Re-thinking, Re-imagining, and Re-interpreting Disability in Brad Fraser's Play *Kill Me Now*

Andrea Connell

Thesis submitted to the University of Ottawa
in partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master of Arts in Theatre Theory and Dramaturgy

Department of Theatre
Faculty of Arts
University of Ottawa

TABLE OF CONTENTS

"I have heard it said that disability onstage is like Chekhov's gun—a play's promise to the audience. If disability appears in the opening act, it had better fire by the play's end."

—Carrie Sandahl ("The Difference Disability Makes" 90)

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

ABSTRACT

Disability representation on stage is not a new concept and has been present in Western theatre since the Greeks. In recent years, disability scholars and activists are calling for a re-examination of how we create, stage and perform disability on our stages. To facilitate an examination of disability representation, this thesis explores Brad Fraser's play *Kill Me Now*. Fraser's play was the subject of controversy after it was staged in the United Kingdom in 2015. Dea Birkett challenged the text's frame of disability representation and the lack of inclusive casting in her article in *The Guardian*. This thesis will examine Fraser's text and endeavour to uncover how the disabled characters are constructed and conceived within this play. Additionally, an analysis of the 2017 co-production by the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre and National Arts Centre will offer an opportunity to examine and possibly address Birkett's concerns due to the inclusive casting of Joey—the first production to cast a disabled actor in this role. This thesis focuses on the dynamic of the father and son figures of Jake and Joey, exploring the dramaturgical questions of textual construction and performance, and how this text and its performance answers or falls short of the call from the disability community for more and better disabled representation onstage.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The disability community appreciates working, supporting and sharing knowledge among one another, and our interdependence in work and life allows us all to achieve to the best of our abilities. As such, I have many people to thank and acknowledge for all of their hard work and support during the creation of this thesis. First and foremost, I must thank the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre and National Arts Centre's 2017 cast, creative team and staff whose receptiveness to this process were invaluable. I would like to extend a special mention to Sarah Garton Stanley, Debbie Patterson, Liam Zarillo, Stefanie Wiens, Leslie Watson, Alison Fulmyk, Sharon Bajer, Andrea del Campo, Braiden Houle, Myles A. Taylor, Cory Wojcik and Paige Lewis. Thank you all; your contributions were critical to crafting this thesis project.

Secondly, I would like to thank Dr. Yana Meerzon, my thesis supervisor, who stuck by me through this long and twisting journey, and jumped in when my situation required it. Your support of me and my project was invaluable to me. I would also like to acknowledge my two other thesis supervisors whose advice led me to where this thesis eventually went— thank you, Dr. Joël Beddows and Dr. Kathryn Trevenen. I would also like to acknowledge Kristina Watt, whose encouragement and support of my thesis fostered my identity as a disability scholar and theatre artist. I would also like to acknowledge the support and valued scholarship that my professors cultivated in my undergraduate and graduate programs at the University of Ottawa.

I would also like to thank all of the disability scholars I have met at various conferences during my journey, whose input, writings and talks have helped shape my thinking and re-thinking about normative practices that disability fits within. I would like to especially thank Dr. Kirsty Johnston, who I first encountered through her book, *Stage Turns*, and then in person at the NAC's "the Cycle" projects—"The Study" and "The Republic of Inclusion" in 2017. I would

also like to acknowledge the other scholars and artists I met at this event who spurred me on to write this thesis in order to better bridge the gaps that define a binary of disabled and nondisabled.

I would like to acknowledge my fellow disability scholars from our CATR working group, “Disability, Pedagogies, and Performance,” with special mentions to Becky Gold, Megan Johnston, Ash McAskill and Jessica Watkin. Your scholarship, support and friendship as fellow investigators in this large field of disability and theatre was invaluable to the development of my thesis. I would like to mention the fellow members of my cohort: Tim Ginley, Mariah Horner and those that came before and after, including Eliza Anthony, Ryan Borochovitz, Luke Brown, Kyle Cameron, Patrice Forbes, Ian Huffman, Brit Johnston, Nicholas Leno, Jonas McLean, Ludmylla Reis, Vivi Sørensen and Mahalia Golnosh Tahririha, whose sharing of the somewhat tremulous path that graduate work can entail was welcome company along the lonely path academia can be at times. I would also like to thank Alexa Higgins, Emily Jones and Kristina Watt for editing my document. This thesis would not have been possible without the support of my family and friends. Although I cannot possibly mention all of the people who have helped, taught, inspired, and supported me through my process, please know that I appreciate and acknowledge the time and effort you gave me in the pursuit of this thesis.

The University of Ottawa’s Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies’ (FGPS) financial support was an important contributor to my thesis work.

PREFACE

My thesis is grounded in and written from my lived knowledge and understanding of the intersections between disability and theatre scholarship. As an interdisciplinary scholar, I am keenly aware of the various ways both communities express knowledge. As part of my pedagogy within this field, it is important to me to communicate in a way that may help open up spaces that have historically been inaccessible to my disability community. This commitment shapes how I think, speak and in particular, write. Following the approach of my contemporaries such as Petra Kuppers, Carrie Sandahl, Jessica Watkin among others, I have chosen to model my thesis in a semi-non-traditional essayistic format that makes theatre writing accessible to my disabled community, and also decentres the normative ways we, as scholars, traditionally write about disability in theatre.

This thesis is the original, unpublished, independent work by myself. As part of my research I chose to interview and interact with the 2017 co-production cast and crew members. I acquired the ethics approval for this project from the University of Ottawa Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board (REB); ethic's file number #03-17-19.

INTRODUCTION

Theatre operates in images and stories that evoke feelings and perceptions. Such feelings and perceptions either confirm or challenge the meanings of people, groups and attitudes within society. Meanings shift over time as society and culture evolve and how they are understood (Knowles 2). Theatre holds the power to invent worlds, which in turn can have real world effects that shift spectators' perspectives of how they feel about different aspects of society (Taylor 200). "Performance is world-making" (Taylor 208). Erin Hurly, a Canadian theatre scholar, identifies how theatre uses audiences' feelings to communicate the full narrative of the play. Theatre has the capacity to be "bigger than life" because it has an "emotional repertoire" that "is bigger than our quotidian one," as we can span a character's full life of the highs and lows within a single play (7). Spectators can have "*real* emotional responses to what are usually *unreal* (that is, fictional) situations and characters onstage" (Hurly 7). This ability to feel things about fictional realties within the spectator's lived experience is why theatre can be such a powerful tool to either reinforce feelings about disabled people—or subvert them. Petra Kuppers, a disability scholar, artist and activist, states that bodies perform and reproduce the systems of their cultures and where bodies fit within it—no one is "outside" the system (*Disability* 6). Performances can provoke a discourse of difference. They can challenge the construction of what it means to be a particular body, which can "unfix certainties" about disabled people (Kuppers, *Disability* 6-10). Representations in performance shape both the narratives and how we understand what disability means within society (Garland-Thomson, *Disability* 523).

Since the ancient Greeks, disability has been used in narratives (Johnston, *Disability* 2; Wright 46-78) in the form of metaphors or tropes that externally signify the inner flaws of a

character, or as an "explanation" for their deviation from the norm.[1] Narratives written by nondisabled people often feature disabled characters in ways that privilege nondisabled people's perspectives over those of disabled people, and these depictions have "dominated our stages" (Johnston, "Great Reckonings" 24). Rosemarie Garland Thomson posits that the centring of the nondisabled as the assumptive norm and the disabled person as the abnormal, influences perspectives of disability in society (*Extraordinary Bodies* 6). When disabled representations are not fully realized within texts or onstage, the disabled character becomes the sum total of their impairment (disability) (Sandahl, *Disability Identity* 236).

Disability arts has been established in Canada for over 47 years, although it only recently gained traction in the mainstream artistic community (Decottignies 43-44; Reid). David Freeman's play *Creeps,* for example, premiered in 1970 at the Factory Lab Theatre in Toronto, Ontario[2] and was the "inaugural production for Tarragon Theatre in Toronto in 1971" (Johnston, *Stage Turns* 171). There is a rich history of disability theatre companies in Canada from coast to coast, which Kirsty Johnston, a Canadian theatre scholar, surveys in her book *Stage Turns*. Matt Hargrave, theatre practitioner and scholar, offers a definition of disability arts as "an art practice that addresses the oppression of the dis-abled person" (27). Fundamentally, disability arts strive to advocate for and prioritize disabled stories, bodies and culture that challenge the normative nondisabled culture of society. This ideology aligns well with Diana Taylor's analysis of the power of performance that suggests that artists use the body to transform themselves from the object to a subject within an activist light (1). This shift in performance strategy challenges the localization of power and can be a tool to shift society's understanding of diversity.

---

[1] Sandahl, "Tyranny" 255; Johnston, "Great Reckonings" 25; Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary* 10-11
[2] David Freeman was a disabled playwright (1945-2012).

However, there is an important distinction to make between disability theatre and disability *in* theatre. The conceptual differences between these two terms is important to discern because both influence theatre in their own way. Disability theatre takes the activist position through the disabled artists' positioning as central to the work, whereas disability *in* theatre focuses on disability's function within the theatrical work. The latter includes disabled characters, narratives, actors, barriers, access, accommodations, spaces (both physical and attitudinal) and casting within mainstream theatre. It is fundamentally the perspective from which the narrative is told, who this work is for and how the disabled characters (figures) are being used to meet these ends. Disability *in* theatre, the main focus of this thesis, is when disability and disabled characters' stories are told or performed as *part of* the mainstream theatre.

In this thesis, I will examine traditional theatrical practices that shape the perception of disability and limit the role of disabled people in the production of theatre. I will examine the meaning and function of disability in Brad Fraser's play *Kill Me Now.* The 2017 co-production by the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre (Royal MTC) and the National Arts Centre (NAC) will facilitate this exploration of disability in theatre. Fraser's play, written in 2011, provides a contemporary text where we can explore how the figural constructions of disability are influenced by the pervasive and unconscious semiotic meanings that, in turn, influence audiences—even when a playwright states their play is not about disability ("Kill Me Now" 9:17). The play has been produced internationally which provides a broader context to analyze the 2017 co-production. In 2015, after Fraser's play was staged at the Park Theatre in the United Kingdom, it was marked as controversial. Dea Birkett, a disability advocate and writer, wrote an article in *The Guardian* that challenged the representation of disability in Fraser's text and the production's lack of integrated/inclusive casting. However, Fraser's work is not new to

controversy (Mock 87-88). His work typically challenges spectator/audience's perceptions of social order, but the controversy with *Kill Me Now* is that Fraser does not challenge the dominant thinking about disability, nor was there a disabled actor cast in the 2015 production.

There have been five productions of *Kill Me Now*: Workshop West (Edmonton, Alberta, 2013), Kaliyuga Arts (Hudson, New York, 2013), Park Theatre (London, United Kingdom, 2015), Royal MTC (Winnipeg, Manitoba), NAC (Ottawa, Ontario, 2017), and Firehall Arts Centre (Vancouver, British Columbia, 2018). The first three productions featured only nondisabled actors. For the 2017 co-production, director Sarah Garton Stanley insisted that a disabled actor play Joey. This can be viewed as a constructive response to Birkett's concerns, and a challenge to professional theatre to become a more inclusive space for disability. This paper's production analysis examines how the casting of Myles A. Taylor in the role of Joey shifted the play and the production. While a full analysis of all of the characters in Fraser's play would be optimal, due to the scope of this thesis, the analysis is limited primarily to the dynamic between the father and son figures, Jake and Joey.

In this thesis I argue for the prioritization of a shift in attitudes towards a more integrated and inclusive model of disability in theatre. I document the ways in which this play and its subsequent productions have contributed to both the reinforcement and removal of barriers. Petra Kuppers describes "[t]heatre in change" as the real physical mark left behind when disabled people are integrated/included within theatrical spaces (*theatre & disability*). She cites Ali Stroker's dressing room which had to be made wheelchair accessible through the "structural change of [the] theatre (backstage) space" (15).[3] This left behind a physical alteration to the theatre's structure: an accessible change room for any disabled cast member. Disability

[3] Ali Stroker is the first wheelchair user to perform in a show on Broadway.

integration and inclusion within theatre's mainstream spaces provoke physical changes, and require an attitudinal shift in thinking about how the production system works. By examining how the script *Kill Me Now* and the 2017 co-production uses and integrates disability, theatre artists and scholars can unpack the ways they can decentre traditional mainstream practices.

The work of artists and scholars in disability arts and theatre provide, for this thesis, a lens through which I hope to illuminate the challenge of integration/inclusion from the perspective of disability. Ultimately, by examining outdated practices that restrict thinking of disability, this thesis invites a shift away from thinking of people in binary terms of disabled or nondisabled. Through a purposeful reconceptualization of traditional thinking and practices, theatre can become inclusive of disability as a normal lived experience, and embrace the creative contributions of society's largest minority group.

Epistemological Framework

To better understand the play's social impact, I use Michel Foucault's concepts of the body, power and institutions. His concept of power focuses on the roles of governments, institutions and social spaces. He states that "power produces knowledge" and that both "power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (*Political* 101). As such, it is imperative to examine how these power relations operate and how they influence the knowledge generated in society. This knowledge "invest[s in] human bodies and subjugate[s] them by turning them into objects of knowledge" (Foucault, *Political* 102). It is only through the perfecting of the body and the control of the body to make its "material" efficient that it can become productive in society (Foucault, *Political* 103). Through this "discipline" it "produces subjected and practised bodies,

'docile' bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience)" (Foucault, *Political* 104). Therefore, there is an internalization of the meaning of the body. The body is a "powerful symbolic form" that inscribes "the central rules, hierarchies" of our culture (Bordo 13), which ties into another concept that Foucault terms bio-power, the power within certain bodies to control others. There are two components to bio-power: the scientific surveillance though documentation and the medicalization of the body, and the internalized self-surveillance by conforming one's body to what is considered "normal" by the society (Foucault, *Political* 107; Kuppers, *Disability* 5). This use of power generates knowledge and meanings about different people in society (Tremain 16), and can either segregate or integrate them. When bodies become objects, bodies become tools of capitalism. Robert McRuer, a disability and queer theorist, states that the power of a society lies within those with a productive body in contrast with those without a body deemed as productive—who therefore must be made reliant on a "work-based" versus "needs-based" society ("Disabling Sex" 110). This division leads how society has historically defined the disabled body as both passive and reliant. The concept of power is consistent with many disability scholars who apply Foucault's work as foundational to theirs, in rethinking societal structures and how they intersect with disabled people's place in society.[4]

This thesis continues disability scholarship that demands for theatre-makers and scholars to challenge and re-consider how disability is used onstage, and furthermore, how they integrate and/or include, disabled people within theatres—and by extension, society. This thesis emphasizes the knowledge that theatre-makers and scholars must familiarize themselves with in order to understand the meanings and culture essential to shifting physical and attitudinal spaces.

[4] For example, in: Kuppers, *Disability*; Peers 331-349; Tremain 9-23.

