with "key industry people" to ensure the scheme's continued success (Houston, 2020).

Houston's work with DANC shapes and influences the inclusion of disability in front of and behind the camera, creating an identifiable entry point into the industry for disabled people; its success hinges on engagement from broadcasters. Houston casting in *Coronation Street* was also because of an initiative after *Coronation Street*'s executive producer Kieran Roberts pledged to improve inclusion in the programme during a conference Houston attended. As Houston recalls:

> Kieran Roberts, who was the exec producer at the time, made a promise at the time to put a disabled actor on screen for at least six months. So they auditioned males, females, and all ages. So it was about finding the right actor. (Houston, 2020)

In this example, the casting was specifically disabled people, and it was open as to the type of disability, gender, race, and age of the actor. Izzy Armstrong was only created and characterised after Houston secured the role. Houston explains ITV's decision to cast a disabled actor in a disabled role was them recognising they did not have a representation of disability (Houston, 2020). Mixed auditions were inappropriate for this casting as they

addressed the lack of inclusion. A disabled actor I spoke to compared closed casting and mixed-ability casting, noting they prefer mixed ability because it feels less tokenistic:

> I've been in some [audtions] that did seem like a tick box exercise. So, there is a big difference in each audition process, but, I think, mixed casting stands out. I don't know how to describe how, but I think it was – I think – I guess it just goes down to that I knew they were looking at anyone and everyone. I think that's what it was, and it genuinely wasn't anything to do with everybody's ability or disability. It was purely to do with what talent they were looking for, what they felt who bought what to the table on the day, and that's that, in my opinion, that's how it should be. (Anonymous source, 2020)

The actor prefers mixed casting because it prioritises talent, that is not to say that closed casting does not choose the most talented individual, but the focus on disability risks the danger of labelling the role as tokenistic, with the actor only being cast in that role because of their disability. There has been a shift towards mixed-ability casting where appropriate. Houstons explains her auditions were relatively unstructured, allowing the producers to familiarise themselves with actors:

> There was an audition afternoon. I'm not sure if they ran a couple of them. We improvised together and played around with different things. I think just to see how you were as a human being, how I interacted and your ability to act. I think, a year and a half later, they auditioned ten men, ten women. We got a script through, eight pages, for two days' time. To be off script, doing a screen test. So, I spent my next 48 hours doing nothing but that script. I knew it backwards because I wanted that job. (Houston, 2020)

Houston also explained that the lack of disability on television had shaped her work ethic: "You have a lot less opportunities to get jobs [as a disabled actor], you had to really nail those opportunities, and I think that's an ethos I always took through was work your socks off" (Houston, 2020). The lack of disability has impacted the practices of a disabled actor, as was the case with Nabil Shaban (see page 73). Houston knew the opportunity was unique and unlikely to arise again, so she ensured there was no room for error. It had taken three years since Kieran Robert's pledge to audition, create, and launch the character. Despite being a

disabled character, Houston noted disability is not crucial to the characterisation, which was unique from her previous experiences:

> I don't mind it [her disability] being mentioned. What I love about Corrie [*Coronation Street*] is it's not about my disability at all. Prior to Corrie, I think I had one job which wasn't about a disability, and disability isn't a personality trait. It's a given circumstance, it's a fact, not a how you live your life, and I think the moment because non-disabled people are writing without much consultancy or assumptions are being made again you're stuck with some stereotypes or caricatures, where it becomes personality driven about disability. (Huston, 2020)

Although Houston is indifferent to exploring disability, she also enjoys that her role in *Coronation Steet* focuses on character. She also notes that she believes representations of disability are limited as the roles are not created by or in consultation with disabled people, and this produces stereotypes or caricatures. The research has already shown that disabled actors are used as consultants on some scripts, as was the case for Ellie Wallwork, who removed the cliched scene where she felt her mother's face from "It Takes You Away Script" (see page 109). Houston seems to suggest that this type of consultation needs to continue to produce characters that are not stereotypes of disability. The academic assertion that stereotypes are negative has made its way into production cultures, with actors failing to not the reliance on stereotypes, particularly within soap operas, with all characters, and that stereotypes are temporary.

