‘Culture as Pharmakon’: Representation, Social Encounters, and Discourses of Disability

Ms Heidi Mapley
Centre for Culture and Disability Studies, Liverpool Hope University, UK
Email: 09003305@hope.ac.uk

DOI: 10.17774/CDJ1.02016.1.20575874

General Submissions
Publication Date: 04 November 2016
‘Culture as Pharmakon’: Representation, Social Encounters, and Discourses of Disability

Heidi Mapley
Centre for Culture and Disability Studies, Liverpool Hope University, UK

Abstract
This paper explores how cultural models of disability enable an exploration of the all-important relationship between representation and social encounters. To establish this connection, Bolt’s two-tier cultural model and other cultural models will be discussed, alongside evaluations of biblical and scientific discourse. The overall aim is to accentuate the significance of cultural models of disability by illustrating ‘culture as pharmakon: both poison and remedy’. That is to say, to evidence how culture has the potential to validate cultural guidelines that promote meaningful inclusion, yet also has the ability to shape and entrench problematic social attitudes towards disability.

Keywords:
Pharmakon, Culture, Cultural Models, Representation, Encounters, Discourse

Correspondence Information:
Ms Heidi Mapley, 09003305@hope.ac.uk
Introduction

This paper will explore, via an engagement with representational social encounters and literature discussion, how culture, as pharmakon, distorts the void between binary opposites such as poison and cure. The overall aim is to accentuate the significance of cultural models of disability, by evidencing how culture works on two levels. First, it has the potential to validate guidelines that promote meaningful inclusion. Second, it has the ability to shape and entrench problematic social attitudes towards disability. To establish this connection between cultural models, representation and social encounters, Bolt’s two-tier cultural model and other cultural models will be discussed, alongside evaluations of biblical and scientific discourse.

The term ‘remedy’, as synonymous with cure, is viewed as problematic by many disability studies scholars and disability activists alike. Remedy, when perceived in terms of disability, has eugenic connotations that underpin ableism and disablism. To draw a distinction between these two often related concepts, ableism renders the non-disabled person supreme, whilst disablism (re)produces the production of disability through problematic social attitudes (Bolt, 2015). Within discourses of medicalisation, disability is often perceived as suffering. Lives of disabled people are imagined to hold no value and, as such, offer no scope for happiness (Bolt, 2015). Society assumes that the disabled person themselves will define remedy as a cure for impairment, when, paradoxically, it is this assumption and other societal misconceptions that must be remedied, as they often create the greatest obstacles. Significantly, culture provides a means of remedying these misconceptions, although it can also be guilty of further entrenching them. Derrida (1981, p.101) acknowledges that to ignore the ambiguity of the pharmakon by interpreting it only as remedy is ‘thus as violent as it is impotent’. Undeniably, what is viewed as a remedy by the
One can be poison to the Other. Thus, the pharmakon is always going to be “alternately or simultaneously—beneficent or maleficent” (Derrida, 1981, p.75).

Culture can be considered as a ‘site where the identities...of marginalised minorities are recognised, protected, or condemned’ (Yegenoglu, 2012, p.142), as it ‘marks an area of damage or injury or marginalisation and signals simultaneously the idiom of a politics of repair or redress’ (Scott, 2003, p.94). Cultural representation has the ability to shape and entrench problematic social attitudes towards disability, yet it also has the potential - particularly when engaged with on a profound and critical level - to validate cultural guidelines that promote meaningful inclusion. That is to say, the problems of representation withstanding, ‘a variety of putatively harmed communities...are thus enabled to find an affirmative shelter within the capacious ambit of culture’ (Scott, 2003, p.94). Culture, then, can be considered as a ‘complicity of contrary values’ (Derrida, 1981, p. 128), as it establishes opposing behaviours and attitudes, and promotes ‘the movement, the locus, and the play’ (Derrida, 1981, p.130).