Methodological Framework

This thesis will employ a textual and performance analysis of the play *Kill Me Now.* I will examine critical discourses of this play by Fraser and reviewers, and localize these discourses within the relevant disability scholarship. My textual analysis will apply Manfred Pfister's *The Theory and Analysis of Drama* as a guide. In order to give voice to the participants of the production, I conducted interviews with the cast and creative team. To protect their anonymity, I have grouped together their statements and include them only if more than two of the interviewees responded similarly. My performance analysis derives from my experience of the 2017 co-production's rehearsal and performance period. This includes the last two weeks of rehearsals plus production week at the Royal MTC, the previews and opening night in Winnipeg, followed by the production process and full run in Ottawa. I facilitated two talkbacks in Ottawa, the first with only the cast and the second including disability community members as well. The entire arc of this experience influenced the framework of my production analysis, and as an outcome of this investigation, I propose a new tool for production analysis that includes disability *in the way that theatre-makers and scholars consider performance.*

Terminology

Diana Taylor highlights the performative power that language holds as an extension to the body (117). Language shapes the way society perceives and understands people, in addition to concepts in society. In this thesis, I take the activist position that decentres the normative terminology (Linton 23). When discussing a person with a disability, I describe them as a disabled person/actor/figure etc. When discussing someone who does not identify as disabled, I use the term nondisabled person/actor/figure. This decentring of the *normal* versus *abnormal* is

used by disability scholars.[5] Shifting the power of the conversation to centre on disabled people removes the normative position of abled versus disabled, and calls attention to who is privileged (or not) within academic, institutional and social spaces.

With the influence of post-modernism, disabled people resist any definition based on science and embrace a social model of disability. The medical model of disability pathologizes differences in people by the medical profession (Eales 147). It defines someone through their impairment or "deficit" compared to the healthy "normal" body (Jacobson and McMurchy 54). The social model of disability centres the barrier or *problem of disability* within the societal structures.[6] Jacobson and McMurchy argue this model requires the nondisabled society to reconsider the ways society constructs the accepted "values and practices," and through this re-conceptualization, nondisabled people can become informed allies that lead "the process of attitudinal and concrete change" (54).[7] In the social model of disability, the term impairment is used to describe the medicalized details of someone's condition. When discussing disability, the use of this term implies the socio-cultural constructs that create exclusion within society.

In this discussion it is useful to also define the standards of society which the disability community and this thesis are working towards shifting and re-imagining. When I use the term normative, I am referring to the space and binaries that exist in society, which generates the standards and structures that we operate within and by.[8] I acknowledge that normative has a range of meanings in sociological and philosophical terms, and its usage can place a value statement upon what should or should not be recognized under this term (Shotwell 992). It is also

---

[5] For example: (Conroy 1-14; Fox, "Chapter 6" 148; Johnston, *Disability* 43, 56-57; Linton 20-27).
[6] Such as: Belsky 290; Conroy 3-4, Eales 147; Jacobson and McMurchy 54; and Kuppers, *theatre & disability*.
[7] For a concrete example of this, it is typical for us to assume that there are stairs, elevators and ramps. However, if our society was constructed with wheelchair users as the majority group, ramps and elevators would be the dominant mode of accessibility and would be physically more accessible than stairs (Garland Thomson *Extraordinary* 7).
[8] This definition is arrived at through reading Garland-Thomson, Alexis Shotwell, Simo Vehmas & Nick Watson's work and the Lexico definitions of "normative" and "predominant."

useful to acknowledge, as sociology scholar Alexis Shotwell does, that in disability and cultural studies we cannot always define normative, and it can be used to indicate a "constrictive and restrictive force, delimiting the range of subjectivities one might inhabit" (991). Instead, I use normative in this thesis to define the standards and binaries that are socially/culturally constructed and implicitly agreed upon. These standards and binaries create the precedent of what is expected. How these standards are implemented will be defined in my thesis by the use of words such as traditional, historical and predominant. In making this distinction, I hope to offer clarity to the reader, and move towards embracing a more fluid conceptualization of what is typical in society. Further is the concept of Temporarily Abled Bodies (TAB). This is the recognition that disability is an open category that everyone can join at any given time, either temporarily (as with an injury) or slowly (as in aging), or permanently by acquiring an impairment. Disability is a fluid category; it can change over time and fluctuate over a day, a week, or year(s). However, the dynamic nature of disability versus a static state is not often recognized in society, and this limits society's perceptions and attitudes about it, which in turn creates more barriers in policies and practices.

When disability is first considered, often nondisabled people will focus on those who are physically and visibly definable as disabled. Ellen Samuels, a disability scholar, links the LGBTQ terms of "coming out" and "passing" to the process that invisibly disabled people experience. To "pass" is to visibly ascribe to the criteria of the dominant culture. A disabled person with an invisible disability can only pass up to the point where they require an accommodation (Samuels 237). Tobin Siebers, a disability scholar, also stresses the question of whether or not a disabled person should have to disclose their identity—that this passing can form a type of oppression for the individual in "coming out of the closet" (*Disability as*

Masquerade 2). This process highlights the stigma and fear around "coming out" as disabled and reveals the pervasive concept of disability as a physically identifiable static condition.

Ableism is defined as "a combination of discrimination, power, and prejudice related to the cultural privileging of *able-bodied* people" (Eisenhauer 8; Linton 20). Typically, society operates from the perspective of the nondisabled person, such as when it fails to recognize the omission of disabled people in the social and physical design (Kuppers *theatre & disability*). This omission directly impacts the physical and attitudinal barriers that disabled people face when interfacing with institutions such as colleges, universities, and theatres.

Another important distinction to make in the evolution of disability in society and theatre is between *integration* and *inclusion*: "[i]ntegration implies making space" for disabled people within the established system (Irving & Giles 372), while inclusion requires a shift in process from the outset. With inclusion, the disabled artist is considered and involved throughout the entire process (Irving & Giles 372).

I would also like to emphasize the difference between dependency, independency and interdependency and how they are prioritized in society. Independency, or being self-sufficient, is viewed as crucial to success. Disabled people are often viewed as dependent due to their need for assistance. Traditionally, stories about disabled people tend to focus upon either their dependency or ability to transcend their disability to become more independent, and are deemed inspirational for this achievement. The latter narratives constitute inspiration porn or "supercrip" because the disabled person achieves a higher status for the benefit of the normative society (Peers 331). Instead, the disability community stresses the concept of interdependency, as we all need to work together to ultimately succeed as a society. This third concept, interdependency considers disability as part of the social ebb and flow where everyone's needs are met.

I consider the concept of space as both the concrete physical space and also the conceptual/perceptual space of attitudes that shape society's standards with regards to space. This duality of space provides a helpful model when cogitating the ways in which we either integrate or include disabled people in theatre. It is important to consider space in both physical and attitudinal terms, as disability operates in both. Physical space is often recognized as a consideration for disabled people with the obvious physical barriers such as stairs to a wheelchair user. However, whether or not a disabled person can get into a space is not solely dependent upon physical access. Attitudes and ways of thinking present barriers to access spaces. Kuppers suggests if society viewed wheels as the mode of transportation rather than bi-pedal walking, society would have ramps as access to buildings as the standard instead of stairs (*theatre & disability*). She continues that the social priority of being time efficient presents barriers to disabled people and deems them less valuable (*theatre & disability*). These attitudinal aspects create barriers to disabled artists working in theatre (Derbyshire 266), and prevent people from viewing work by disabled artists as valuable or high quality. Attitudinal spaces encompass an area of thought in two ways: first, how the attitudes shape the traditional systems that affect the ways we create and use theatre spaces, and second, how attitudes (traditional and conceivable) shape the ways society understands and views theatre. Consideration of attitudinal spaces highlights the relative positions of privilege in how traditional systems operate.

The above is not an exhaustive list of the lexicon from disability studies. However, these terms in particular highlight the need to re-examine the model of normative privilege of ability and shift it towards one that resists binary definitions. Nor are these definitions static; they serve as an impetus to decentre what is deemed normal and abnormal so that we, as a society, can be open to new and ever evolving meanings, in particular within theatre.

In my thesis, I examine the physical and attitudinal process of creating theatre in English Canada. I define normative mainstream theatre in English Canada as spaces that were designed in the past, often without conceptualizing the presence of the disabled patron and artist. These spaces include the permanent physical spaces such as theatre architecture, and attitudinal spaces such as casting practices. Neither were designed with the intention of integrating or including disabled people. In addition, these theatres with their institutional power such as National and Regional theatres, stage productions that the dominant part of society experiences, meaning that whatever is staged influences society's perception as to who does and does not appear to belong.

Summary of the Play

For those who are unfamiliar with Fraser's work and the play, *Kill Me Now,* I will provide a brief summary. Fraser is a well-known playwright both in Canada and internationally for his desire to challenge the social and cultural status quo. In *Kill Me Now*, he raises several topics such as disability, sex and disability, sex surrogacy/work, euthanasia/assisted death, and dependency versus independency (and therefore interdependency).

Kill Me Now centres on the Sturdy family. Jake Sturdy, a 39-year-old widower, professor and one-time novelist, is father to Joey. Joey is a disabled seventeen-year-old male whose disability affects the mobility of his hands and legs, and thus uses a wheelchair. Joey also has a non-normative speech pattern. He is in his last year of secondary school. Jake's sister Twyla assists with the care of Joey; she is an alcoholic, 29-year-old single woman who works for a technology corporation. She watches Joey on Tuesday nights—the only time Jake takes off from his caregiving role. Jake's Tuesday diversion is his affair with Robyn, a married woman with two adult children, and a former student of Jake's. The affair is framed as Jake's hockey night

and Robyn's bridge club. The fifth character is Rowdy, Joey's best friend, confidante and schoolmate. Rowdy has fetal-alcohol syndrome (FAS) and lives in a group home.

The play starts with a portrayal of a realistic everydayness of family life. The family seems to be tied together by love and the mutual experience of the death of both Jake and Joey's mothers. Jake focuses on the tremendous responsibility to provide personal care for his disabled son. However, Jake soon finds himself facing his own disability: spinal stenosis. With this revelation, Jake and his family confront how to manage Jake's disability. Jake feels that he has no worth, and he thinks the only valuable contribution he can make to his family is with his life insurance money. Eventually, though not a legal option, assisted death and suicide are discussed by everyone and the play closes with Jake's decision to end his life.

Kill Me Now is not divided into scenes, but for the purpose of analysis, I identify twenty-six scenes based on the typical stage management markers such as characters' entrances or exits, stage directions, and certain shifts within the text.[9] By superimposing the text on a Freytag Pyramid, it becomes clear that the play does not follow a traditional well-made play structure. The play's inciting incident occurs in scene nine, with the climax occurring in scene twenty-five. The falling action begins in scene twenty-six, but because Jake does not actually take the pills, the falling action does not reach completion, and we are left in suspense. No new state of equilibrium is established. Below is the Freytag Pyramid for this play, including scene numbers.

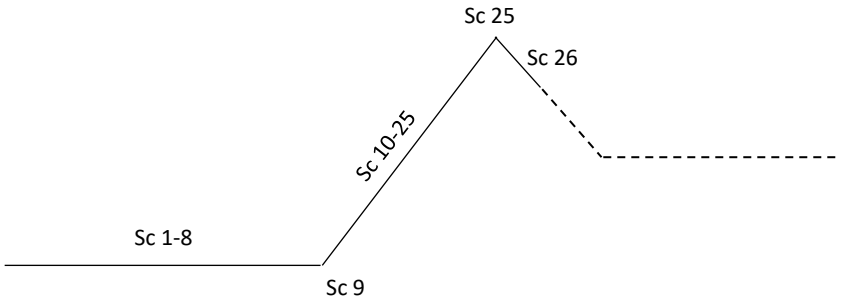

Figure 1. Kill Me Now *Freytag Pyramid*

[9] Please refer to the appendix for the scene breakdown, with corresponding page numbers.

Kill Me Now—2017 Co-production

The co-production of the Royal MTC/NAC was directed by Sarah Garton Stanley, with Assistant Director Debbie Patterson and Apprentice Director Liam Zarillo. The benefit of such a large directorial team meant that the attention to aesthetics and the practical integration of disability was more considered. The cast included Sharon Bajer (Robyn), Andrea del Campo (Twyla), Braiden Houle (Rowdy), Myles A. Taylor (Joey) and Cory Wojcik (Jake). The cast members were established artists, except for Houle who had just graduated from Studio 58, and Taylor who did not have much acting training and was attending university during the production period. The creative team, Amy Keith (Set/Costume Designer), Hugh Canacher (Lighting Designer), Chris Coyne (Sound Designer), Paul Essiembre (Fight Director), Darryl Audetter (Apprentice Designer), Leslie Watson (Stage Manager), Alison Fulmyk (Assistant Stage Manager) and Stefanie Wiens (Accessibility Consultant) worked together to support Sarah Stanley's vision of the play. The production ran 110 minutes with no intermission.

Thesis Layout

The format of the chapters follows a trajectory that embraces the full circle of knowledge generation within theatre. I have broken these areas of knowledge into five chapters that explore the various physical and attitudinal spaces, and how disability in theatre is integrated and included within them. In Chapter One, I frame my literature review around Fraser's response to Dea Birkett's criticism. I, in turn, formulate a response to Fraser, informed by the disability community since his questions and comments represent current (attitudinal) barriers to the integration and inclusion of disabled people in mainstream theatre. This chapter's goal is to situate the reader within the predominant normative thinking held by society. I follow by proposing alternative ways to envision theatre spaces and who belongs within them.

In Chapter Two, I offer a textual analysis of the play-text using Manfred Pfister's book *The Theory and Analysis of Drama* as a dramaturgical guide while answering Kenny Fries' three questions regarding disability representation and the disabled characters' function within a text; 1) "[d]oes a work have more than one disabled character?"; 2) "[d]o the disabled characters have their own narrative purpose other than the education and profit of a nondisabled character?"; and 3) "[i]s the character's disability not eradicated either by curing or killing?" (Fries). I specifically examine the characters of Jake and Joey and the meanings generated by their use within the text.

In Chapter Three, I introduce Jan Derbyshire's Infrequently Asked Questions (IAQs), her concept which queries how theatre operates, and I examine what physical and attitudinal changes the Royal MTC/NAC made to the normative practices previously in place. This chapter identifies how barriers of physical and attitudinal spaces were mitigated and adapted for this production. The seemingly small insistence by Stanley to cast a disabled actor provided a huge opportunity for the two theatres, nondisabled actors, crew and Taylor to learn about how to integrate disabled people into the mainstream system, a step towards a fully *inclusive* process.

In Chapter Four, I examine traditional acting practices, the attitudes that shape them, and how performances of disabled characters (figures) acted by nondisabled-versus-disabled actors are analyzed. I propose the use of my Res*cript*ing Wheel, a new analytical tool that allows scholars, critics and artists to analyze and understand performances that include disabled people and figures. I use Taylor/Joey and Wojcik/Jake as examples of how this wheel offers a type of performance analysis that is decentred from the normative means of analysis to one that allows for a full examination of the meaning generated from these performances in a production.