Interestingly disabled actors continue to position "The Disabled Person as Normal" (Barnes, 1992, p18) not as a stereotype but as an aspiration that other disabled roles should aim to reproduce. The continued acceptance of this particular stereotype demonstrates the issues with the binary labelling of roles as negative or positive. Although she argues her character in *Coronation Street* does not consider disability, that is certainly not the case, and her character, like all soap opera characters, moves through stereotypes during her inclusion in the drama. In doing so, it is not reductive but produces a complex character with various story types, some of which explore disability. This case study also differs in that there is more exploration of everyday issues, and Izzy's accessibility issues are shown on camera in a greater depth than in previous representations due to a shift in production cultures.

*Coronation Street* had begun developing a new set in 2013, three years after Houston joined the drama. They planned to move the set from its old location in central Manchester to a new one at MediaCity UK in Salford. As with the building of the *Eldorado* set, this presented the production with an opportunity to design the set and implement access requirements into the very fabric of the set rather than make adjustments later on. ITV consulted with Houston while designing the set to make reasonable adjustments for her. Houston explained the consultation process of both the old set and the new one and noted the benefits of the reasonable adjustments:

> They brought me in a couple of months before I started the job, went around, checked everywhere just to make sure everything was fully accessible for me and had a chat with every department to make sure we could figure out how to make it accessible for me. When we moved from Quay Street to MediaCity, they figured out a route for me, so we've got electronic doors around the building. They also made sure the whole of Corrie was flat and accessible. All the way around the street, there was a path across the cobbles as well because I can't go over cobbles because they hurt. So now, which is brilliant, because it made a difference for cameras for dollys, for people who are carrying lots of stuff, the access actually helped everybody else. Like the electronic doors help somebody if you're carrying something, the elderly members of the cast, if somebodies hurt their arm. It just shows how access is a good ripple for everybody, really. (Houston, 2020)

On the first set, Houston met with each department to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that she was fully incorporated into the production; as Fernandez noted, accessibility issues can lead to isolation and exclusion from the production and the community on set (see page 129). Allowing time to implement changes helped Houston move freely between departments, such as wardrobe and make-up. However, some access issues were only resolved because of the new set. The consultation process ensured that Houston could access all areas of the set. Providing a path around the cobbles means that she can appear within any interior set, and there are no limitations placed upon the character; Izzy can appear anywhere her non-disabled neighbours do. Houston positions developments in access as a positive not for just disabled actors but for other cast and crew members and also changed the coverage, with dolly cameras able to manoeuvre more of the set. Houston notes that ITV also made reasonable adjustments for her chronic pain, she claims "they facilitated me very well for my

pain like ensuring I work a four-day week, ensure I have a bed in my dressing room, you know, looked at proper rest, sympathetic scheduling, things like that" (Houston, 2020).

There has been a clear shift in production cultures brought about by the Disabled Discrimination Act of 1995, which made it a legal requirement to ensure disabled staff were not disadvantaged. Previously to the DDA, Shaban had little to no reasonable adjustments and worked through his discomfort (see page 72). For Fernandez, the production used cuts to overcome accessibility issues, and Fernandez struggled because of her move to Spain and a lack of aftercare (see page 123). Meanwhile, Houston has been consulted, and ITV has worked to ensure each of her needs are met before beginning filming on both the old and the new set. It may be the case ITV are meeting their legal obligations. Still, there has been a clear shift in the production practices as to when reasonable adjustments should be made and that they are made in consultation with the disabled person rather than their needs being assumed, as has been the case previously.

The set itself was expanded, and in those expansions, the production met the access needs of Izzy on camera too. Izzy often visits her boyfriend Gary Windass (Mikey North) at his workplace, the local gym. In one scene, after Izzy drops off their baby with Gary, she exits the building via their wheelchair lift, just beside the steps of the gym's entrance. The camera is in a high-angle long shot as Izzy is shown using the left, pushing open the safety gates and making her way down the pavement. The programme represents access needs in a manner that David Proud called for when discussing Peter Amory's portrayal of disability (see page 136). It grounds the character, adds authenticity to the role, and shows how the production has incorporated Houston into the programme.

A scene from a 2015 episode shows that the reasonable adjustments have made it easier for Izzy to navigate the set, and the camera can cover the action entirely. Houston and Gary exit the local fish and Chip shop. Together, they head down the access ramp, turn and bump into Faye (Ellie Leach). Ellie walks with them as they eat their chips. Walking into the road, Izzy uses the drop curb, and the camera tracks them in a medium close-up shot as they cross the road onto another pavement. There is a cut to a close-up of Izzy handing Faye a tray of chips. In this shot, her chair bounces as it mounts the curb; using another dropped curb, Izzy heads down the pavement with Gary and Faye in tandem. The camera tracks the three of them for the length of the street, stopping as they reach their home. There is a cut to a medium shot of

Izzy offering Faye more chips before she exits the frame. This example shows the change in production culture and its relationship to the images of disability, from sets being too small for Roger Tonge and staging being designed around him to large sets made accessible for both actor and character, with the cameras also able to cover the entire scene and track her as she moves down the street.