**Paving the way to a two-tier cultural model of disability**

Central to the construction of difference is the social ‘encounter’, which has been defined as ‘moments where differences and boundaries of inclusion and exclusion are negotiated between individuals, contested or reaffirmed’ (Wiesel et al, 2013, p.2391). Encounters are diverse by nature. While they allow some individuals an opportunity to step outside of their fixed identities and ‘explore other aspects of their own hybridity’, they can also reinforce ‘existing fixed identities’ and signal that a person is ‘unwelcome in certain places’ (Wiesel et al, 2013, p.2394). Here, it is possible to consider the significance of cultural representation to the social encounter, for cultural representation can be imagined to operate in much the
same way. For example, literature that does not represent a diverse selection of characters is toxic, suggesting to certain readers that they are unwelcome, both as participants in the act of reading and as participants in society more broadly. Meanwhile, inclusive literature enables the reader to identify with complex rather than ‘single story’ characters (TED, 2009). The availability of an array of inclusive literature is undoubtedly a remedy for all people, as it assists in developing awareness, understanding, and knowledge. That said, there is a requirement for representation to be engaged with on a profound level for these benefits to be realised (Mapley, 2015).

Influenced by Garland Thomson’s work on ‘normate’ culture, Quayson (2007, p.14) explores how this social encounter between reader and text may influence social interaction, specifically between the disabled person and the normate – the occupier of a culturally constructed position of ‘power’ and ‘value’ (Garland Thomson, 1997, p.8). Aesthetic nervousness, a manifestation of fear and anxiety, results when ‘subliminal unease manifests itself within the structures’ of textual ‘discourse itself’ and generates ‘a series of crises in the protocols of representation’. Thus, any tension evident between the disabled and non-disabled characters can refract across to the reader, if internalised by the reader this tension can then influence self-identity and attitudes towards disability. This progression becomes apparent during the social encounter between the disabled person and the normate when tensions become manifest as ‘anxiety, dissonance, and disorder’ (Mapley, 2015; Quayson, 2007, p.17). Bolt (2012, pp.292-293), expanding on Garland Thomson’s work on normate culture (1997) and Quayson’s more recent work on aesthetic nervousness (2007), provides a two-tier cultural model with which to explore this relationship between societal encounters, cultural representation and the construction of identity. These two tiers are ‘normate reductionism’ and ‘the metanarrative of disability’. Together they demonstrate the poisonous
nature of culture, as cultural representation and social attitudes both ‘reproduce and reinforce each other, and thus prevent real social change’ (Kama, 2004, p.449).

Normate reductionism involves the assigning of an anomalous attribute to one specific binary category or the other. It resonates with work by Strauss, which emphasises that binary oppositions are predicated on myths. These myths assign an understanding of the world to hierarchical categories, so as to achieve a social order that upholds homogeneity (Macey, 2000). In accordance with normate reductionism impairment is viewed as a ‘master status’, in this instance all other attributes become irrelevant, and the disabled person is automatically categorised to the supposedly inferior half of all binary oppositions (Garland Thomson, 1997, p.34). Each of these inferior binary opposites is pieced together to create the metanarrative of disability, a grand narrative that (re)produces the overarching myth of disability as tragedy.

Charity discourse provides an example of how the metanarrative of disability poisons lived experience. Charities often portray disabled people in a stereotypical manner that endorses the receiver as a person who is ‘to be pitied’, ‘negative’, ‘dependent’ and ‘less than average’ (Riddell and Watson, 2003, p.44). Of course, by following the binary hierarchy, the person donating to charity is then able to assert themselves as fortunate, positive, independent and superior. This order refracts through the representation and may influence the way the normate, in this instance the viewer, interacts during a social encounter with a disabled person.

The charity Guide Dogs (2012) demonstrates how this order is refracted through representation. A televised advertisement for this charity features a man called Dave and his guide dog, Quince. In this advertisement Dave states: ‘without Quince I couldn’t be Dave’. Two points are raised through these words. First, Dave appears to have adopted a ‘false
consciousness’, because it seems that, in his mind, blindness is the focal point of his identity (Reeve, 2012, p.85). All other attributes are displaced in favour of impairment. Second, Dave is reliant on the donations of the viewer if he is to have any hope of leading even the most basic life. Thus, Dave, through his actions and the actions of the very charity that is meant to be supporting him, is reduced to a master status of impairment, from which he is subsequently keyed to the second tier of Bolt’s model, the metanarrative of disability (Bolt, 2012). The viewer, as a result of this representational social encounter, positions themselves as author of the metanarrative of disability, for they assume knowledge that supersedes the lived reality of Dave and all other people who access the services of Guide Dogs.