Finally, in Chapter Five, I examine critical responses to the first three productions and the co-production to illustrate how critics have discussed and continue to discuss disability in

performances. My examination highlights the attitudinal perspective that exist when viewing performances by nondisabled and disabled actors, and offers a way to re-evaluate the role of critics and the position of power from which they write. This chapter reveals how the critic's position can influence and re-contextualize the spectator/audience reception. With the analysis of critics, my thesis comes around to the full circle of knowledge from creation to reception. In identifying how each part of the theatrical process is connected in shaping the physical and attitudinal spaces of theatre, it can elucidate how theatre influences and is influenced by society.

Conclusion

It is essential to question and analyze how the work of institutions can impact communities, and to hold them accountable to their goals of being inclusive and non-discriminatory. Traditional systems have been built without a full consideration of the presence of disabled people. This thinking is rooted in the bio-politics that privileges nondisabled, white, male bodies above other types of bodies. Canadian society's historical ontology upholds ability as paramount. However, since theatre is both a reflection of society and a powerful force for change, the integration or inclusion of disabled individuals (artists and patrons) can provoke a shift in society's normative systems. My thesis is part of an ongoing iterative process of fighting for *inclusive* theatre. I hope to offer the reader ways to re-think what it means to be disabled, and to invite consideration of what creative potential may result if we, as theatre-makers, integrate or include disabled actors and spectators/audiences within our theatre spaces.

CHAPTER 1—"CONTEXT. IT'S EVERYTHING."

Playwright Brad Fraser states in his preface to *Kill Me Now,* "On Characters and Casting," that: "[c]ontext. It's everything" (ix).[10] Context allows readers a fuller understanding of the writer's intended meaning. A playwright's work(s) are better understood within the context of their history and where a particular work fits within their canon. Their work is informed by the socio-cultural practices of the time in which they wrote it, either explicitly or implicitly, which gives meaning to all elements of the play such as characters and plot. Furthermore, through "concretization," a term theorist Felix Vodička developed, perceptions of the *receiver* of a work can shift meaning over time as different social, political and cultural contexts arise (109). Within this context the spectator/audience and critic's perceptions of the material are influenced. It is vital for scholars to consider in their examination of works to fully understand the socio-political and cultural influences that construct and re-construct playwright's work(s) and productions.

Playwrights hold a significant amount of power when they construct figures for the stage, and these characters can have real world ramifications. The systems of power within society also influence how critics and other receivers either voice their opinions or internalize the information. Michel Foucault argued that power can either be repressive and controlling, or can be a productive tool that provokes action—action that shifts perspectives on how society classifies people (Tremain 17). It is imperative that playwrights remain ethically responsible when constructing narratives and figures, especially when their work includes minorities, such as

[10] This preface is a reprinting of the 2015 response Fraser wrote in *The Stage* to Dea Birkett's commentary for *The Guardian* February 26, 2015 titled "Why can't theatre imagine what it's really like to be the parent of a disabled child?" after watching the 2015 production of *Kill Me Now* at the Park Theatre in London, UK. It was written from her perspective where she reflected on her experience of being a parent of a disabled child. She was offended by Fraser's interpretation of this experience.

disabled characters. Their presence will generate meaning about disability, whether they are the focus of the narrative or not. Any presentation of the conventional idea of disability serves to marginalize the minority group in service of the majority's ideas.

In the NAC's *Points of View* podcast, Fraser says that he writes to showcase "the people we are not seeing in the theatre" ("Kill Me Now" 8:49). He believes it is important for those in the dominant culture to use their privilege to support the minority culture as allies by talking and writing about them ("Kill Me Now" 19:15). However, when a member of a majority group writes about minorities, they need to recognize the context from which they approach the subject, and how the implicit biases and learned understandings can influence their perceptions and thinking. As Kirsty Johnston states, "theatre artists, audiences, critics and scholars are all connected to disability's aesthetic value, for all participate in the systems of knowledge and culture" of society (*Disability* 2). This is not to limit artists from writing about experiences other than their own, but to serve as a reminder of how biases and lived experiences can characterize one's work. In order to support as an ally, as Fraser advises, the writer should acknowledge any privilege and position of power they have in society. Then, engage with the minority group to discern what *they* need or want the majority population to understand about them otherwise there is a risk that the status quo is confirmed and not challenged.

This chapter provides context for questions often asked about the integration/inclusion of disability in mainstream theatres. Questions from theatre-makers, scholars and critics tend to centre around casting disabled people, the cost of their inclusion, and accommodations that are outside of normative practices. These questions reveal perceived barriers that are impediments which continue to exclude disabled artists and patrons. This exclusionary practice is reinforced each time a theatre produces work that does not involve disabled actors in the cast or does not

allow for disabled patrons to access the theatre. It is ironic that theatre frequently uses disability as metaphors or tropes in plays such as the pitiable, innocent like Tiny Tim in *A Christmas Carol*, but resists the idea of integration or inclusion of disabled people in their spaces. If casting, cost, and accommodations are continually presented as barriers then the entire theatre community is deprived of the valuable contribution of disabled people and artists.

This thesis focuses on Fraser's play *Kill Me Now.* In this chapter, I use his preface of the play and his opinions from interviews over the years as representative of perhaps the pervasive and often presumptive thinking expressed by other nondisabled theatre-makers, critics and scholars. I reflect on Fraser's statements, within the themes of casting, cost and accommodations, highlight how only a *re*-thinking of these positions will facilitate a shift towards a truly inclusive theatre—one that reflects everyone within society. However, first, I must contextualize Fraser's opinions with a brief overview of his personal history and works. This contextualization will inform the examination of the aforementioned themes centering the discussion of Fraser's *Kill Me Now*—both as text and as production. I will re-contextualize these topics through discussion of other works by disability theatre artists and scholars, and offer areas to re-think the mainstream theatre systems.

Brad Fraser and *Kill Me Now*

Brad Fraser is a playwright, director, screenwriter, producer and talk show host. He was born in 1959 in Edmonton, Alberta. He grew up in a working-class family ("Brad Fraser"). At 17, he won the Alberta Playwriting Competition with his play, *Two Pariah at a Bus Stop in a Large City Late at Night* ("Brad Fraser"). However, the play was deemed too controversial to be produced (Nicholls). Fraser is "one of Canada's best-known playwrights" ("Biography") and celebrated as Canada's "bad boy" in theatre because of his provocative content and attitude

(Arrell). He is known for his controversial characters and circumstances that are "confrontational about calling out audiences" about their "hypocrisy" (Nicholls). He has achieved international success with his plays, such as *Unidentified Human Remains, The True Nature of Love, Poor Super Man* and *Martin Yesterday* ("Biography"). However, *Kill Me Now*, first produced in 2013, diverges considerably from his canon; this is the only play that does not feature any queer characters, as he felt it could "muddy issues" (Nicholls).

Fraser draws inspiration from his lived experiences to inform his characters and the conflicts in the play. For example, Fraser's nephew, diagnosed with Kleinfelder's Syndrome, inspired Fraser to construct Joey in *Kill Me Now* (Corrigan). For Jake, Fraser used his personal experience with spinal stenosis. When playwrights construct their characters, it is imperative that they do not become metaphors or catalysts for ableist or normalized culture in our society (Sandahl, "Disability Art" 89). Yet Fraser's language, both in the play and in interviews, align with a normalized and internalized system of knowledge about disability in society. This serves to reinforce dangerous perceptions because of their pervasive reinforcement of harmful stereotypes that align with real-world beliefs of what it means to be a disabled person. When a playwright constructs disabled figures from their nondisabled context, they tend to place these figures in a precarious and restrictive position which conforms to normative perspectives of disabled people and serve nondisabled thinking. In a podcast interview, Fraser describes his nephew's life versus what he wrote for Joey's life. He says that *Kill Me Now* presents a more "romanticized" portrayal, and that his nephew's life is "much more horrifying" ("Episode 24" 23:30). This language suggests that Fraser's observance of his nephew's life is centered in a normative perspective that pities disabled people. Fraser goes on to describe the years that he himself had spinal stenosis as "a very dark time", and that he contemplated suicide ("Episode

24" 25:43). Spinal stenosis, in his experience, was a "painful, crippling condition" (Nicholls, "Brad Fraser's") that took away his "beautiful body" ("Kill Me Now" 7:40) and prevented him from doing what he wanted. Surgery effectively "cured" him of this condition ("Kill Me Now" 7:43). The playwright's first-hand experience of temporary disability influenced how the character of Jake also experiences disability—a life too limited to be considered livable. The language he uses reveals a negativity towards disability and aligns him with the medicalized perspective which supports stereotypical thinking and tropes within society.

Fraser drew upon two other sources of inspiration for the characters in his play. In a *Toronto Star* advice column, a father expressed his moral dilemma about his disabled son's sexual development (Corrigan). This article gave Fraser as a base for the struggle that Jake has with Joey's sexual maturity. Fraser challenges his audience through sex and morality (Mock 87) in many of his plays. In *Kill Me Now,* Jake and all the other figures debate the ethics involved around Joey's sexual maturation. Finally, in order to create a fuller characterization for Joey, Fraser gave him a non-normative speech pattern. This choice aligns with the ableist perspective that disability is not understandable, further reinforcing normalized attitudes toward disabled people. In fact, Fraser stated that his nephew's speech is another language (Corrigan), motivating him to create a "new language" for Joey. In giving his most physically disabled character a non-normative speech pattern, Fraser further alienates his audience and plays into any enculturated beliefs about disabled people. In his position of power as playwright, Fraser could have reversed the audience's expectations by ensuring the disabled character could be more relatable to the audience; however, the narrative and character choices conform rather than challenge preconditioned mindsets about disabled people.

"On Characters and Casting"—The Right to Write and Perform

In a 2017 interview, Fraser stated that "people think [my play] is about disability because one of the characters is disabled. It is not about disability. It's actually about … saying goodbye to a parent" ("Kill Me Now" 9:17). However the dialogue between all the figures in the play focuses predominantly on the issues' disability presents in their lives.[11] At this current time of cultural shifts in society, any play involving disability informs the meaning of disability, whether explicitly or unintentionally (Johnston *Disability* 2). The play participates in the meaning-making of disability as "the way some bodies make other bodies feel" (Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics* 20). Thus, I question Fraser and argue that this play *is* about disability; even if there were only one disabled character, it would still be formulating understanding about what it is to be disabled.

Interestingly, the play ends with Joey being unable to truly say goodbye to his father; instead, he becomes the child trying to please his father by facilitating his wish for death. Joey is thus placed in a precarious position in several ways. He gives Jake the pills and the means to kill himself and chooses to wait with his father until he passes. The play ends *before* Jake ingests the pills. The spectator/audience is left with a set of unknowns: if he did take them, Joey and the family would be in peril. Will the family be charged with murder or manslaughter for their part in Jake's death? Will Joey find accommodation and continue living within the broken system of their world? Regardless, the act of Joey staying by his father's side and supporting Jake's desire to kill himself is framed as a self-sacrificing and heroic act by Joey—one that I do not think is acknowledged by the other characters nor the spectators/audience.

---

[11] The play begins with Jake caring for Joey with a surprise of a new element of care being introduced, Joey's sexuality. Jake takes this news and shares it with Robyn, his lover. Both deliberate on the boundaries of care for his disabled son versus the ineffectual "services" provided by the government. When Jake acquires a disability, the need for more assistance in care is highlighted, and the other figures pitch in. When Jake begins contemplating suicide, the idea of a murder-suicide is floated so that Joey would not be left alone without the stability of Jake's care/insurance funds. Additionally, many of the moments within the play feature the figures trying to navigate the shifting needs of the two Sturdy men within the play due to their impairments and society.

Further to Fraser's point of what playwright's roles in constructing plays and conflict he states in response to Dea Birkett's criticism; "[…] theatre is drama, drama needs conflict. […] All dramatic characters are metaphorical constructs that serve the needs of a story. All artists work with their imaginations. To ask anyone to limit that imagination for political purposes seems to me the worst kind of oppression of all" (xi). Fraser is correct in his assertion that "drama needs conflict" (xi). However, what is the central conflict in the play that Fraser envisions? *Kill Me Now*'s conflict centers on the *tragedy* of being disabled and conveys the perception that Jake and Joey's disabilities limit all of the figures' lives. Birkett's criticism of the play lies in its assumption that a disabled life is tragic and not worth living. In the Foucauldian sense, this attitude is rooted in societal structures and understandings of what it means to be disabled. Lewis discusses that in a writing workshop, Paul Longmore, a notable disabled activist and writer, challenged the writers to find alternative conflicts to disabled tropes in their works. Lewis noted that the writers "grappled with how to make effective drama if they had to abandon the convenient 'narrative prosthesis' disability stereotype [….], even though they knew those tropes are harmful and distant from their own lived experiences" (103). Disabled narratives and the associated pervasive conflicts are so internalized in society that they are accepted and even expected by spectators/audiences (Sandahl, "Difference" 90). It is imperative that artists do not further perpetuate these ideologies within the new work they generate.

Casting—The Body and Social Understandings of What Bodies Mean

Many of Fraser's statements about his play deal with casting practices in mainstream theatre. Casting presents an area of special inquiry for individuals with minority status when the goal is accurate representation. Directors, playwrights and theatres make casting choices that reveal the priorities and beliefs they hold. The choices reveal what is and is not acceptable within

society, Carrie Sandahl writes that "[c]onvention dictates which identities are considered acceptable to take on other identities in performance" ("Why" 235). Through examining these casting practices, the conventions and structures that maintain them can be discerned.

Sandahl cites nondisabled actors as examples of how the dominant class can play various minority/oppressed groups and are thus excluding the latter from mainstream stages. The acceptable parameters of who can and cannot be seen in auditions, and who can and cannot portray those who live on the margins are in constant renegotiation. She demonstrates how casting practices have shifted over time. For example, in the Elizabethan era, men played women because women were not allowed onstage, and in the 19th and 20th century, blackface was an acceptable form of entertainment since black people were not cast on the mainstage ("Why" 235). Sandahl also extends this example to the present day where slender actors wear fat-suits to play larger characters, for example with "Gwyneth Paltrow (*Shallow Hal,* 2001) and Renee Zellweger (*Bridget Jones' Diary,* 2001)" (235-236). She asserts that in an "ideal" world, any actor could play any role and exercise their acting ability (235). However, in a non-ideal world, with oppressed and marginalized cultures, genders, etc., casting directors must be conscious of who is cast in which roles, and how these roles are portrayed (Sandahl, "Why" 235). Casting relies on external physical signifiers based on the theatre director's concept of the piece. The casting choices in turn shape how spectators perceive bodies within society, as the stage is an extension of what they are used to seeing (Garland-Thomson, "Staring: How We Stare" 3). Johnston notes that many minority groups have been fighting for representation onstage and that the disability community aligns with these other groups (*Disability* 38-58). Furthermore, the exclusion of disabled people limits stories about disabilities to ones that are for and in the service of the nondisabled population's interests.