Houston has had a variety of story types, and they vary on whether disability is or is not explored. Two examples show how the programme does and does not explore disability, with the first being a pregnancy storyline (2012) similar to Donna's in *EastEnders* it does not attempt to explore disability. Although the conflict in the narrative is caused by Izzy being unable to carry children due to her disability, the story focuses on her IVF surrogate Tina McIntyre (Michelle Keegan), and her desire to keep the baby, which places a strain on Izzy and Gary's relationship. Initially, the couple approached Gary's sister Katy Armstrong (Georgie-May Foote), to be their surrogate. Having only recently given birth, Katy kept surrogacy a secret from her family and partner Chesney (Sam Aston). Chesney and Izzy's and Katy's father, Owen Armstrong (Ian Puleston-Davies), learn of the surrogacy at the Christening of Katy's son, Joseph (Ronny & Tommy Cheetham). Owen tells Katy, despite having Joseph, she is too young and naïve to make these sorts of decisions. Owen threatens Gary at the christening, and the day ends abruptly.

In the scenes after the christening, Chesney and Katy discuss the possibility of Katy carrying Izzy's baby whilst Izzy visits her father to make amends and gain his blessing. In this scene, instead of exploring disability, as *Eldorado* did during the argument between Nessa and her mother, the programme develops Izzy and her family's history. The scene occurs at Owen's door; she stands outside telling him:

> When Mum left, I always put you and Katy first. I did my best to fill the hole she left behind. And that was my choice, and I'm glad I made it, but this is my chance to have something for me, and all I'm asking, all I'm begging, is that you keep an open mind. Is that such a terrible thing? (ITV, 2012).

Owen pauses before answering, "Yes"(ITV, 2012). The characters refer to events that happened off-screen and position Izzy as the matriarchal figurehead of the family despite her disability. Therefore Izzy is not a disabled stereotyped but stereotyped because of her

femininity, which is typical in soap operas. Garagthy writes that typically British soap operas depict women as working to "hold the family together" (Geraghty, 1991, p.78). Izzy is attempting to hold her family together in reasoning with her father. Geraghty explains that the matriarchal woman is a:

> Structural role of selfless support [that] is passed on from one generation to another in British soaps. Indeed, the young women seem almost to be in training to pick up their mothers' burdens. Through the years, British soap audiences have been able to watch the young girls in the programmes develop into strong women on whom, in their turn, the family relies. (Geraghty, 1991, p.79)

The exploration of the past positions Izzy as the selfless supportive role in her family, inheriting the role after her mother left. Izzy is typed as a strong woman whom her family turns to despite being disabled. The narrative works to reject disability, as it did in *EastEnders*; this exchange demonstrates the conflict is not focusing on whether Izzy will be a capable mother, she has already proved she is in becoming the head of her family, but rather whether it is suitable for her sister to be her surrogate because of her young age. Izzy selflessly considers others as a surrogate, not wanting to cause a rift in the family. In debt with Own, Tina is forced to become a surrogate for the pair to cancel her debt. Tina's boyfriend, Tommy Duckworth (Chris Fountain), is uncomfortable with the arrangement. Throughout her pregnancy, Tina is suffocated by the Windass family who have a sense of ownership over Tina due to their arrangement. Gary attempts to kiss Tina whilst she carries his and Izzy's child. Katy tells Izzy as Tina is rushed to the hospital, there are complications during the birth, and the baby is monitored and placed in an incubator. Tina has grown attached to the baby during her pregnancy and is concerned for its wellbeing, with Gary and Izzy constantly arguing. Tina decides the baby should stay with her; she opts not to hand the child over to Gary and Izzy once it has recovered. The story continues with the baby moving between his biological parents and surrogate mother. Eventually, Tina relinquishes, and Izzy and Gary start their family.