This representational social encounter can be theorised through the panopticon, an architectural design that disassociates the ‘see/being seen dyad’ (Foucault, 1977, p.202). In the peripheral ring, one is always seen but never seeing. Meanwhile, from the central tower, one can see everything whilst remaining invisible. Foucault’s theory, then, presents that the viewer is not qualified to occupy the constructed subject position of author of the metanarrative of disability, as it is only through the role of gazer that the viewer is able to discount their own discredited or discreditable stigma. Dave, meanwhile, is rendered vulnerable to what he imagines to be a superior gaze, although he has no knowledge of who occupies the control tower from which this gaze is elicited. Hence, the normate subject position presents only an illusion of superiority. This illusion is shrouded by the architectural design of the panopticon, as it permits a concealment that suppresses the true narrative of disability.

The metanarrative of disability, as defined in Bolt’s cultural model (2012, p.292), is ‘a cloud of a story...an overriding narrative that seems to displace agency’. Providing an embodied example of how this displacement affects agency, Javid, a wheelchair user,
discusses how he was reduced to the cultural construct of the disabled beggar while routinely waiting for a taxi outside the theatre. On this particular occasion, Javid was sat with his hat on his knees when a coach load of tourists filed past him and ceremoniously placed money into his hat. This action did not stop until Javid moved back inside the theatre, even though he attempted to notify the tourists that he was not situated outside the theatre in order to collect money (Riddell and Watson, 2003).

This reductionism demonstrates how charity discourse contaminates lived reality. The normate adopts a role of superiority. From this position, he/she reinforces a hegemonic ideology that seeks to reduce the disabled person in every aspect. In this discourse, the voice of the disabled person goes unheard, as the metanarrative of disability ‘...renders any other voice inferior to its own. Its story is the story and its word is the final word...’ (Michalko, 2002, p.32). Lynn Manning (2009, p. 785), an award-winning poet and playwright, utilises culture affirmatively in order to articulate the metanarrative of disability. In his poem, The Magic Wand, Manning considers how his identity changes ‘from Black Man to “blind man”’, he concludes: ‘My final form is never of my choosing; I only wield the wand; You are the magician’. These poetic words explain Javid’s theatre experience. The magician (the tourists) assumes control, selecting for Javid the final form of a disabled beggar. Javid believes that the behaviour of the tourists results from ignorance, as for many non-disabled people the only knowledge they have of impairment is the knowledge that is disseminated via cultural avenues such as the television, the stage, and media. These avenues, as Bolt (2014) and Manning (2009) note, often present materials that accord with the metanarrative of disability. Impairment is sensationalised and, as such, becomes the main feature of a person’s identity (Riddell and Watson, 2003).
Cultural myths of Judeo-Christianity

The Hebrew Bible, as a cultural artefact, holds ‘deeply informed representations, attitudes, and practices concerning disability’ that can be accessed by contemporary society and utilised to further entrench hegemonic values that perpetuate disability as a tragedy (Raphael, 2008, p.2). Barnes (2010) reads Leviticus (21:16-20) in order to confirm how the bible perpetuates discriminatory western attitudes towards people with disabilities, as it presents a God willing to punish and curse those believed to be sinners, and rejects individuals with specific impairments (Rose, 1997; Schuelka, 2012). However, other readings of Leviticus have been put forward. Olyan (2000) observes that, as a complete text, Leviticus (21) ‘indirectly privileges the disabled Israelite priest above the able-bodied Israelite layperson’ (Moss and Schipper, 2011, p.7). Meanwhile, Beates (2012) observes that, as a complete text, Leviticus is not about impairment but is about the surpassing holiness of God. Nobody can stand before God and intercede, because ‘God says he alone is perfect’ (Beates, 2012, p.77). In this context, disability is rendered irrelevant, as only God is qualified to occupy the normate subject position. These readings of Leviticus, although conflicting, raise two important points. First, for an analysis of biblical literature, or any other form of cultural representation, to be precise it has to consider the complete passage of text and not cherry pick sections that can be utilised to present a flawed interpretation. Second, although biblical literature is often presented as a major contributor to discriminatory practices of contemporary western society, in Judeo-Christian times the reality may have been altogether very different.