Fraser purports that "[r]ejection, for actors, is an equal opportunity experience" ("On Characters and Casting" x). However, this is an oversimplification. It is true that all actors face rejection, but not equally. Casting calls take place at theatre spaces that are often inaccessible, thus precluding disabled actors from even auditioning. Sandahl notes that there is a lack of trained professional disabled actors ("Difference" 88). She references phone calls she receives from casting agencies requesting disabled actors and to their dismay, there are very few disabled actors "waiting in the wings" ("Difference" 88).[12] Furthermore, casting is not only reliant on the actor's training, but also on what the director and production are seeking. It is not the norm for disabled roles to be cast with disabled actors. As Christine Bruno warns, this "exclusion results in a serious loss to the cultural life of the nation, denies artists and audiences alike the artistic benefits of diversity, and denies the public an accurate reflection of the society in which we live" (86). As many disabled artists, activists and scholars have noted, disabled people are "amazing" creative thinkers capable of adapting systems and tools to their needs.[13] Why not tap into this creativity to help the mainstream re-think how theatre creates? Yet there remains resistance to hiring disabled artists. Sandahl identifies the erroneous presumption that disabled actors should play themselves, whereas nondisabled actors can display their acting ability portraying a disabled figure ("Difference" 92). This belief propagates the practice of "cripping up," where a nondisabled actor takes on a disabled identity for television, film or theatre.

Fraser challenges the disability community's assertion about cripping up and says "[e]quating able-bodied actors playing physically challenged characters with historic blackface is a false equivalence" (x). Frances Ryan, a disability scholar, questioned if there is a difference

[12] This ties into training for actors, which I will discuss later on in Chapter four.
[13] As an example, in Stella Young's TEDtalk she noted that she has learned that she can charge her phone using her wheelchair battery from another disabled community member.

between “blacking up” and cripping up, and concluded that the two are similarly aligned, as both employ “prosthetics or props to alter their appearance in order to look like someone from a minority group. In both cases they often manipulate their voice or body to mimic them” (335). Ryan draws attention to how this process removes work opportunities for minorities, which continues the “group’s under-representation in the industry” (335). Furthermore, Ryan emphasizes that any “cripped up” performances are in service of the dominant mainstream society’s entertainment and not in service of the minority group (335). Like Fraser, Tony Seymour, another disability scholar, questions if blacking up is synonymous with cripping up. Seymour clarifies that the historical purpose of blacking up was to belittle the black community, which he believes is different than the intention behind nondisabled actors playing disabled characters (339). Fraser, though, dismisses the equivalence because, he says, disability is not limited by “race or gender” (x). This generalization of disability dismisses disability scholars’ criticism of unequal and offensive casting practice, and inherently says that disability is only a physical experience and not in itself a culture. Instead of growing from the disability community’s cultural and personal sitpoint, he examines cripping up from an established normative and ableist standpoint. Blacking up reinforced existing stereotypes and so does cripping up because it does not further an understanding of disability beyond one of diminished capacity as physically expressed. Sandahl states it is imperative to cast disabled actors in roles in terms of economics, aesthetics and politics (Sandahl, “Why” 237): economically because disabled artists are employed and get paid for their work; aesthetically because disabled actors offer *authentic* portrayals that draw from their rich lived experience; politically because it provides the opportunity for nondisabled people to readdress any stereotypical assumptions of the disability community (Sandahl, “Why” 234-237).

Fraser argues that additional considerations when casting a disabled person can complicate a production.[14] Fraser asks "[c]an the lead dancer in the chorus of the latest megamusical lead the troupe on advanced prosthetics rather than legs?" (x). To this, I ask, what is it about a dancer who uses prosthetics that precludes them from being the lead? Fraser suggests that the performer's appearance would not be aesthetically pleasing based on normative standards and the enculturated expectation that ensemble dance movements must be uniform to have an aesthetic value. However, disabled actors have appeared several times within "megamusicals" and commercial theatre. Ali Stroker was the first disabled person to be on Broadway and to win a Tony Award (Salam). Someone with prosthetics or who uses a wheelchair can dance, as evidenced by the many disabled dancers around the world. Why not challenge preconceived aesthetic values and reconceive ones that embrace a plethora of bodies?

Fraser also questions actors' abilities: "[h]ow versatile does the actor need to be in a single show; will they be playing multiple characters and how will that work?" (x-xi). The need for an actor to play multiple roles is not a requirement in all productions and should not be a point for exclusion. Fraser asks how the audience would differentiate between multiple characters played by one disabled actor. This reveals a presumption that the disability would prevent the spectators from distinguishing between characters. However, I respond that this is also the case for nondisabled actors. When nondisabled actors play multiple roles, the audience may, visually or audibly, detect that it is the same actor playing multiple roles. Fraser is making an assumption that the mechanisms that work for nondisabled actors would not hold true for a disabled actor. The same creative thinking on the part of the production team can apply for both nondisabled and disabled actors. Additionally, having disabled actors portray a variety of roles

[14] Inclusive casting is the practice of ensuring and actively pursuing minority groups to be included in the casting calls and production.

could subvert the inadvertent implicit practice of generalizing, or universalizing, the disabled experience in productions. The second part of Fraser's question applies to logistics about character/actor quick changes, which can be solved by dressers backstage, creative costuming and/or staging choices—all typical solutions in most productions. Thus, the ability to navigate logistics requires the same creative strategies on the part of the production team.

Fraser further questions the actor's ability to effectively and "convincingly" play a role: "[c]an a disabled actor play the able-bodied part as convincingly as an able-bodies actor can portray the disability?" (xi). His question implies that a disabled actor may not be able to portray figures without a disability. Johnston asserts the need to imagine disabled people in ordinary roles (*Disability* 41). Disabled people are more than their disability; they are teachers, politicians, mothers and fathers, and more, so there is no need for them to exclusively play disabled figures. Furthermore, roles do not have to be exclusively written for disabled/nondisabled actors. If there are no explicit physical requirements within a playtext for a figure to be nondisabled, then a disabled actor can be cast. Removal of binary casting of disabled actors to disabled roles and nondisabled actors to nondisabled roles will facilitate true inclusion. Removal of the presumption that disabled actors only serve to offer authentic representations of disability shifts the conversation to what constitutes a strong performance.

Fraser is concerned about disabled actors' ability to act "convincingly," however acting ability comes from training and practice, which comes from the opportunity to work in inclusive productions. As previously noted, currently there are limited opportunities for disabled actors to receive formal training. And in order for the theatre industry to include more disabled actors into its spaces, they must have access to professional training programs. In addition, it is not necessary for disabled people to pass as nondisabled in order to perform a *convincing* figure on

stage. Fox and Sandahl stress the importance of discussing the implications of casting outside of the "presence or absence" of disabled figures because "we risk re-inscribing disabled/nondisabled binaries" (122). The standard of a *convincing* performance is skewed by an ableist perspective. Consider when nondisabled actors perform disability and are championed for their performance; the praise stems from nondisabled perceptions of disabled people's experiences, not the disabled person's lived experience and an understanding of disability (personally, culturally and socially).[15] This standard does not consider what disabled people perceive to be "convincing" portrayals of disabled characters, nor does the standard allow for the vast cultural landscape that theatre is ignoring by only casting nondisabled people in roles in which "they wish to assume disabled identities for fun, profit, or as an example of their supposed actorly virtuosity" (Fox and Sandahl 122). Disability is part of the human experience and should be reflected truthfully as such. In decentring nondisabled traditional standards of casting practices and performances it challenges theatre-makers, scholars, spectators/audiences and critics to think critically of what makes a convincing and good performance through new means.

In *Kill Me Now* the character of Joey is never diagnosed with a particular disability thus no actor would share Joey's exact condition. Notably, the 2018 production also cast an actor with cerebral palsy (CP) to play the role of Joey, however this actor was significantly older than Joey and a more established actor in Canada than Myles A. Taylor (Joey in the 2017 production). This is not to say that every Joey should be played by an actor with CP, but to indicate that the depth of the role benefits from an actor with a disability. Director Sarah Garton Stanley felt it was crucial to cast an actor with a lived experience of disability, but not to match the figure's

[15] Refer to Chapter four for more exploration on actor training and performance analysis.

disability (Langston). The ultimate goal is to ensure that the character's rich, lived experience reaches the spectator/audience and that the actor who is equipped to do that is cast.

With the inclusion or exclusion of disabled performers, directors and theatres perpetuate beliefs as to what it means to be disabled. Nondisabled actors playing disabled characters further heightens the perceived divide between disability and ability in society. Maysoon Zayid, in her 2014 TED talk, addresses this divide. She reveals her difficulties training to be an actor in her school program. She was excited when, in her final year, her school was producing *They Dance Real Slow in Jackson,* a play about a girl with CP, a role Zayid thought she could be play. However, though Zayid shares the diagnosis, she was not cast on the premise that supposedly she would not be able to do all the stunts in the show (6:23). Zayid responded: "[e]xcuse me, if I can't do the stunts, neither can the character" (6:57). Their reaction reveals a *perceived* need for disabled figures and therefore disabled actors to be hyper-abled. Furthermore, like Zayid, disabled performers' real-life impairments are considered barriers to the show, and barriers to the entire production process. Conversely, if theatres hire disabled people, directors and theatres have an opportunity to challenge both themselves and theatregoers regarding what they expect bodies to be and be able to do. The *need* for the normative body in performance is merely due to a limited social perception of bodies, their abilities and aesthetic desirability.

Time and Money

Fraser argues that the pacing of the performance and "maneuvering" of backstage spaces (ix) depends on an actor's abilities and points out that disabled actors affect this process. Their integration/inclusion, he says, will always come down to "time and money" (ix). Yes, it may take more time to find a disabled actor (considering the shortage of trained disabled actors), and there will be associated costs such as making theatres in Canada fully accessible (for instance

backstage, dressing rooms, washrooms, use of lighting, etc.) But should the inaccessibility of the space be the barrier to inclusion? Theatre-makers need to shift their focus from the barriers of the *disabled person's* impairment to considering the *theatre and their processes* as the barriers that are holding back a truly inclusive artistic experience.

While time and money can be valid considerations, how do we prioritize what is most important to spend our resources on? The additional considerations for the 2017 co-production included an occupational therapist (OT), a personal support worker (PSW), taxis for Taylor, additional equipment rentals, and an alternate rehearsal space. Robert McRuer says that the worth of a person is determined by their economic productivity in society and earns them a share in the overall social and political power (McRuer, "Disabling Sex" 110). The body is a determinant of its social and economic value, and therefore one's body impacts their access to the dominant society (Bordo 182). If certain people are not deemed socially and economically valuable, they are excluded from the normative systems of society. This "needs based" perspective indicates they do not benefit society, only rely on it (McRuer, "Disabling Sex" 110). This belief devalues any potential artistic *added* worth of a production with a disabled actor. Within Fraser's opinion that hiring disabled actors is too expensive fits the normative belief that disabled people are a drain on theatre/society's resources. Is this a valid justification for excluding them? In Fraser's article, the disabled person is the problem, not current practices.

When the barriers preventing the integration/inclusion of disabled people are considered only from *how* society and its institutions are constructed it compels a response for the integration/inclusion of disability within cultural institutions. Art is meant to challenge us and push us from our comfort zones, something Fraser strives for in his work ("Kill Me Now" 10:15). Art invites us to re-think the ways in which we engage with the world and the people

around us. The guidelines and policies that organizations and governments put in place reflects how we include people in our society. Policies are intended as guidelines for implementation. However, as Sara Ahmed outlines, there are policies that operate as "non-performatives" (116). Some institutions tout the importance of certain practices but do not create support for the policies to actually produce an effect (117). It is imperative for organizations to stop giving token non-performative utterances, and instead commit—*put our money where our mouth is*—and invest time and money into tangible actions that will support disabled artists and patrons. Disability should never be used in words only, promising inclusivity but not resulting in inclusive practices. Bruno states "[t]he full inclusion of disabled artists in the theater deserves our serious consideration; it makes economic sense [….] but, more importantly, it gets to the heart of why we make art" (87). The deprioritized position of accessibility is reflected in the lack of accommodations such as the limited accessible venues, the unavailability of sign language interpretation or adaptive services such as audio description, lack of tactile tours and content offered in alternative formats, among other forms of accessibility (Jacobson and McMurchy 3-4). If accommodations are not prioritized in a company's budget, this indicates that the presence of disabled people is not deemed worthy of the investment. Investing in accommodations for disabled actors and spectator/audiences should not be considered a burdensome *loss of money*, rather as something that *adds worth*. These services do require an organization to seek additional funding support, something that in itself indicates that they have *never* been considered an inherent part of the production process. Inclusion indicates an advancement of society; art is not meant to simply generate income, but to challenge the status quo so that society can meet the challenges of the future. The Royal MTC and NAC's decision to integrate Taylor into the 2017

co-production *highlights how national artistic powers can advance both the theatre's accessibility and enrich a production.*

Accommodations

Much focus of mainstream theatre has centered on simply accommodating disabled people as patrons but not as contributors in the production process. Fraser questions, "[h]ow does a director communicate ideas to a deaf and mute actress who is playing Hellen Keller?" (x).[16] Although *Kill Me Now* does not touch on Deafness, his question focuses on the *barrier* of communication that a director might have with a Deaf actor, but only because the exchange could not be done in a normative manner. We can infer from these statements that a Deaf/disabled person must interface within the traditional theatre system without accommodations, or they must accommodate themselves within that system. This seems to align with the premise that altering the way we do things means that then there must be a devaluation of the work by and with Deaf/disabled people (Sandahl, "Disability Art" 93). Just because something has always been done a certain way should not preclude other ways that might lead to an equitable and richer artistic outcome.

As enforced by the Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) it is a duty for employers to accommodate for the employment of disabled people. Accommodation of Deaf and disabled people are the law. Any barrier indicates pervasive assumptions that prevent imagining how a production can be inclusive of disabilities, Deaf or otherwise. Alex Bulmer, a well-known Blind playwright and activist, discusses her struggle with Canada's system of accommodation in her article "Inclusion:

[16] This beside the fact that Fraser uses the medical model definition of "deaf" by spelling is with the lower case 'd' while additionally calling them mute. Deaf people are not mute, they do speak, and some have also engaged with oralism which has its own history within North America but this is for another discussion.

Building a Culture of Desire and Resilience." She lived in the UK for many years because there is more funding and support for the inclusivity. She describes how Access to Work, a UK employment support program, facilitated her ability to work on her projects with ease. Bulmer expresses frustration that a similar program does not exist in Canada (259). She reframes the conversation from the medical to the social model of disability, stating "[t]he truth is I am always blind, but I am not always disabled" (260).[17] Perceiving disability as solely a problem limits the creative merging of different abilities in productions. Bulmer calls on the Canadian community to provide opportunities for all of us to "thrive" and not simply "survive" (262). This way, the theatre community can move towards an inclusive world, where barriers of time and money are not used as a point of exclusion, and accommodating disability allows a shift in theatre/society's perspective and to think more creatively about our world.