In an episode from the same year, the programme focuses on Izzy and parenthood. After bringing their baby home, Izzy is shown to be a capable mother. Begging on a close-up of the baby in his basket crying, there is a cut to a medium shot of Gary, who is stressed at the sound. He attempts to touch the baby, but nervously, he gives up. He shrugs, telling Izzy,

“Maybe he's not hungry? Maybe there's something wrong”. There is a cut to a long shot of Izzy in the kitchen, who is preparing a bottle. She heads over to Gary and the Baby, telling him, “There's nothing wrong”. Gary replies, “At least in the hospital, we could tell there were monitors in there”. Izzy laughs off Gary’s worry and tells him, “Stop fussing. He just wants a feed”, as she gives the baby his bottle. When she goes to pick the baby up, Gary jumps to his feet, telling Izzy, “I’ll do it”.  Izzy puzzles Gary and asks why, but before Gary can answer, she tells him she can cope and that “she can manage anything that he needs” Gary apologises and sits back down as he tells her, “Of course, you can cope”. Again, Izzy is the head of the family and is shown to be a strong woman, Gary wonders whether she is capable because of her disability, but Izzy is quick to affirm that her disability will not affect her parenting. She remains calm and confident, whilst Gary is nervous. Though disability is touched upon here, it is to dismiss disability and show this storyline does not aim to explore disability.

*Coronation Street* did what *EastEnders* did not. *EastEnders* put an abrupt end to Donna’s baby storyline, and as a result, it did not show a disabled person as a parent. *Coronation Street* continued the storyline past the point of pregnancy, allowing them to represent a disabled mother. The story continues to have longevity; eleven years later, Izzy shares custody of her son Jake Windass with Gary after splitting up. The story was allowed to continue, and in doing so, it continued to distance itself from disability and represent Izzy as a strong matriarch. However, as with the nature of soap operas, this stereotype is only temporary, and in a storyline around substance abuse, the programme investigates disability and shows Izzy to be fallible.

In 2014 Izzy and Gary’s relationship began to crumble, Izzy and Gary split custody of their son, and Izzy struggled between raising her son and the chronic pain caused by her EDS. To try and cope with the pain, Izzy begins to self-medicate with marijuana. In a scene from 2016, Izzy tries a new strain that Gary had purchased on her behalf. Sitting at the kitchen table, she waits for Jake's Grandmother,  Ann Windass (Debbie Rush), to leave with Jake. Upon hearing the front door close, she scrambles to make a cigarette. She sits at the table and begins to smoke. The camera watches from a distance; it creeps towards Izzy as she exhales a mouth of smoke. Instantly, she is disorientated, her hand takes the stick of her wheelchair, and she rolls backwards, knocking over the kitchen bin. She places a hand on the kitchen wall to steady herself. She then pushes forwards on her chair and drives herself to the kitchen table; there is a cut to her hunched over the table. The camera tilts up to show Izzy’s eyes

darting from left to right. Cutting to her point of view, the camera shakes as it films the walls of her flat. The camera quickly pans to the left, rocking as it settles on a pair of curtains that are warped and distorted. Izzy takes to her phone and begins to sob, mumbling "Gary" as he puts the phone to her ear. Returning to Izzy over the advert break, her condition has worsened. She breathlessly chants "breathe" as she sobs, rocking back and forth, bouncing her mobile phone off her leg. There is a cut to a low-angle dolly zoom shot as she panics further; she repeats, "I don't know what to do" in her panic. She tries her phone again but struggles to type; cutting to a close-up of the phone, the image moves in and out of focus. Gary never answers his phone, but eventually, she calms down. Ann returns with Jake to find Izzy looking pale and sweaty. Izzy is unable to hide the Marijuana before Ann enters the front room. Upon seeing the smoked cigarette, there is a cut from a high-angle shot of Izzy to a low-angle show of Ann, who frowns at Izzy.

The storyline above hinges on Izzy's disability; she is experimenting with cannabis to treat her pain. Her pain and drug use has repositioned her place in the drama, and she is now viewed as incapable of raising Jake by his grandmother. The story repositions Izzy and could be labelled as a couple of stereotypes, including "The Disabled Person as Pitiable and Pathetic" and "The Disabled Person as Their Own Worst and Only Enemy" (Barnes, 1992, pp17-14). Her pain produces sympathy from Gary, who is willing to break the law to find her drugs, but Ann does not feel sympathy; instead believes Izzy should not rely on drugs to treat her pain, that she is self-pitying and needs to "rise to the challenge" which would be to overcome her chronic pain without medical treatment. However, the storyline does not end here. Instead, the narrative becomes socio-political motivated, exploring the laws around cannabis, particularly for medicinal use. The narrative allows for complexity, and as a result, Izzy is not a fixed stereotype, as she becomes an advocate for medicinal cannabis and calls for changes to be made in the law. Izzy is arrested for drug use; during her trial, she calls out to the judge:

> It was a bit of weed, for crying out loud. This is Western Europe, aren't we supposed to be advanced, tolerant and liberal? I have just told you why I take it. I wish I didn't have to, but I do, and I will do whatever it takes to get hold of it until they change the law or you throw away the key, and if you do that, god help me, and god help my three-year-old son.