Extending this notion of subjectivity, Allen (2010, p.36) emphasises that ‘different denominations of Christianity may interpret scripture differently’. Underpinning this idea, Sullivan (1999) highlights that biblical scripture can be read differently depending on the gospel to which it is accorded and the version of the bible being studied. To illustrate this
point Sullivan goes on to describe how aspects of a specific encounter between Jesus and a disabled person vary between the gospels of St. Mark and St. Luke. Additionally, minor discrepancies can be found between the Revised Standard Version and the New Revised Standard Version of the Christian bible, specifically in relation to the gospel of St. Luke (Sullivan, 1999).

Without challenge, attitudes associated with Judeo-Christian times strengthen the exclusion and openness dichotomy in contemporary society. These attitudes are often attributed to God. However, they are founded on cultural myths that are believed to result from a historicity of biblical narratives. The two dominant myths that are (mis)interpreted via biblical literature are disability as a punishment for sin and disability as divine intervention. The tragedy model underpins the first of these myths. This model presents disability as exclusionary, a fate worse than death. Meanwhile, the second myth aligns, albeit problematically, with the affirmative model, openness is presented and impairment is viewed as a valuable part of identity.

The overarching myth of disability as tragedy is represented in Bollywood film Mehboob ki Mehndi. This film features a social encounter between two characters, Anwar and Safdarjung. Anwar, believing Safdarjung guilty of committing sin, enters his bedroom while he sleeps, with the intention of taking his life. However, moments before the anticipated murder of Safdarjung, Anwar observes that his nemesis uses a wheelchair. This knowledge leads to Anwar sparing the life of Safdarjung, as Anwar questions ‘What’s the use by killing the crippled you?’ His inner response to this rhetorical question is:

‘You’ll free of this problem then. You will be free from this life. You should be given such a death...that you should beg for death...and yet, you shouldn’t get death. You must writhe all your life and die’ (Mehboob ki Mehndi, 1971).
The idea presented by this scene, is that to live with disability is to live with a punishment far worse than death. Therefore, when aligning this representation with the Hebrew Bible, disability can be imagined to be God’s ultimate punishment for sin (Schuelka, 2012). The life of the disabled person is devalued to such an extent as to be worthless, she or he can only ever be viewed as an inconvenience to society. Society then considers the unacceptable treatment of disabled people to be justified and does not recognise a need for change. After all, a positive disabled identity cannot exist within this discourse, as the presumed belief of God must go unchallenged.

The affirmative model arises as a direct response to the poisonous view of disability that Mehboob ki Mehndi presents. Biblical discourse would suggest that the affirmative model is underpinned by the notion of divine intervention. Divine deliverance is described by Avalos, Melcher and Schipper (2007) as a precise decision undertaken by God in order to enrich identity, not to displace it. This consideration of disability also resonates with Derrida’s discussion of the pharmakon (Shildrick, 2002). For those people who view disability as God’s punishment for sin, disability can only ever displace. Meanwhile, for those people who view disability as divine deliverance, disability can only ever enrich or add meaning. That said, it has to be acknowledged that the myth of divine deliverance is in itself problematic because it detracts from agency and attributes all success to God and not to the individual.

A cultural study of scientific discourse

The scientific model can be observed in terms of these two religious views. The scientific study of biogenetics resonates strongly with the idea that disabled people live ‘life unworthy of life’; therefore ensuring that disability is considered a fate worse than death (Swain, French and
Cameron, 2003, p.48). Meanwhile, the disabled person who chooses to access the science of human enhancement takes an affirmative approach, emphasising an ownership of their body which further enriches their quality of life (Fixed, 2013; TED, 2010), thus, in terms of a religious model, optimising on God’s decision. In both instances, reductionism is demonstrated, as the individual continues to be defined by her or his impairment.