Conclusion

Fraser is known for his controversial representation of the minority voice, but in *Kill Me Now*, as I argued in this chapter, it seems that he is uncharacteristically working from the position of the status quo. Fraser's position perpetuates the medical model of disability and negates the disability community's desire for better representation and integration/inclusion. Fraser aligns himself with mainstream theatre that presents these barriers to integration/inclusion. These barriers are considered to be the actor's impairments and not because of the way theatre is constructed and operated. Shifting this mindset allows for the nondisabled community to think more freely about how to accommodate and integrate/include disabled people in their work. This

[17] Alex Bulmer in her quote uses the lowercase 'b', as she is discussing the medicalized way of conceiving her impairment and not just her culture, her qualifier within the statement of not always being disabled is about highlighting her cultural and community experience as a Blind person and artist. Typically, it is the same for Blind people the way the Deaf community uses the lower case/uppercase. The lowercase 'b' denotes the medical impairment and the capital B the cultural and community component.

is important, especially when one is working towards being an ally; an ally must understand the position of the minority group that they are supporting. It is clear how Fraser's position on disability and its place within theatre frames his text. I will analyze this in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 2—TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF *KILL ME NOW*'S DISABLED FIGURES

The narrative and overall meaning of a text are conveyed through the structure and function of its figures and, as such, an examination of figures is foundational to a textual analysis. Historically, nondisabled playwrights have used disabled figures in their work, not to reflect the lived experience of disability, but as metaphors or tropes to facilitate the nondisabled figure's journey (Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary* 11). This chapter questions how disability is used within *Kill Me Now.* Querying disabled figures and their use within a text elucidates how meaning is generated and reinforced within theatre artists' work. Meaning, by extension, influences societal perceptions about disabled people.

Disabled poet and scholar Kenny Fries, spurred by a question from a colleague, developed a test similar to the Bechdel test (Fries). The Bechdel test is comprised of three questions which facilitate a critical examination of movies to determine whether or not the female characters are represented in stereotypical and/or sexist ways. The Fries' test "lays out the minimum standards for accurately representing disability" in a work (Kovich). The test poses three questions: 1) "Does a work have more than one disabled character?"; 2) "Do the disabled characters have their own narrative purpose other than the education and profit of a nondisabled character?"; and 3) "Is the character's disability not eradicated either by curing or killing?" (Fries). These questions frame my analysis of the dominant figures and their function in *Kill Me Now.* I also use Manfred Pfister's *The Theory and Analysis of Drama* as a guide. Using more normative theories and tools of analysis to investigate plays about disability is important as it identifies uses of disability that could be re-thought. Thus, I apply both a disability-centred lens with the Fries' test, alongside Pfister's approaches, bridging their intersecting knowledges in the service of the richest possible investigation.

Pfister stresses that dramatic figures operate within the fictional world and cannot be extrapolated to function within real world parameters (161). This is important when discussing authentic portrayals as they must conform to the fictional world's rules and not necessarily those of the real world. Pfister specifies that in order to maintain this distinction when analyzing a text, the playwright must consider the roles and functions of the *figures*—not characters—as the term character denotes attributes of the real world (161). In this chapter, I will adopt this strategy. By revealing the rules of the fictional world in which the figures operate in *Kill Me Now*, I can examine the use of disability in the text. Then, I will explore how the figural representations communicate meaning to the reader/spectator/audience. It is essential to consider the meaning in the constructed reality of the text as well as potential meanings in the real-world context, since receivers bring the context of their own lived experiences to the performance or script.

Fries Question 1—"Does a Work have more than one Disabled Character?"

In answer to this question, yes, *Kill Me Now* has three. Disability scholars stress the necessity for there to be multiple disabled figures in a work so that the spectator/audience does not universalize the disabled experience around one figure (Sandahl, "Queering the Crip" 27). Additionally, the three disabled figures each have different impairments: Joey is born physically disabled, Jake acquires his disability and thus demonstrates the vulnerability of nondisabled people, and Rowdy has an invisible disability—so he can pass as nondisabled. The ability to pass challenges interpretation that disability must be visible, an internalized belief held by nondisabled people (Siebers, "Disability as Masquerade" 2). These three varied experiences can challenge the normative belief that disability is only when it is physically and visually apparent in the person. With more than one disabled figure within a text, the fluidity and range within the disability category is represented, and any universalization by readers/spectators/audiences of the

disability experience is challenged (Lewis, "Dramaturgy"). Fraser's construction of these three disabled figures provides his readers/spectators/audiences this opportunity.

Fries Question 2—"Do the Disabled Characters have their own Narrative Purpose other than the Education and Profit of a Nondisabled Character?"

To answer this question, I must first establish which, if any, of the three disabled figures is the dominant figure of the play, and then establish how the other figures serve in supporting roles to the dominant figure's narrative. As for Rowdy's role, he facilitates the figures' journeys and serves as comedic relief, and as such he is clearly a supportive figure within this play. For the other two disabled figures, Jake and Joey, it is unclear which one is the dominant figure. Using Pfister's figural analysis, I will examine the configurations that include the participation of Joey and/or Jake, the figural potential, and their characterization within the text. Once I determine the dominant figure whose story the play is about and who serves in a supporting role, the second question can be answered.

Figural Potential

The figure's potential is established by comparing and contrasting the information presented about them; this assists in determining the figure's development within the play. Pfister calculates the potentials of the figures by assigning positive and negative values to the normative matrix of male, heterosexual, upper class, and neurotypical (169-170). While these positive and negative values are an outdated binary, Pfister's core method of comparing and contrasting specific attributes imbued to figures is important when evaluating the main figure. This thesis will employ this method in the figural analysis. The table below lists the areas in which I will explore the interactions between the figures.

Table 1. Figural Potential Comparison Table of Jake and Joey

Jake	Joey
Male	Male
Late 30s	Teens
Father	Child/son
TAB/Disabled	Disabled
Economically Meeting Ends	Dependent of Jake
Educated	Special Education
Widower	Single
Loyal	Loyal

The first point of comparison is the figures' sex. They are both male, therefore there is no differentiation. The second point is age; any difference in their ages creates a potential for personal growth and conflict. The same applies to their relationship: father and son. Joey's disability increases the intimacy between the two figures. He is financially dependent on Jake due to both age and disability. Jake is Joey's father; the power relations in this configuration are clear. Joey's sexual maturation stresses this relationship. There are two bathtub scenes in which this topic is explicitly explored. The first scene foreshadows Joey's need for sexual intimacy and in the second, Jake provides a release for Joey. Both scenes display the caregiver and father role where Jake holds the power in the relationship. As scripted, Joey's naked body is on display in both scenes, making him vulnerable to the spectators. The scenes present both the normal sexual maturation of an adolescent male, and a morally challenging way of addressing it. This increases the perceived dependency of Joey on Jake to have all his needs met.

The potential for Joey's only independent sexual configuration happens offstage when Rowdy brings a sex worker to the house for him (Fraser 77-78), however this configuration offers no future development for Joey to foster a real sexual or romantic relationship. The lack of this configuration fails to advance the view of the disabled person as desirable and capable of a full life that includes sex (Siebers, "Sexual Culture" 37). Additionally, Fraser implicitly links

sexuality of disabled people with the continued societal perception where sex work is dismissed, amoral and outside the normal relationship, thereby Fraser is reinforcing and linking the idea that sex and disability are abnormal and amoral as well. Fraser makes this act permissible in the play, as "the services" fund the sex worker's visit once a month (Fraser 79). A dual meaning results: there is an acknowledgment of the need for sexual support for disabled people, while minimizing the possibility of mutually fulfilling intimate relationships. As well, within the world of the play, there seems to be a societal acceptance of sex surrogacy that is not present in the real world; in Canada, sex surrogacy and therapy are not paid services for disabled residents.[18] Perhaps Fraser's inclusion of sex therapy was intended to educate spectators/audiences about sex and disability? However instead, since the only option for the one *physically* disabled figure is to pay for sex, Fraser alienates disabled people from being considered worthy of full relationships. Rowdy calms Joey's nerves about the sex worker, saying "[s]he's done way worse bro. […] This is how she gives back" (Fraser 77). Any potential power Joey could have had through the purchasing of a sex worker's services was removed by the sex worker taking pity on him.

In contrast, Jake has an ongoing sexual affair with Robyn. Jake's time with Robyn is regarded as a temporary, mutual arrangement. He does not consider a long-term relationship as possible while being a caregiver to Joey, and, as a married woman, Robyn is unavailable. The nature of this relationship augments his feeling of isolation. Once Jake acquires spinal stenosis his ability to have sex becomes limited. This not only compounds his feeling of inadequacy, but it reinforces the societal belief of sex as only synonymous with a productive body (Siebers,

[18] Disability scholars and activists believe that sex surrogacy is a legitimate requirement for the disability community. Lawrence Shapiro detailed a potential funding parameter within the Ontario Direct Funding Program in 2002 to help address the disability community's needs (Shapiro).

"Sexual Culture" 41). This idea of a productive body is central to Jake's motivation throughout the play and pivots his burden of caring for a disabled child to enduring life as a disabled person.

It is evident that Joey is dependent on Jake. As his father, Jake has more power and figural potential than Joey. Joey's age and relationship to Jake reduce his figural potential for dominance since the focus of the play is on how Jake takes care of Joey. Jake's impairment then launches a more normative narrative progression when he perceives himself as unproductive. How the two figures interact is important in determining figural dominance. An examination of the various configurations both figures engage in within the playtext is explored next.

Configurations

Examining the figural configurations helps delineate the presence of each figure, and further clarifies the figures' power and dominance in the playtext. Pfister encourages the examination of the size and length of the figures' configurations to determine the dominant figure (171). *Kill Me Now* has 22 configurations. All of the configurations range from 5 lines to just over 6 pages. Joey is the only figure in the text that never appears alone. Jake and Joey both share 12 configurations with the other figures of the play. As they have an equal number, I will examine the configuration that involves just the two of them and address the absence of a solo configuration for Joey. These two configurations will discern more clearly the power relations between these two figures and how the text frames Joey.

Jake is Joey's father, a fact that places significance upon the configuration because of the father/son connection. Jake is also Joey's primary caregiver and as such, Jake has a more intimate relationship than most parents do with their 17-year-old child. In the first scene, Joey is being bathed by his father, and in scene twenty-six, it is Jake who is in the bathtub when Joey gives Jake the pills and offers emotional support while his father prepares to die. The

vulnerability of each of the figures in the bathtub scenes underline cultural depictions of disabled people within media: as "victims" or "patients," which "implies defeat…. passivity, helplessness, and dependence upon the care of others" (McRuer, "Critical Investments" 222). Fraser portrays Jake within the binary of many narratives that use disability either as a means of finding a miracle (usually presented as impossible) or giving up—resigning to life in a wheelchair under the care of others or dying (Lewis, "Great" 102; McRuer, "Critical Investments" 229). Because of the societal impulse to feel pity for disabled figures, both figures' nakedness within the bathtub accentuates this effect. At first, Joey is seen as pitiful, needing his father to help him clean himself. However, by the end of the play, the pity is shifted to Jake who can no longer live the life that he anticipated. Jake's nakedness represents how much he has "failed" to "overcome" (Garland-Thomson, "Disability and representation" 524) his disability and therefore must "give up" (McRuer, "Critical Investments" 229). This configuration leans into the medicalized understanding that both figures have about their impairments and the barriers they must navigate. Jake's medicalized and ableist ideology is evident in that for him, living a disabled life is worse than death. Overall, the two figures support the depiction of disability as undesirable, a depiction that resonates with the fears that normative society have about their own bodies (Davis 180). The figures' configurations affirm Jake's perception, and do not welcome or support the interdependent world Joey is attempting to construct.

The only figure that never appears by themselves is Joey. All the other figures have at least brief periods of time where they are onstage alone. Why is Joey the only figure that does not appear without another presence? It is possible to discern an implicit meaning of this choice: the most physically, audibly, and visibly disabled figure in the play must have a mediating presence in order to be seen and understood by the spectators. Possibly this was an explicit

choice: given Joey's non-normative speech, perhaps Fraser wanted another figure to either translate or facilitate the dialogue. However, the lack of a solo configuration for Joey also mirrors Jake's belief that Joey must always be watched and cared for, even though Joey is mostly independent and only requires interdependent support. This choice implicitly reinforces to the reader/spectator/audience that Joey lacks the ability to be independent and has the dangerous potential to reinforce ableist ideas of what disabled people can and cannot do. Joey's autonomy increases throughout the play through his figural configurations with Rowdy, however the lack of the solo configuration undermines the spectator's inability to view him as a figure that can be on their own. The transformation of Joey is not supported in the scenic construction and implies the figure's disability is subservient to a nondisabled narrative, one that says that disability means no autonomy. The potential meaning of the bathtub scenes (bookends to the play) is that if you are born disabled you may have to accept a *limited* life. The scenes confirm to a nondisabled spectator that this is untenable for the formerly unimpaired Jake, thus *justifying* death.

These configurations (or lack thereof) demonstrate the figures' physical presence in the playtext. As stated above, Jake and Joey both have an equal number of configurations, leading to some confusion as to who is the dominant figure within the narrative. They both share an identity with disability, and thus both contribute to the production of meaning about disability in the play.

Figural Participation in the Text

It is imperative to now examine the figural function within the text to determine how Fraser uses these figures in the narrative as a means to generate meaning. Pfister discusses that "establishing the length of time that a dramatic figure spends onstage and the extent of its participation" within the text can lead us to determine a figure's dominance (165). The influence that a figure has within the text, however, is not solely linked to their physical presence but also

their verbal presence in the play. A figure's relative verbal dominance in a play can be established by examining the number of scenes and the number of lines in which a figure is involved. The figure's dominance determines "whether a particular figure is either a central or peripheral element" and can thus "influence the focus and… control the perspective" (Pfister 165). To accomplish this, I employed the numbering system from stage management, giving a new number to each new line on a page, including stage directions and textual information. I exclude the translations of Joey's lines from his total count. The total number of scenes, lines, and words for Jake and Joey are in the table below. My focus is on Jake and Joey as these two figures are tied in configurations, and one of their perspectives will dominate the focus of the play. I include the number of scenes, lines and words spoken to help determine how verbally present the figures are within the scenes.