Although the judge is sympathetic, Izzy is sentenced to two months in prison. The story was inspired by the ongoing debate on whether marijuana should be legalised for medicinal purposes. Houston explains that it was important to her to represent chronic pain "because pain is invisible and pain impacts on me every second of my day and can impact on the way you do stuff" Houston has tried to use her chronic pain to inform her performance that she adds "little nuances" and is keen to show that "she [Izzy] has a bad day every so often" (Houston, 2020). The drug abuse storyline brought chronic pain to the forefront of the story. It was important to Houston, even though she is a pain sufferer herself, to research the subject to add authenticity to the story:

> Through a lot of research, I discovered a lot of pain users use cannabis, and it's quite a lifeline for a lot of people. Some of the research I found out [showed] people with strokes who couldn't move, and then there was a phenomenal difference. Scotland's really quite far on with some brilliant campaigners out there who are trying to make a difference. (Houston, 2020)

The storyline educates the audience as well as entertains them, as Hobson notes the soap operas "combine controversial content with the dramatic imperatives of the storylines to explore great themes" and they "enable the exploration of issues that might only be handled in other programme genres, such as documentaries, and these might be as accessible or generate the same level of interest or interaction with the audience" (Hobson, 2003, pp 141-142). The storyline allows both sides of the debate to be aired (Hobson, 2003, pp.141). It adds complexity to the character, showing her to be fallible, and allows the exploration of chronic pain, which up until that point, was a nuanced performance. The storyline demonstrates the complex relationship between disability and genre in that they inform one another. Houston's chronic pain and the socio-political issue of legalised drugs saw the creation of a narrative, and the genre's conventions shaped the way it was explored through stereotypes and educating audiences entertainingly.

Houston's appearance is another example of an image of disability being changed by developments in production cultures and the fluidity in genre. The changes in the genre have produced a social realist representation of disability that shows the mundane and everyday realities of disability, such as access requirements and pain management. Although it does not shy away from disability, disability does not fundamentally define the character. Instead,

her femininity does, showing her as a matriarch who is not limited by her disability. The changes in production cultures have shown broadcasters work to fill gaps in representation and maintain an openness to the types of disability on camera through closed casting. The casting process was long, but the broadcaster communicated with Houston to ensure they met her needs and that she was not disadvantaged from the beginning of filming. The result is a representation of disability which is not limited by the set's design or testing working conditions. The character and the actor can fully negotiate the set, and the character becomes integrated into the community of the street.

It is worth remembering that Houston did experience difficulty finding representation and work, even after the passing of the DDA in 1995. The internet has made the application process more accessible, allowing disabled people to apply for roles quicker and more conveniently. However, Houston pushes for continued communication between disabled-led companies such as DANC and Graeae to create opportunities for disabled actors and make entry to the British television industry achievable for aspiring disabled actors. The schemes produced by DANC work to build connections between disabled actors and crew, to improve inclusion on screen and behind it, but demonstrate the need for such initiatives to help improve inclusion.

This chapter has shown the relationship between soap opera conventions and images of disability. That soap operas employ stereotypes. However, these stereotypes should not be considered limiting or harmful but rather aid the complexity of the character, as stereotypes are not fixed. Soap operas offer a variety of story types that may explore a character's disability or distance the disability, instead opting to develop the character's history and complexity. The disability informs the narratives, with the relationship between genre and representation being a two-way communication. The disability informs the types of narratives the soap opera explores, and an actor’s disability informs their performance; their ambulatory or access needs bleed into the characterisation.

There have also been improvements in production cultures with the creation of the DDA, making reasonable adjustments a legal requirement; broadcasters have worked to incorporate disabled actors. The change has seen disabled characters fully integrated into their fictional communities, meaning there are no limitations placed on the character's inclusion because of accessibility issues. It was once more common to find non-disabled actors playing disabled

characters. Although this practice may still occur, there has been an effort to have authentic representations of disability in British soap operas. This has seen more opportunities for disabled actors, but there are calls for further engagement, with the focus shifting to improving inclusion in all aspects of production.