Biogenetics and human enhancement can be viewed as binary oppositions, an equivalent to the dichotomies of poison-remedy, kill-cure, and tragedy-overcoming. The science of biogenetics strives to eradicate all forms of impairment, while human enhancement strives to optimise on impairment, by enabling the disabled person to exceed expectations of normalcy (Davis, 1995). Naturally, as is often the case with binary oppositions, somewhere amongst their ‘various shades of meaning’, these two terms do share a meaning (Freud, 2003, p.132). In this instance, the shared meaning is a desire to eradicate the abnormal and to achieve a utopia that transcends normalcy.

The televised advertisement for the London 2012 Paralympics, *Meet the Superhumans*, (C4 Paralympics, 2012), provides a social encounter between viewer and text, which demonstrates the dichotomy that exists between biogenetics-enhancement. The viewer is shown a foetal ultrasound scan that is followed by an image of a heavily pregnant woman, clutching her abdomen with her eyes downcast. The tragedy view of this narrative is affirmed by other subliminal messages that connect with war and a devastating car accident. Therefore, it can be discerned that the presence of the ultrasound scan suggests a delayed diagnosis of impairment that prevents biogenetics from offering eradication as a way forward. In this instance, the results of the ultrasound scan are equivalent to the notion of tragedy that surrounds bomb blasts and road traffic accidents. The only acceptable outcome can be to overcome this tragedy and triumph over impairment. Hence, enhancement, in its quest to
cure that which biogenetics fails to kill, provides a means of achieving this state of overcoming.

The toxic message disseminated via the *Meet the Superhumans* advertisement aligns with the ‘Bakhtinian concept of the chronotope’ (Liet, 1999, p.207). Bakhtin considers chronotopes as ‘governing narrative turning-points or crises’ (Liet, 1999, p.209). Similarly, each of these subliminal messages conveys a turning point from ‘normal’ to ‘abnormal’. In this specific moment of time, the governing narrative becomes a narrative of ‘brokenness’, as opposed to a narrative of wholeness (Watermeyer, 2013, p.30). It is in this instant that the scientific model becomes relevant because it utilises human enhancement as a means of repairing this ‘brokenness’ and returning the individual to a status of ‘normal’. The aim of this reparation is to ensure that ‘broken bodies’ (Watermeyer, 2013, p.104) are made productive, in order to ‘serve the interests of capitalist accumulation and market forces’ (Nadesan, 2008, p.3). Where this level of productiveness is not possible a ‘culture of waste’ decides that damaged humans are surplus to requirements (Bauman, 2004, p.94). Of course, this restoration to ‘normal’ is not possible because, even if the norm were not a social and cultural construct, the individual could not return to space they occupied prior to the turning point in their narrative. Going back is not an option, enhancement can only guide the individual forward, on towards a further turning point of overcoming. Hence, in its quest for normalcy, enhancement ultimately leads the individual further away from their original starting position.

One specific frame of the *Meet the Superhumans* advertisement illustrates a level of stigmatisation which further challenges the idea that enhancement is empowering. This frame features a brief social encounter between a camera operator and a female Paralympian (C4 Paralympics, 2012). The camera operator, or gazer, operates an upward movement of the
camera while simultaneously lingering over the female’s prosthetic limb. Interaction of this nature is reminiscent of the male gaze. The camera moves slowly over the female form and lingers on specific physical attributes (Mulvey, 1975). Thus, as a result of this encounter, the Paralympian is fetishized and reduced to a master status. This fetishism and reductionism suggests that enhancement can never remove the mark of stigma. Indeed, Goffman goes so far as to suggest that ‘victimisation’ is to be cited’ because the stigmatised person has been exposed to ‘fraudulent servers’ (Goffman, 1963, p.20). A deconstructive reading of Meet the Superhumans is revealing on two counts. First, it exposes the nuanced way in which this advertisement fails to live up to its promise to ‘change public perceptions about disability’ (Ellis, 2015, p. 132). Second, it challenges the success of scientific advancement, even though scientific success is vital to the message that the advertisement disseminates.