Table 2. Textual Participation of Figures Jake and Joey

Figures	**# of scenes**	**# of lines spoken**	**# words**
Jake	19	430	3426
Joey	15	377	1627

It is clear that Jake dominates with 430 lines compared to Joey's 377. This analysis reveals that Jake has 53 more lines than Joey; Joey is less verbally present than Jake. Furthermore, Jake utters 1799 more words than Joey, further cementing his verbal dominance over Joey. Fraser may have chosen to limit Joey's verbal presence due to the non-normative speech he attributed to him. However, this is a precarious position for the most visibly and verbally disabled figure because, relative to Jake, it significantly silences his participation in the narrative. Playwrights who craft disabled figures must be cognizant of the implicit messages they send. Although Joey has a smaller *verbal* presence within the text, he has a greater figural

transformation than Jake. However Fraser alienates Joey from the reader/audience because of fewer speech utterances, in addition to his non-normative speech pattern. The nondisabled receiver may not interpret Joey's full figural potential because of their limited auditory connection to him. Joey's growth can be implicitly erased in the perception of the receiver since Fraser does not give Joey a stronger voice in the play. In the following section, I will examine the characteristics that contribute to the construction of Jake and Joey.

Figure Characterisations and Conceptions

Pfister considers two categories to determine the figures' characterisations in a play: figural and authorial, with the subcategories of explicit and implicit which influence the figural conceptions (184-194). Within the explicit figural characterisation, there are two subdivisions: self-commentary and commentary by other figures about the figure. The implicit figural characterisation includes information that is communicated both verbally and non-verbally. Using these categories, it is possible to analyze how Jake and Joey are constructed by the information their fellow figures share about them and by how Fraser shapes them within the text, explicitly and implicitly. This analysis will further clarify the dominant figure of the play.

It is clear from Jake's self-commentary that he has a negative conception of himself since the death of his wife. He calls his home a "dump" (Fraser 56), and that he lives in a "sad house" (Fraser 94). He says to Robyn that he has "no self" due to his disabled son (Fraser 28). Jake defines himself solely as Joey's primary caregiver, and this, in his opinion, limits his formation of a larger life outside of this role. Fraser clearly gives the reader/audience the stereotype of the invisible self of a parent who is burdened by their need to care for their disabled child. It further highlights the isolation that Jake feels from both society and from himself, revealed by his inability to write a second novel (Fraser 28). The moral dilemma Jake faces with assisting his

son's sexual needs is between being a good father and his moral boundaries (Fraser 33). When Jake acquires a disability of spinal stenosis, he enters a personal struggle to reconcile caring for Joey with his own suffering, and a desire to end his now *unacceptable* life. Jake's sense of isolation is primarily due to his reaction to Joey's disability. However, Jake does not grow to understand disability as anything other than a lack of ability, and thus never changes his attitude toward his son's abilities. This limited understanding of disability then influences Jake's perception of his own disability. He states that the only reason he does not kill himself is because the insurance would not support Joey if he committed suicide (Fraser 75). In summation, at the beginning of the play Jake's conception of self is limited to be a caregiver; he has already given up his personhood. He can only envision his life's worth by supporting his disabled son. Once he acquires a disability, he seeks to regain control of his life by deciding to end his life.

The explicit figural commentary the other figures reveal about Jake reflect their desire for him to take control of his life. Both Twyla and Robyn assert Jake is not engaged in his life even before his diagnosis, and his passivity is compounded after he becomes disabled. Twyla is the only figure to challenge Jake's attitude towards his disability; she suggests, for instance, alternative medicine to assist him. Jake dismisses her attempts and instead adheres to the medical view of his diagnosis and the deleterious reaction to the acquisition of a disability (Fraser 42). Twyla challenges Jake's desire to end his life but is ultimately rebuffed. Overall, the figures comply with Jake's self-conception and ultimately support his desire for death.

Implicit figural characterisation reinforces the explicit commentary, such as Jake's inability to connect with outside figures, his aging, pain, acquired disability, and economic struggle. He struggles with the fact that Joey does not measure up to the perfect child that he wrote about in his acclaimed book (Fraser 28). The perception of disability from a medical

model is shared by all the figures in how they respond to the ideas of impairment. There is no real growth in Jake's self-concept through the play. Any change in circumstances only removes further control, and the termination of his life as the only way for him to regain control.

Fraser does not provide much explicit material for the characterization of Jake. The implicit authorial choice comes later in the play's text where, due to medication Jake's words are slurred and appear much like Joey's, although no translation is offered (as in Joey's case). In addition, within Fraser's explicit authorial conception, he indicates an age range for Jake, that he is in his 30s-40s and is Joey's father. However, this goes against what Twyla states: that they are specifically 10 years apart (Fraser 10) and she is 29 years old (Fraser 68). This indicates that the explicit authorial content does offer a definitive age for Jake.

Joey, like his father, also has a negative self-concept. He has internalized the commentary from others and classifies himself as a "freak" (Fraser 2), "crippled" (Fraser 73), and "twisted" (Fraser 77). He believes that no woman will desire or touch him, which upsets him (Fraser 47). This self-commentary is Joey's means of self-policing his power to engage in his life and see himself in control. Joey does not feel that he is valuable, which is consistent with how others perceive him. Theatre-makers need to be cognizant that these representations of disability reinforce social and cultural understandings of disability either implicitly or explicitly.

Joey develops a more positive self-concept, where he feels "normal" (Fraser 64), through his relationships on the internet. He can *pass* on the internet as well as engage with the disability community, both of which empower him. The overall representation of Joey in this play includes a place *offstage* where he can pass as nondisabled. This places his life beyond the central social interaction of the play. With the exception of Rowdy, any potential empowerment of Joey is not

supported within the figural configurations. Ultimately, any positive representation of disability within a normative society is not championed within this play.

The comments of other figures in the play tend to patronize and infantilize Joey. Jake calls him a "nice and handsome boy" (Fraser 2-3). These platitudes deny Joey's internal struggle, diminish his power, and imply an infantile dependency. Additionally, Jake describes Joey to the others as not engaged with life and pities him for "the things he'll never experience" (Fraser 32). Jake discusses the supercrip trope and suggests that extra chromosomes are supposed to give people superpowers and not "crippling disabilities" (Fraser 13). Jake also describes his son as requiring a lot of attention and stimulation, suggesting that he does not get this outside of the home (Fraser 75). If Jake is not home, he believes that Joey will become anxious. However, Twyla counters this assumption (Fraser 15). Due to Jake's figural dominance, his portrayal of how insurmountable Joey's disability is becomes a dominant message and overpowers the figural growth that Joey experiences.

While Rowdy is the figure that drives Joey's transformation, he does this mostly from an ableist perspective. He tries to motivate Joey to move out so that he can stop being a burden on Jake. Framed in this manner, moving out is to facilitate another to have a more normal life, not as a maturational step for Joey. Thus, Rowdy's language leaves the reader uncertain about Joey's transformation to independence and provides an implicit authorial message that confirms a negative conception of disability within the Sturdy family and society.

The commentary by other figures in the play occurs through implicit verbal and nonverbal accounts that serve to augment the confusion—from both a nondisabled and disabled perspective—about independence. While a nondisabled person may define independence as the complete lack of need for others, the disabled perspective acknowledges the interdependency of

living and that autonomy is not exclusive of the need for others. Implicitly, Rowdy tries to force Joey to confront the social categorization of his disability as an inability, and to claim his power (Fraser 73). Jake's assumes Joey would not want to live if he died underlines the nondisabled understanding of independence and autonomy. [19] Jake believes he has the right to decide Joey's fate; his plans to end his own life include, implicitly, the ending of his child's life. The dangerous implication is that a parent/caregiver has the right to make life and death decisions for a person for whom they provide care. When Joey realizes his father's meaning he confronts him (Fraser 82), affirming his desire to live while respecting his father's alternative choice.

Compared to the other figures, Fraser creates a very prescriptive authorial conception for Joey and the most detailed character description. He describes Joey as "severely disabled" due to a rare extra chromosomal condition which affects his hands and ability to grasp things (Fraser *Kill Me Now* "Characters"). Furthermore, Fraser never explicitly or implicitly labels Joey's diagnosis unlike the two other disabled figures of Jake and Rowdy. Instead he leaves Joey's disability ambiguous. Through the dialogue of Joey and the other figures, Fraser also implicitly influences how Joey is to be played and staged. Fraser describes Joey as having a different speech pattern. This is seen in the text's orthography and the use of translations of Joey's speech, both of which are explicit authorial directions that impact Joey's characterization significantly. As I discussed previously, Fraser chooses to construct Joey's speech from a nondisabled lens where he identifies it as a *new language* (Corrigan). This *could* be an opportunity to challenge the spectator's normative understanding about disability, however ultimately the figure's conception reinforces pervasive misunderstandings.

[19] This is inferred in the scene when Joey affirms that he would not want to be without his father. Jake asks if he had to go elsewhere would Joey want to come, and Joey says yes. However, it is clear that Jake is talking about death and Joey is not (Fraser 47).

Disability's Representation and Function within Kill Me Now

From the vast and diverse works of leading disability scholars, I have identified in *Kill Me Now* seven commonly used normative representations of disability.[20] The seven tropes are: the pitiable and pathetic disabled figures as a victim; as a subject of laughter or the butt of the joke; as a burden and an outcast; as non-sexual and incapable of a full relationship; as incapable of fully participating in everyday life and with a chip on their shoulder; as a patient confined to their bed/wheelchair; and as someone who has given up and has asked to die. It is imperative to identify these harmful tropes as only through identification can theatre-makers, scholars and critics begin to challenge their entrenched perspectives about disability in society.

The **pitiable and pathetic trope** is evident in the opening sequence when Joey is in the bathtub. Joey is on display as naked and vulnerable for the spectators to view. In this scene Joey discusses his insecurity about his body, his lack of potential for intimacy with women, and his inability to explore his own sexual needs. This trope is also evident in Jake at the end of the play when he expresses how he feels, saying "Uhm mishing id ah. Everushing….Ish not fuh. Ish not fuging fuh!" 'I'm missing it all. Everything…. it's not fair. It's not fucking fair!' (my trans, Fraser 104-5). Perhaps the use of this pity trope at the end of the play is Fraser's way to help reconcile doubt in people who may not be fully onboard with Jake's desire to kill himself. However, with Jake's incontinence and seizure, after which he can no longer feel his legs, the spectator/audience then only perceives a man who is no longer able to participate in his life. This

[20] These seven normative representations have been determined by compiling lists and articles written by various scholars, such as Robert McRuer, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, David Mitchel and Sharon Snyder, and the compiled list by the "Focus on Disability and Deaf Arts in Canada" by Rose Jacobson and Geoff McMurchy for the Canadian Council of the Arts.

moment plays on the spectators' emotions, removing them from critically questioning how quickly the assisted suicide became permissible and the *only* accepted solution.

As a victim and someone with a chip on their shoulder, Jake is angry about his disability. He is unable to value anything in his life once he acquires spinal stenosis. He gives up all of his autonomy and makes evident how powerless he feels as a disabled person. However, Jake was already a victim of his circumstances before he became disabled; he states prior that he is a father of a disabled person, and thus has "no self" (Fraser 28). This sentiment carries over into the trope of Joey as **a burden, an outcast, and incapable of fully participating in everyday life**. Jake's life is all consumed by his role as caregiver to Joey. Then with his own disability, this trope is reinforced since he comprehends little value in living as a disabled person.

Joey is placed in the position of being **the butt of the joke** when he tells his friend Rowdy that he is unable to masturbate. Rowdy responds, "Shit fuck dude that's kinda like being crippled" (Fraser 24). Although this joke may be innocuous between friends, when the play is written by a nondisabled person and the play is framed through this lens the joke becomes precarious. This joke serves as a possible way for the spectator/audience to laugh at Joey's situation. It is one of the many jokes in the play that emphasizes Joey's impairment and his inability to participate in the daily tasks that his nondisabled or physically abled family and friends are able to do. This particular joke harkens back to the opening scene where Jake speaks to Joey in a manner that could be perceived of as infantilizing and handles Joey's erection by spraying him with cold water (Fraser 4). This again emphasizes the *joke* that Joey has an erection but cannot do anything about it for himself, thereby he is further "crippled." Joey is placed in a subjected position, whereby extension of these circumstances yet again he has lessened power over his circumstances and Jake can be perceived as more dominant.

Joey is viewed **as non-sexual and incapable of a worthwhile relationship**. As Tobin Siebers discusses, the need for understanding sexual citizenship for disabled people is imperative in reshaping how society interprets the desirability and value of all people ("Sexual Culture" 37). All the figures in the play pity Joey's inability to engage in any sexual activity. Jake tells Robyn that Joey "got an erection" while he was giving Joey a bath, then states, "[i]t's just one more thing he knows he can't do normally" (Fraser 13). Here, Jake positions the nondisabled community's ability to participate sexually alongside his statement that his disabled son is not able to do another "normal" thing. Also, within this scene, Robyn is at first shocked that Joey could become aroused, and then she reasons that Jake could potentially take care of Joey's needs. Joey's own sexuality presents yet another bodily function that must be taken care of, along with "wiping him" (Fraser 32). There is a total absence of support for Joey's need for a full sexual relationship of his own, nor a conception that he could be capable of having one.

Jake serves to re-enforce **the patient** narrative in the play after he acquires a disability. He becomes less mobile and sleeps most of the day due to pain and medication. What heightens this patient narrative is that Jake has given up on life; he just wants to die. The option of dying with dignity is raised and by the end of the play all the figures rally to support Jake. The only resistance to this process is from Twyla, who eventually gives in. Once more, the spectators are asked to understand Jake's current condition as a life not worth living just as Jake does when confronted with living as a disabled person.

Joey challenges the patient trope of **confined to a wheelchair** when he is seen standing up to urinate in scene eighteen (Fraser 70-73). A missed opportunity to challenge the patient trope is Joey's lack of a medical diagnosis, which demonstrates a rejection of the medical label to define the figure. However, on the whole, it is clear that Joey's figural conception and

characterization are wrought with the stereotypical and universalization of what a disabled person looks and sounds like. This is evidenced in the careful detail Fraser provides in the character description and through the other figures' comments about Joey, as well as the textual representation of Joey's non-normative speech pattern. All of the textual elements ultimately serve to reinforce the nondisabled and negative understanding of disability.

Summary of Question 2—"Do the Disabled Characters have their own Narrative Purpose other than the Education and Profit of a Nondisabled Character?"

Fries' second question asks if the disabled figures serves a nondisabled figure's narrative. If they only serve a nondisabled storyline of either education or profit for another figure's story, then the disabled figures lack their own purpose. If so, the text has greater potential to create misconceptions and reinforce harmful stereotypes. In the exploration above, it became clear that there are precarious aspects of *Kill Me Now* that can lead to a confirmation of normative attitudes that the disabled figures' impairment/disability only serves a nondisabled message. If Jake is the dominant figure, as we have proven him to be, his self-conception and attitude are rooted in the medicalized perspective. This steers the narrative of the play along the path of nondisabled tropes such as victimization, failure to overcome, less valuable, the patient, and the burden of disability on others. However, there is some hope if a *production* of the play could frame Joey as the dominant figure, which would also resonate with Fraser's claim that the play is about a "son saying goodbye to his father" ("Kill Me Now" 9:17). Such a production would complicate the play's existing normative tropes that place disabled figures in precarious positions of serving nondisabled messages. As opposed to Jake, Joey's figural journey in the play is the most positive: he becomes empowered through assistive devices such as his tablet and access to the internet, he has a layered friendship with Rowdy, and he grows to conceive of an interdependent

life. This leaves the responsibility in the hands of the production to offer a competing presence of both figures in the narrative. While this shift in the dominant figure from Jake to Joey would foster a more accurate (and less damaging) representation of disabled people, I admit uncertainty that this shift would mitigate the current nondisabled messaging in the play.