What has become apparent through the Telefantasy and Soap Opera chapter is the difficulty disabled actors face in entering the British Television industry. Despite changes in production cultures which have made workspaces more accessible, there is not one clearly defined way an actor can enter the industry, and this has seen the creation of disabled-led companies such as DANC and theatre groups like Graeae. These companies have become communities of professional disabled actors and disabled crew awaiting the opportunity to be let into the industry. There will be a space in the conclusion reflecting on the need for broadcasters to engage with these disabled companies as they present an opportunity to forge an entry point for disabled actors. It will also consider whether the lack of an entry point is not a lack of will from broadcasters but caused by a lack of opportunities.

## Conclusion

This research sort to discover if the images of disability have changed and whether genre and production cultures have had a bearing on those changes. It is clear that there has been a change in the images of disability and that genre and production cultures do have a bearing on those changes. However, the communication between representations, genre, and production cultures is not a one-way conversation but a complex relationship that has seen genre and productions shape representations. The changes in the images of disability have been across genres and from role to role.

The telefantasy section showed that the types of roles given to disabled actors have changed. The chapter began with Nabil Shaban, who was typed cast during his time on *Doctor Who*. He had expressed a desire to play characters which were human and heroes, but producers at the time dismissed him and considered him only for the role of Sil, the alien. I produced a multifaceted analysis to demonstrate although one could label Sil as an evil stereotype, Shaban argued that the character was not disabled and, therefore, could not be easily categorised. This typecasting continued with Jimmy Vee, who, like Shaban, was used purely to aid the character's aesthetic. He clearly desired to appear in the programme as a human character but only ever appeared in prosthetics. Warwick Davis's introduction to *Doctor Who* saw a shift, with casting agents now considering actors of restricted height as humans and heroes. Davis played the emperor of the universe and helped the Doctor save the world. Rachel Denning's character was also a human role, and she, like Davis, aided the Doctor and averted the world's end. These four actors demonstrate a clear change in production cultures. There was a shift in the mindset in the more contemporary examples, with a willingness to hire actors of restricted height in roles that did not use their size to further the aesthetics of the alien.

The Soap Opera chapter began with Rodger Tonge's appearance as Sandy in *Crossroads*. It was an example of the production making a reasonable adjustment to ensure Tonge's continued involvement in the drama. They made the character Sandy a person with paraplegia because Tonge's diagnosis non-Hodgkins Lymphoma resulted in him using a wheelchair and crutches. The production made some reasonable adjustments for Tonge, ensuring he could attend hospital appointments and still appear in the drama. However, they did not make any adjustments to the sets, resulting in Tonge being static in scenes with staging being designed

around him. Julie Fernandez was the first example in the thesis of a disabled actor being cast as a disabled character in a soap opera. The production had made some reasonable adjustments to sets, allowing Fenandez's character Nessa to move around the sets. There remained some accessibility in some areas of the set, and these access issues were edited out of the drama and Nessa. Access issues continued after filming for Fernandez, who had moved to Spain specifically for the production. The chapter investigated the representation of Chris Tate, an example of a character becoming disabled and being played by a non-disabled character. As the actor was not disabled, there were no access requirements, and although he moved around the set, the production did not explore accessibility issues. David Proud easily manoeuvred around the *EastEnders* sets. Proud had expressed a desire to show access needs, referring to how *Emmerdale* never reveals how Tate gets in his car. Lisa Hammond appeared on *EastEnders* in and out of her wheelchair and could easily manoeuvre the sets. However, Cherylee Houston's reasonable adjustments ensured that there was no area out of bounds to here, and the programme worked to show her characters access requirements, with dropped curbs and the installations of wheelchair lifts within the diegesis of the programme. With reasonable adjustments behind the camera, too, ITV worked to ensure the character was integrated into the community and that Houston was not disadvantaged. The changes in reasonable adjustments also changed the way disability was filmed in soap operas because the cameras had mover coverage. This resulted in more experimentation with framing disability, as evident in the scene where Izzy uses cannabis. The changes in production cultures were partly brought about because of the legislation the Disabled Discrimination Act passed in 1995, but also show a shift in the mindset of broadcasters to implement reasonable adjustments before commencing filming and in consultation with the disabled actors.