Cultural models as a possibility for social change

Cultural models of disability elicit the social encounter, both representational and embodied, as a means of remedying attitudinal barriers that induce reductionism. Their aim is to promote a mutually beneficial dialogue between the disabled person and the normate, in order to produce ‘clear cultural guidelines on how to behave’ (Murphy, 2001, p.121). The hope is that the disabled person and the normate will feel more at ease during social interactions, thus avoiding the manifestation of tensions that lead to aesthetic nervousness. Once this ease is established the voice of disabled people will be more readily heard, meaning that an awareness of environmental and attitudinal barriers can be raised.

Discussing the relevance of the social encounter to this inclusionary process, Devlieger (2005) reports that benefits can be observed when disabled people and non-disabled people
work together socially to promote social change. This change can involve both a shift in social attitudes and a redesigning of physical space, as professionals are encouraged to consider how their practice impacts on the lives of disabled people. For this relationship to work productively a high degree of reciprocity is required. Given the history of oppression and the culture of silence that clouds discussions of disability, it is essential that the voice of the disabled person is not dominated by professional knowledge. After all, to encourage narrative is to respect and appreciate voice and embodied experience. This respect and appreciation, in turn, may lead to a deeper revelation, wherein the ‘intrinsic disparity’ between ‘the quality of life of disabled people as they report it and the estimates of their quality of life by...professionals’ can be addressed (Couser, 2014).

An example of collaborative practice has been observed through collaborations between Young DaDaFest and Liverpool Hope University. This collaboration involved Young DaDaFest engaging with work taken from the academic text Changing Social Attitudes Toward Disability (2014). From this engagement, an art project was formed that explores solutions to problematic social attitudes toward disability in educational settings. It is anticipated that Young DaDaFest will present aspects of this collaboration at the Everyman Theatre in the not too distant future. As a result of this collaboration, the young people involved with DaDaFest were able to engage with critical frameworks of disability on a level that was accessible to them. Also, the professionals working with the young people were able to consider how their theoretical understandings could be made accessible, and utilised on a practical and artistic level to promote social change.

The cultural model enables an exploration of the void that exists between binary oppositions. It challenges the hierarchical relationships that exist as a result of these myths and in doing so acknowledges difference as a valuable way of being. Michalko (2001, p.349),
a ‘blind professor’, makes use of experiential knowledge to highlight how the social encounter can be instrumental in promoting this transformation. He discusses how he is able to utilise his interaction with students in order to challenge the dominance of sightedness over blindness. It is through this method of teaching that Michalko can raise vital guidelines that assist both himself and his students as they progress through their educational journey and beyond.

Alternative methods of communication are one of the cultural guidelines that Michalko highlights. Continuing with this discussion, Bolt proposes that such alternative means of communicating would require a move away from ocularnormative convention, a move that could be advantageous to all of society. For instance, when a student states their name before commencing an in-class discussion with a ‘blind teacher’, benefits can be observed for all people who share in the environment (Bolt, 2016, p.32; Michalko, 2001, p.354). The teacher is made aware of who is speaking and is able to make connections between a name and a voice. Meanwhile, the student speaking is assured of how to act during this social encounter and can relinquish any tensions that they may be experiencing. Simultaneously, all students who share in this encounter are able to become familiar with each other’s names and voices, meaning that they can then communicate with each other more confidently during subsequent interactions.

In questioning the superiority of sight, Michalko (2001) and Bolt (2016) prompt an awareness that vision is not the only means of embracing existence. Thus, they encourage individuals to explore the power of their other senses, leading to a profound and embodied understanding of the self and the world more broadly. This said, due to the complex nature of impairment, the denouncing of ocularnormative classroom practices is not tantamount to full inclusion, it is merely a move in the right direction. The rhizomatic model, as a cultural
model in its own right, encourages the embracing of all forms of existence (Kuppers, 2009). This model, as demonstrated by Lynn Manning in an aforementioned example, utilises various forms of culture (i.e., poetry, art, text and the spoken word), in order to challenge the binary hierarchy and to establish the interconnectedness and significance of all beings. The videopoem Disabled Lilacs (Kuppers, 2009, pp.233-235) demonstrates how cultural representation can be utilised productively. This assemblage challenges dominant stereotypes of disabled people by presenting the disabled body and disabled love as qualities of beauty and sensuality.