Fries Question 3—"Is the Character's Disability not Eradicated either by Curing or Killing?"

In order to further confirm who the dominant figure is and to demystify Fraser's possible intentions for the spectator/audience, it is important to consider the name of the play: *Kill Me Now.* The possible usages of this phrase influence the spectator/audience's understanding of the play to come. There are many meanings that can be derived from this phrase in North America. For one, this is a colloquial phrase. People use this phrase to describe moments when they are overwhelmed with their situation, such as not being prepared for a test or struggling to make ends meet. In these cases, however, it is an expression of feeling rather than an imperative demand, a plea to the listener to help them end their suffering. By extension, if we fulfill the person's stated desire, we understand the help to be an act of compassion. Both meanings of "kill me now" effectively communicate the same message, that the situation is not bearable, with the first as a euphemism, and the second as a plea for death. The spectator/audience enters their experience of this play with one or both of these meanings in mind, which effectively colours their interpretation of the figures' ability to cope (or not) within their circumstances. *Regardless of the interpretation, they know that a request for death lies ahead.*

At the conclusion of the play, "kill me now" is clearly Jake's genuine plea for death. Since this desire follows his acquisition of a disability, this is where *Kill Me Now* fails the Fries' test through the "eradication of disability." Furthermore, there is something deeply unsettling

about applause in the darkness that follows the ending of the play, as it is connected with the erasure of the disabled figure. Of course, the applause is for the performance and not Jake's imminent death, but the timing implicitly links these two elements. I acknowledge that there is the potential to present death as the *right thing* when someone acquires a disability. This is an especially pressing issue within the current Canadian landscape with the "right to die" movement and assisted death now being legal in Canada. When the right to end one's, life is considered solely from the individual perspective, such as with Jake, it is influenced by the socially enculturated perception of what a life worth living includes. What if the individual learns to understand their value in society as lesser than others? This societal influence colours the ability for many nondisabled people to perceive a life as a disabled person as worthwhile. My concern in *Kill Me Now* is that the dominant figure's desire to die is presented and received as an understandable response in society when one acquires a disability. In the final scene, with Jake naked in the bathtub and with the means to kill himself, does the spectator this receive this as "normal" or dignified? If disability in theatre is only considered from the nondisabled lens, as a life not worth living, it places disabled people in a continued precarious position and does not advance society's understanding of the plethora of human experiences.

Conclusion

It is imperative for theatre artists to recognize the powerful meanings that disabled figures present to their spectators/audiences, and this awareness should influence how they write and present the stories of minority (oppressed) individuals. The Fries test offers dramaturges and scholars a means to question if a disabled figure's representation within a text is harmful—or is it helpful in that it may provoke a generation of new meanings about the lived experiences of disabled people. By examining *Kill Me Now,* it is clear that the play does not successfully meet

the second and third questions of the Fries test. In the text, Jake is the dominant figure, and Joey, one of the other disabled figures, serves Jake's narrative. I believe there is a responsibility for the production of the play to empower Joey's representation through his stage presence, use of staging/blocking, and possibly through framing and re-framing of the play in pre/post show discussions. In the following chapters, I will examine how the 2017 co-production met many of the demands of the disability community, challenged some of the precarious aspects of this play, and offered important avenues for criticism about disability in theatre.

CHAPTER 3—MAKING AND SHIFTING PHYSICAL AND ATTITUDINAL SPACES

Theatres are the physical spaces where theatrical productions occur; the use of the spaces are shaped by attitudes. According to the Lexico Dictionary, space is a concept associated and easily identifiable with the physical area occupied by people or objects: "the dimensions of height, depth, and width within which all things exist and move" ("Space"). In Foucault's *The Language of Space,* he identifies "language is…. a thing of space" in which "its choices draw its figures and translations" (163). Space is where language is given meaning, and meaning is derived from the dialectical opposition of the conscious versus subconscious knowledge, social versus the individual, and the known versus the unknown. Attitudes are formed through the use of language. This affects the meaning generated in society and cultural practices. Patrice Pavis discusses six types of spaces: dramatic, stage, theatre, gestural, textual, and inner space—where the contemporary mise-en-scène operates (345). It is important to consider the way disability in theatre operates within spaces in order to realize how attitudes shape the way the text, theatre and patrons comprehend, use, and integrate/include disability. Attitudinal spaces are as important (if not more important) than physical spaces when considering access for disabled people. Only through a shift in attitudes will space open to include disabled people in theatre and society.

Dramaturgy considers "the action, character, space and time; all the issues that have contributed at once to founding theatrical, contextual and stage practices" (Pavis xi). Dramaturges must therefore consider the interaction of attitudes and practice. Jan Derbyshire, a disabled artist, created the Infrequently Asked Questions or IAQs to query the normative ways that theatre companies and artists work in creating and producing performances (268). These IAQs serve to raise awareness about who has the power to create, change or shift current practices and what and whom these current practices serve. Derbyshire seeks to reposition and

defamiliarize the normative, status-quo process, querying "is this the way you've always done things?" (263). She highlights the way that theatres usually produce works, and compels them to differentiate their purpose from their practice. This differentiation will provoke theatres to reposition who is and is not included within their processes. The IAQs remind theatre-makers how physical spaces, like institutions, and attitudinal spaces, such as professional, personal and societal standards are constructed, used and perceived. Note that Derbyshire's IAQs do not generate simple responses for uniform application; they offer ways for organizations, artists and spectators/audiences to consider their attitudinal position and join an iterative process that can create inclusive changes. Likewise, Jessica Watkin, disability scholar and artist, comments that

> [i]nclusivity refers not only to physical places […] but also to the creative space in which a piece is conceived and to production practices that consider the needs of both audience members and disabled artists. Artistic integrity and accessibility do not have to be mutually exclusive but can be in conversation with each other; accessibility is not about interfering with art but about inviting everyone to experience it (106).

Watkin asks theatre-makers and scholars to enter the artistic process and know that they are integral to generating momentum for accessibility in the overall performance process. Watkin also stresses, "conversations must be ongoing since specific challenges to accessibility will change from production to production" (107). The 2017 co-production of *Kill Me Now* offered ways to prioritize the integration of disabled people. I will examine here how the they worked with, adapted and/or shifted the use of both physical and attitudinal spaces in Fraser's play.

The 2017 co-production was the first time a disabled performer was cast in *Kill Me Now.* This began with Sarah Stanley's insistence to cast a disabled actor, which included prioritizing the search for a disabled actor and shifting the use of the physical spaces at the Royal MTC and

NAC to accommodate the disabled actor. Although it is of value to address the financial and economic shifts needed by a theatre to include disabled people, instead I will prioritize the social costs and benefits of disability in theatre. For future research it would be useful to examine theatres that make these shifts and how, in making these shifts, the funding is found. However, funding is not the largest or only barrier to the inclusion of disabled people—although it is easily identified as one. The core impetus for change, I propose, is the shift of attitudes. I ask: what is the production's function within society? Artistically speaking, how did the integration of a disabled actor shift the physical and attitudinal spaces? With Stanley's decision to integrate a disabled actor into the production, this necessitated the Royal MTC/NAC to re-think their processes and spaces in order to accommodate Myles Taylor.

Physical Spaces

Providing physical access—the means for disabled people to *enter* a space—is generally accepted as the way to accommodate disabled people into society's institutions, transportation, cultural spaces, etc. What is not always considered is how the disabled person will navigate the space once inside, or if the manner in which they have to navigate the space allows for a full and dignified experience as an equal member of society. The pervasive idea of accessibility to physical space as the only requirement for the participation of disabled people leaves physically disabled people out of creation and performance spaces. Integration, of course, firstly requires disabled people being able to enter and use spaces. Here, I will examine the physical spaces that the Royal MTC and NAC used, and the ways they adapted the spaces to integrate Myles Taylor (Joey) into rehearsals, living accommodations, the set and costume design, and of course the performance spaces. This chapter draws on my first-hand observations of the production process

during the last two weeks of rehearsal, the opening night at the Royal MTC, and the rehearsal and run at the NAC. My interviews with the cast and creative team also inform this analysis.

Rehearsals

The rehearsal space is the first physical space for consideration in this paper. Most large theatre companies such as the regional and national theatres in Canada have their own rehearsal spaces. These rehearsal spaces are scaled to match their performance venues. However, when integrating/including disabled actors or production staff, companies must consider how the space can meet all needs and adapt the space accordingly. For the Royal MTC, the Tom Hendry Warehouse performance space was selected, but its corresponding rehearsal space is inaccessible for wheelchair and scooter users due to a flight of stairs and the lack of an elevator. These considerations necessitated the Royal MTC production to re-think their rehearsal space for *Kill Me Now.* The solution was to use the John Hirsch Mainstage rehearsal space, as it can be made physically accessible for wheelchair users through a simple adaptation (I will discuss this later). The need to adapt or change reminds us that many spaces such as theatres, are not designed with disabled people in mind (Kuppers *theatre & disability*). The AMA and AODA exist at the provincial level for disabled people to ensure the right to work and enter spaces. However, access is still difficult because most theatre spaces predate this legislation and remain physically inaccessible, placing disabled people in the position to have to walk, crawl, or simply not attend the theatre as artists or patrons (Kuppers *theatre & disability*).

The co-production's need for the mainstage rehearsal space overlapped with the mainstage production *Bittergirl: The Musical*, which was in their final week of rehearsals. As such, the *Kill Me Now* team chose to use the library in the Royal MTC's main building for tablework during the first week of rehearsals. This created a longer tablework process than is

typical in professional productions. The advantage here, though, is the production had more time to think through potential barriers, or flag difficult scenes (such as the bathroom scenes) before exploring them in rehearsal. Furthermore, given that this was Taylor's first professional acting experience, the tablework extension was no doubt helpful for him to acclimate to a professional environment. While this use of time was circumstantial, the rehearsal process was altered with no negative impact, and may have even fostered greater and richer integration.

The John Hirsch Mainstage rehearsal space is accessible for a wheelchair user, even though it was not designed to be accessible for disabled people. The actors, crew and staff, enter through the stage door and must climb a set of stairs at the back of the building—stairs that make it inaccessible for most physically disabled people. As a result, disabled actors and crew are segregated from the nondisabled and must enter through the main doors of the theatre lobby. The construction of the building clearly indicates that physically disabled people were not ever envisioned to be part of the cast and crew: they enter through the main doors like patrons, use the elevator at the extreme end of the building, and traverse a long and meandering series of offices and corridors in order to enter the rehearsal space. Also, the doors do not have accessible pushbuttons, and therefore, disabled cast and crew must be accompanied and supported by a nondisabled person. As for the washrooms, the accessible ones are the patron washrooms at the front of the building. If a disabled artist requires an accessible washroom, they must repeat this trek from the rehearsal space.

At the Royal MTC, Taylor was met by the Assistant Stage Manager (ASM), Ali Fulmyk, to support his access to the rehearsal space, due to the design of the theatre. Because of the willingness of Taylor and the cast and crew, this negative aspect of the design of the theatre that reduced inclusion was reshaped as an opportunity for interdependence. It facilitated the

production's process to better understand the lived experience of disability for the cast and crew and how to integrate disabled actors in theatre. The adaptations the production had to make within the mainstage space were minimal.

Staging the play, or blocking, presented some challenges that were never completely resolved. In two of the scenes with the full cast, Joey's seated presence is, by contrast, overpowered by the physical domination of everyone else standing. The set and stage space restricted Joey/Taylor's large movements since the table, chairs and ramps were in the way. However, Taylor's individual strengths and skills as a wheelchair user offset these physical barriers in the blocking, solving the challenge. Any diminishment of the play's disabled figure as a result of staging constraints or choices, is a crucial consideration that hopefully will be addressed in future productions.

Accommodations

During the rehearsal process, there were some additional accommodations that were necessary to facilitate Taylor's participation in rehearsals. Taylor required assistance with turning pages and writing his notes. Liam Zarrillo, the Apprentice Director, used Joey's tablet to upload Taylor's notes on Google Drive, so Taylor could access them in rehearsal and onstage. This gave an opportunity for Stefanie Wiens (Accessibility Consultant/Taylor's backstage aid) to assist with his entrances and exits and other scene note reminders. Another accommodation to consider in future productions is to provide an editable digital version of the script where blocking notes could be written into the actual text, similar to how other actors take notes by hand. This would also give Taylor more autonomy to manage his script without the need for assistance.

Time has been identified as a common consideration when casting a disabled person. In this co-production, the actors and crew noted the need to adapt and create more time in the

performance for actors to make the costume changes. This need was both for Taylor and Wojcik. Several members of the production team stated that it was clear in the text that the character of Joey was not written for a disabled actor. The accommodations they made to the script usually involved adding pauses, such as in scene one where Jake dresses Joey before Twyla enters. This seemingly small change provided the opportunity for the authenticity of the performance and conveys more accurate information about disability to the spectator/audience because, for instance, it more accurately depicted the time it takes for disabled people to get ready.

Another structural barrier that the production addressed was the lack of reliable accessible transportation for disabled people. The production provided Taylor a budget for a taxi to facilitate his timely transportation to and from rehearsals/performances in Winnipeg and Ottawa. This allowance is something not typically budgeted for by productions. With this simple accommodation, Taylor could get to rehearsals on time and on his own schedule, thus provided him with more equity and autonomy in his work as an actor in this production.

Set and Costume Design

The set of *Kill Me Now* was built to create a realistic impression of the spaces the play operates in: the family kitchen, bathroom, bedrooms, the apartment, the park, the hospital and the hospital's washroom. Designer Amy Keith used realistic set pieces such as a dirty fridge, chairs and table, bathtub, urinal, bed and tree to create this world. All the set pieces were on wheels to facilitate easy transitions. The overall set had a raised disc platform stage left with three ramps attached, leading to upstage and downstage right and centre-left. Stage right featured the kitchen area, with a fridge, a table and chairs. The bed and tree were stored onstage behind the fridge and were visible by the spectators. There was no attempt at masking, and the fridge remained on the stage throughout the entire performance. The bathtub, however, was moved on and off stage. The

bathroom scene always took place on the raised disc, stage left. Upstage, there was a white string curtain that created a CYC (cyclorama—the backdrop for special lighting effects). Through lighting effects, the CYC could change colour from white to blue or red for instance or look like water trickling in various scenes throughout the play. All the set pieces were on wheels to facilitate easy movement during transitions. Below is an unscaled diagram of the overall layout.