The changes in the images of disability are directly linked to changes in production practices and cultures. With the access needs of an actor being met, the character becomes a fully integrated member of the fictional community. There has also become a willingness to consider disabled actors for roles not written as disabled, as evident through the changes in the casting and audition processes, which have changed from role to role. The mixed methods broadcasters use in sourcing and auditioning talent shows there is no one way a disabled actor can enter the British television industry, and barriers such as lack of training and opportunities limit inclusion. However, changes in how broadcasters audition disabled talent, with mixed ability auditions, work to create more opportunities by considering disabled actors for roles which are not dependent on disability.

Using genre has allowed the thesis to produce a multifaceted analysis of the roles of disability but also demonstrated the relationship between a programme's genre and its representation of disability. The Telefantasy chapter showed that the fluidity of *Doctor Who's* genre changed the characterisation of Sil from a villainous character to a comedic device, a shift caused by the criticism of the programme that saw the producers reposition the drama from an adult demographic to a family target audience. The reboot of *Doctor Who* in 2005 saw aliens played by Vee become tools to aid the characterisation of the Doctor and his companion Rose. As a result, Vee's characters were often killed sympathetically and drove the narrative forward. The change in production cultures saw Warwick Davis, Rachel Denning, and Ellie Wallwork appear as authentic representations of disability, and the convention of the genre meant that their disabilities did not need to be rationalised; they were disabled characters who aided the Doctor.

The Soap Opera chapter showed how the genre relies on stereotypes, but such stereotypes are not fixed, meaning that disabled characters become complex. It showed that disabled characters are offered a variety of story types that may explore disability, but some also work to avoid disability altogether. Tonge's character, for example, in *Crossroads*, his character was shown to be selfless and respected when planning a surprise party for his mother. However, in the storyline where Sandy does not want his fiance to work, he is shown to be cruel and controlling, and the storyline treats his disability as an inferiority complex. The former does not work to explore disability, whereas the latter does. Even in attempting to avoid disability, the genre employs stereotypes, such as Cherylee Houston, who was not stereotyped because of her disability, but because of her femininity. I showed that disabled male characters are more likely to be stereotyped as villainous, although their disability does not cause their villainy. Both examples of disabled male characters could have been, at times, categorised as villains, whereas it is not that clear for female disabled characters. The types of stories have also changed from programme to programme, with the soap opera relying on emotional realism more often. The everyday issues of disability are not as explored. For example, Hammond's pregnancy storyline as Donna Yates in *EastEnders* was not a narrative about disabled motherhood but instead focused on Donna asking her adoptive brother to be her sperm donor, and the narrative focused on the strain that was placed on his family. Soap opera continues to employ emotional realism rather than social realism to win over audiences, and as a result, the everyday mundane issues of disability are not as explored. *Coronation*

*Street* has balanced emotional and social realism, often representing Izzy's access needs and family issues and exploring socio-political topics such as medicinal cannabis treatment for chronic pain. Therefore, the change in the genre's realism has changed the types of stories explored in the programme and whether a disability is integral to that storyline, which has a bearing on the interpretation of the representation.

The work has shown no accessible entry point for disabled actors to enter the industry. Despite schemes and initiatives, disabled actors face barriers. Though Cumberbatch and Negrine described disabled-led theatre companies, such as Graeae, as an "informal network" that "cannot overcome the lack of opportunity and facilities for actors with disabilities" (1992, p.118). Clearly, broadcasters rely on these companies for sourcing disabled talent, and they only lack opportunity through a lack of engagement by broadcasters. Pryor's practices in attending plays and remaining in contact with disabled acting agencies demonstrated the need for those in such positions to communicate with disabled companies; regular engagement will produce further opportunities. Houston's work at DANC and the launching of initiatives demonstrate continued to change, and broadcasters must utilise these companies. In doing so, there may be the formation of an accessible entry point for disabled people into the British television industry.

Multifaceted readings have not been produced through detailed textual analysis alone. The research has used the opinions of disabled actors to understand the intentions behind a representation and their performance, adding another dimension to the analysis, such as Shaban, who positions Sil as neither a negative nor positive representation because the character is not disabled, or Denning who described her appearance in *Doctor Who* as empowering. The discussions with actors has allowed an understanding of their experiences, the barriers they have faced, the pressures they have felt, and how they believe disability should be represented. I stated in the introduction this study would consider the often-overlooked opinions of disabled actors, and it has done so. By considering how they came to be cast, their experiences of production, and their interpretations of the characters, they have crucially upheld the analysis and been given a space to reflect on their experiences in the industry. The interviews with disabled actors and a casting director have helped demonstrate how the images of disability have changed and highlighted the relationship between changes in production cultures, genre, and representations. It must also be stated that there remains room for further investigation. Although the research successfully gained interviews with

disabled actors, my access was limited with regard to writers, directors, producers, and other crew members; who may offer alternative perspectives on representations, production cultures, and the bearing genre has on disability. There remains room for further research considering the opinions of those involved in a programme's production. By not having those opinions, the study is skewed in favour of the disabled actor's perspective; that is not to say that this is wrong, as disabled actors have been excluded from such discussions.