These examples of the cultural model promote an appreciation for non-normative positivisms, rather than the normalisation of difference. Non-normative positivisms, as discussed by Mitchell and Snyder (2015, p.6), seek to ‘transform narrow normative practices, beliefs, and qualifications of who counts’, by problematising the transcendence of normalcy, and accentuating the value and beauty of alternative corporealities. Expanding on this conceptualisation of disability, Bolt (2015) proposes The Tripartite Model of Disability. The purpose of this model is to demonstrate how the ‘ideological continuum’ between normative positivisms (ableism) and non-normative negativisms (disablism) can be disrupted when consideration is given to non-normative positivisms (Bolt, 2015, p.1107). This conceptualisation of disability could lead to a change in social attitudes, which, in turn, could have a positive impact on all social encounters. Hence, these cultural models do act as remedy, as they support a personal form of ‘disability gain’ for all of humanity (Garland Thomson, 2013).

Conclusion: Culture as pharmakon
Many of the social encounters discussed in the present paper present the posture of exclusion that is raised via Wiesel et al (2013): for example, the assigning of Javid to the cultural construct of the disabled beggar, and the sleeping form of Safdarjung. Certainly, the remaining social encounters are brought about by the attitude of openness that is also raised via Wiesel et al (2013): for example, the representational encounter between the reader and inclusive text, and the interaction between teacher and student. Cultural guidelines, which are articulated via a reciprocal relationship between the disabled person and the normate, seek to endorse this attitude of openness. The underpinning significance of cultural models is evidenced by the relevance of cultural guidelines to inclusive social encounters, but it is further proven by the way in which the exclusionary social encounters relate to Bolt’s (2012) two-tier cultural model. During these exclusionary encounters the disabled individual is exposed to normate reductionism, from which they are instantly keyed to the metanarrative of disability. The normate attempts to lead and control all aspects of the social encounter, both representational and embodied, so that the true narrative of disability remains concealed. Culture, therefore, ‘functions as the narrative through which difference and Otherness are made sense of’ (Yegenoglu, 2012, p.143). This power to communicate wider moods, ideas, and attitudes demonstrates culture’s pharmakonic ability to entrench and defy problematic social attitudes towards disability.

Acknowledgements

This exploratory essay is a revised version of an assignment submitted for the Modelling Disability module of the Disability Studies MA at Liverpool Hope University. For this reason, the author would like to thank the course lead Dr David Bolt and other members of the Department of Disability and Education - especially Dr Claire Penketh, Dr Owen Barden, Dr
Marie Caslin, Dr Ria Cheyne, Dr David Feeney, Ms Ella Houston, Dr Ana Bê Pereira, and Ms Laura Waite.

References


Tripartite Model of Disability. Journal of Further and Higher Education. DOI:
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2015.1135888> [accessed 28 June 2016].

Centre for Culture and Disability Studies. Liverpool Hope University, United Kingdom:
12 March 2014.

Tube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tuAPPeRg3Nw> [accessed 18 January
2016].


Federation of Associations of Teachers of the Deaf. [online]. Available from: <
atrick_Devlieger/publication/237762101_Generating_a_cultural_model_of_disabili
ty/links/5434004f0cf2dc341daf2bc1.pdf&hl=en&sa=X&scisig=AAGBfm0AX75bdDln
G8LdymcUn7u6ksU68w&nossl=1&oi=scholarr> [accessed 18 January 2016].

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


Making Change Media.


Available from:


Tube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9lhs241zeg> [accessed 18 January
2016].

York: Columbia University Press.


Encounters between People with and without Intellectual Disability. Urban Studies,
50(12), pp. 2391-2406.

Macmillan.