The work also aimed to produce a historical overview of the images of disability to allow for a then vs now comparison of television. The result has successfully shown changes in images of disability over 48 years of British broadcast. However, the historical overview is not comprehensive; unfortunately, some representations have been missed. The representations included in the research were chosen for they presented an opportunity for a detailed analysis, with engagement at times from those involved in the production themselves. The work is not suggesting that these representations are the only images of disability or that other images are not worth investigating; I am acknowledging the study was limited by the number of interviews I conducted and because of the size of the study. There remains the opportunity for analysis of the representations not included in this work, in the genres I have selected and other genres. By choosing two genres, there remains room to expand and consider how different genres shape images of disability. The genre documentary offers potential, as does comedy; writings on disability in comedy often rely on the application of stereotypes, and there remains room for deeper analysis. Children's drama and television also offer interesting results and could be compared to soap operas because of the educational tendencies of both genres. There is room to expand the discussion around gender and disability, which this work has only touched upon. The image of disability in soap operas may depend on their gender and disability, and it may be the case that gender has a more significant bearing on images of disability in soap operas and other genres. It is also the case that there is room to consider other countries, such as America, which has larger television budgets; this may mean their images of disability have not had the same accessibility issues that disabled actors faced in Britain. Other countries may have different production practices that could develop inclusion in Britain. There is also a difference in genre. British and American soap operas have a different set of codes and conventions, which will undoubtedly produce different representations of disability, presenting an opportunity to compare the two.

The work has also shown the potential to investigate disabled-led theatre companies. Such production companies may present opportunities to develop inclusive practices of broadcasters, as these companies are run exclusively by disabled people. They also are where disabled actors receive training that prepares them for working in television. There is space to develop an understanding of the practices of disabled theatre groups and how the communication between them and broadcasters could be improved to develop more opportunities for disabled actors. This research would be more about the processes of theatre than an analysis of television. The connection between disabled-led theatre companies and television production cultures remains to be explored, with plenty to consider in future research should someone be given access to such a group.

The work is foremost a study of the representations of disability. Genre and production cultures have served as crucial lenses, allowing an understanding of how the representations of disability have changed. The work offers a unique methodology for understanding representations of disability and demonstrates the need for future research to consider the relationship between representations, genre, and production cultures. There has been little to no research on disability and production cultures. The work adds new knowledge to the area of representations of disability by demonstrating the need to consider how access and reasonable adjustments have a bearing on the images of disability. Academic criticism has shaped its incorporation of genre and thus demonstrates a clear relationship between genre and disability. Pressing for future work to build upon this methodology, perhaps incorporating audience reception to further the genre analysis. This study is unique because it has been the first to compare disabled roles against one another to this degree. It has been the first study that has shown changes between disabled representations. It is also the first to demonstrate the relationship between production cultures and the images of disability. It presents an exciting opportunity to build upon its methodology as production cultures continue to alter and as representations continue to change. This study also adds to the academic criticism of the reliance on stereotypes. Instead demonstrates the need for engagement with genre to produce a multifaceted analysis that does not mischaracterise or misrepresent the image of disability.

Such research is essential to progress inclusion; critical analysis must continue identifying the barriers disabled actors face and work towards eradicating those barriers. Through this then-and-now comparison, we can learn what barriers have hindered inclusion and how they have

shaped representations of disability. It also notes changes which are encompassing disability and how they, too, shape representations. The changes in disability are sure to continue, although there is some optimism about the future of inclusion from the actors I have spoken to; this work identifies issues and works towards improving inclusion. It also retrospectively considers roles labelled as negative and demonstrates them to be complex, arguing that no limitations should be placed on disabled actors through fears of being called stereotypical or tokenistic. Research such as this supports disabled actors and works to develop inclusion. It showcases inclusive production cultures and works to remove limitations placed on the images of disability.

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