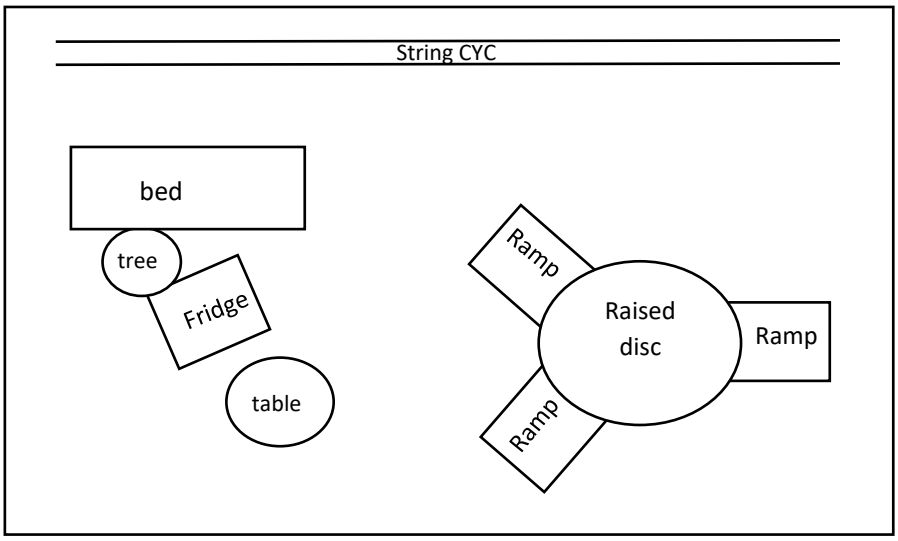

Figure 2. Aerial view of the Set Design of the 2017 co-production, Kill Me Now

The difficulty with the set pieces being on wheels was that they did not all lock in place, which meant they could move unintentionally during the scenes. For instance, when Jake becomes more disabled, the chair would sometimes roll away. This made it more difficult for him to simulate believability in his declining abilities, as he needed to catch the chair from rolling away when he sat down. It also meant that if, due to spatial restrictions, Taylor accidentally bumped into something such as the kitchen table, the entire table would shift. The wheels, while practical for transitions, could at times cause both a safety issue, and an impediment to the spectator's full credibility of this fictional world.

To denote the passage of time, each figure had multiple costume changes. Stanley had to alter some of her staging to accommodate all of the actors' costume changes, especially quick

changes. Designing clothing for quick changes was a challenge for all the characters, but in particular for Taylor. The play requires Joey to wear an adult "diaper" (Fraser 5). A lengthy experimentation process was needed to design one that would be comfortable for Taylor. The "diaper" had to be durable especially since Taylor was wet coming out of the bathtub, and Cory needed to be able to put it on quickly and efficiently within the opening scene. These costume challenges would exist for any actor performing Joey. However, Taylor cannot easily re-adjust clothing himself, so there were additional considerations in costuming and the dressing process.

Taylor had difficulty accessing the costume room due to the physical barriers of the building. Although the building's freight elevator was not designed to transport people, it was the only way for Taylor to access the costume workshop on the lower level. This physical barrier caused Taylor to be absent from rehearsal for longer periods of time for his fittings. Again, this is another barrier that was not attributable to Taylor's disability but rather to an existing physical space that needed adaptation.

Production Spaces

The production was staged at the Royal MTC Tom Hendry Warehouse, a theatre with 286 assigned seats; four of which are designated as accessible. The accessible seating is at the front of the audience space, house centre-left and house right. The four accessible seats are on the ground floor and easily accessible from the lobby. The only accessible entrance to the rest of the house is via aisle three. There is no online ticket sales for accessible seating and booking the accessible seats is limited to phone or in-person at the box office. The stage itself is raised, and the house is on a small rake so that the stage is at eye level for people sitting in the mid-house centre row. For patrons who have audio access needs, the limited number of infrared hearing-assistance devices are available on a first-come, first-served basis ("Accessibility" *Royal MTC*).

The backstage emergency exit has a few steps, which was a potential risk for Taylor since he would have had to be carried out in the case of an emergency. The lighting design also created a risk for Taylor; with Taylor's seated position onstage, it was difficult for him to see the edge of the stage. The production, therefore, added toe rails and a strip of white spike tape along the edge of the stage and ramps to support Taylor's safe and effective navigation of the stage boundaries. Additionally, the team added an extra light during the transitions to further aid Taylor's entrances and exits. The set design team lowered the raised circular platform from its intended height to accommodate Joey's wheelchair.

Other physical barriers in this theatre's space included the backstage. While the backstage door's access was equitable for all the cast members, everyone needed to buzz Stage Management in order to enter. However, the green room, an important space where artists can go to rest, work independently or warm up, was small. It was adapted by removing the couch so that Taylor could navigate this space. The mandatory Equity cot was only accessible by stairs. As somewhat of a solution, Taylor used the show bed onstage when he needed rest, even though there was an inherent lack of privacy. The accommodations that were made were manageable and overall a positive experience and were further improved upon for the production in Ottawa.

In Ottawa the production was staged at the NAC in the flexible Azrieli Studio space, having a seating capacity of 300. Similar to the Royal MTC, there were 286 seats available. In this venue, the house (spectators/audience) is on a steep rake, and the edge of the stage is on the same level as the first row of seats. Accessible seating is at the back of the house and space is created by removing seats. To purchase accessible seating, patrons can do so online, in-person or by phone. They also have a Phonic Ear Wireless FM Sound System with various accessories such as a patch for cochlea implants ("Accessibility" *NAC*).

The stage door for the NAC space is wheelchair accessible with a push button and a security guard for safety and assistance. Furthermore, as part of the renovations of the building in 2017, they created a fully accessible dressing room, equipped with its own shower. Access to the theatre, green room, dressing room and stage have equitable access for all cast members. There were couches for relaxation in the green room for all cast and crew. The result was a greater sense of inclusion for everyone in the production.

Complications for accessibility to the Studio space were mostly because of the steep rake of the spectator/audience seats, rising up into the house above the flat stage. The actors had to cheat their heads up to help ensure that their faces were visible to all the spectators. This was particularly hard for Taylor, as he naturally has a more downward curve to his posture, and it took more effort on his part to accommodate the viewpoint of the spectators. Also, many actors noted that they needed to look down to talk to Taylor, making it hard for them to cheat their faces up for the benefit of the spectators. Furthermore, the steep house rake places the lighting grid higher. This caused light to reflect off of the tablet that Joey uses throughout the performance and refract into the eyes of some spectators. The production team tried to put a cover on it to reduce the reflection, but this made it more difficult for Taylor to use the tablet, essential to his work onstage. There were further attempts to change the angle of the tablet so that it would not affect the spectators, but ultimately there were still people who were bothered by the refracted light when Taylor moved across the stage. There was ultimately no perfect solution made for this obstacle.

For some cast members, the NAC Studio stage seemed smaller than the Royal MTC stage, possibly due to its proximity to the seating and rake of the house. The downstage space between the stage and the first row of seating was limited. Relative to the amount of stage space

at the Royal MTC, many of the actors cited experiencing a lack of onstage space in order to fully physically interact together during the performance.

The physical construction of the theatres presented problems for the actors and the spectators/audiences in both Winnipeg and Ottawa. At the Royal MTC, the disabled patron is placed in the front, with the stage floor at eye level, meaning they might have to tilt their heads upwards. If the patron's disability affects their neck, posture, or they are shorter, this could cause strain. Additionally, the placement of the accessible seating puts disabled patrons in a vulnerable position where they are visibly *on display* for the rest of the spectators. Disabled people tend to be on display within public spaces, and unfortunately this was evident in the Royal MTC house. The advantage of being close to the stage possibly allows patrons to see more details and hear the actors more clearly. For the NAC stage on the other hand, with the disabled seating positioned at the top and back of the house, they are not on display. However, in this position the sight angle is restricted to looking down at the stage. Additionally, with the distance from the stage it is less ideal for Blind or low-vision people, and yet there is no option to sit closer if they require accessible seating. It is essential to consider that the Royal MTC's limit of four accessible seats precludes multiple disabled people attending the performance together. Furthermore, neither theatre provided any ASL interpretation, audio-described or relaxed/sensory-friendly performances during the runs of the show. Again, this omission limited the disability communities that could attend, and further emphasizes that this production was made primarily for nondisabled spectators/audiences.

An accommodation the production provided for Taylor during the Ottawa run was a Personal Support Worker (PSW). The rental of an aqua lift was necessary for the play, as well as the rental of an extra wheelchair battery. However, Taylor provided his own wheelchair,

something that the production would have had to rent for a nondisabled actor. As Taylor is a proficient wheelchair user, he did not require time or training to familiarize himself with the equipment—again, something that a nondisabled actor may have required. Whether or not the production hired a disabled actor, a consultant would still be required to assist in training and to manage the disabled figural representation in the play. Many of the costs, therefore, were associated with the disabled character as scripted and not in order to support the inclusion of a disabled actor. In fact, some costs were mitigated *because of* the integration of a disabled actor.

Attitudinal Spaces

I will now examine the various attitudinal shifts that were made in the Royal MTC and NAC co-production, shifts that facilitated an integration of disabled people into the theatrical creative process. I will explore how the 2017 co-production prioritized disability through their decision to hire an accessibility consultant, to include a disabled assistant director, hire a disabled actor, and how the production process itself provided opportunities for the cast to work and bond together. At the inception of the co-production, the Royal MTC and NAC set an economic priority of allocating funds towards the integration of a disabled actor. This shift in attitudinal spaces at the outset of a project creates a more inclusive process for disabled people throughout, enriching the outcome for both the theatre and society.

Accessibility Consultant

Stefanie Wiens operated as an accessibility consultant, and as an extra stagehand for Taylor. She provided insight into mobility conditions and offered ways to accommodate Taylor into the production and rehearsal process. Creatively, she helped match Taylor's disability with Joey's. Her knowledge as both an OT and actor were particularly valuable during the production, such as working with Taylor's strengths and coaching him on movement and how to project his

voice.[21] During the tablework, both Wiens and Assistant Director Patterson worked with Taylor to identify potential areas that might pose difficulties so that they could address them prior to blocking, illustrating the need for accessibility experts. Equally valuable, it removed the burden for Taylor to identify and problem-solve barriers on his own. Wiens' presence highlights an awareness on the part of the production to seek the insight of someone with a lens of accessibility. As this was his first professional role, and both Patterson and Wiens are seasoned professional actors who are knowledgeable about disability and accessibility, their presence was immensely helpful and indispensable for Taylor until the final curtain. Essentially, from the outset the production provided two informed allies for Taylor.

Bonding and/or Mentoring

Many of the actors noted that they felt a responsibility to mentor and assist Taylor more than they typically would with their fellow actors. They cited feeling motivated to grow more comfortable with Taylor and his disability in order to better replicate an authentic family life onstage. To facilitate more familiarity with Taylor and his needs, many of the actors assisted by removing his coat, bringing him his script or other needs, or running lines with him. Such a motivation identifies that many of the actors were not accustomed to working with disabled actors, and that there is a need (and desire) for nondisabled people to gain more experience working with disabled people. Additionally, because Taylor did not yet have advanced performance techniques, many of the actors worked with Taylor to educate him on vocal and physical warmups, posture, and projection, thus supporting him in his development as an artist. As some of the actors noted, such mentoring overstepped the normative boundaries of the nondisabled performing community, such as the inherent "rule" that only the director should give

[21] As an example, Taylor would press down with his feet before projecting his voice to access breath support.

acting notes or that actors are usually responsible for their own warmups. Also, many actors noted that they would have appreciated additional rehearsal time—time they would dedicate to getting more comfortable in the space and enriching their work with each other on this play.

Throughout the rehearsal process the cast became very close. After rehearsal every Tuesday, they gathered together to relax. "Chippy Tuesday," they called it. It was a potluck sharing of many varieties of chips and dips while socializing after rehearsal. Stephanie Barton-Farcas discusses in her disability theatre guide that the act of eating together can facilitate a process of bringing a cast closer together; "[w]e eat as we listen, as we watch each other, as we laugh and feel and reach out and touch each other" (62). They did not create the gatherings intentionally to make the experience more inclusive. Rather, it was a natural outcome of their work together on the play, a need to decompress, and most of all the desire to bond further.

Economics

This 2017 co-production process also demonstrates a creative means to make producing theatre more economical. There is a trend (by necessity) in Canadian theatre to engage in co-productions between companies in order to share costs. In casting all of the actors from Winnipeg, the cost for the actors' lodging for the first part of the production was eliminated, reducing the total cost for both the Royal MTC and NAC. Stanley was committed to hiring a disabled actor, and she was prepared to search nationally/internationally for this role if required. Fortunately, she was able to find a local Winnipeg actor, Myles Taylor, and those funds could be reallocated. This is, unfortunately, the exception and not the rule when it comes to casting disabled roles with disabled actors. The 2017 production contributed economically by providing professionally paid job opportunities to two disabled theatre artists from Winnipeg, a healthy precedent to set. The 2018 production in Vancouver followed suit and another disabled actor was

cast to play Joey. This initiative helps foster the development of training and performing opportunities for disabled actors in theatre.

Conclusion

Understanding how systems construct barriers for disabled people helps artists, companies and the greater society discern how to integrate/include disabled people in theatre creation and reception. Derbyshire insists that it is by questioning how things have always been done that a re-thinking may happen in theatres' creative processes, which will lead to the shift to a more inclusive model. This questioning demands malleability and the opening up of both physical and attitudinal spaces to disabled people. Disabled scholars and artists appreciate the work required in order to fully include disabled actors, professionals and spectators/audiences. The 2017 co-production nudged the state of disequilibrium towards equity when it made integration a necessary component of their work. Stanley's seemingly small casting insistence had a huge impact on the entire creative team, crew and spectators/audiences. This production was another movement forward in the iterative process of moving closer to a fully inclusive theatre and it must continue.

CHAPTER 4—ACTING AND PERFORMANCE

Although most roles for disabled characters are performed by nondisabled actors, there is demand for disabled actors to portray disabled characters (Bruno 86). However, the scarcity of training available to disabled actors leads to a significant shortage (Sandahl "Why" 236). This often leads to the continuation of nondisabled actors "cripping up" as either the productions do not search for disabled actors, or scarcity makes it difficult to find disabled actors (Sandahl "Difference" 91). Excluding disabled actors from theatrical productions causes "a serious loss to the cultural life of the nation, denies artists and audience alike the artistic benefits of diversity, and denies the public an accurate reflection of the society in which we live" (Bruno 86). Participation of disabled people in theatre is important not only because they provide more authenticity, but also because they are vital to the generation of meaning about disability.

Central to the discussion of disability casting is authenticity of the actor's performances. Authenticity is often measured by how well the performance of the disabled figure meets the social expectations of what disability looks like. The successful performance of a disabled figure is measured by the perceived manifested physical impairment onstage, resulting in a "flattening" (universalizing) of the disabled experience (Sandahl "Ahhhh Freak Out!" 13). When a disabled actor plays a disabled figure, their performance can be reduced to them playing themselves. Rather, authenticity is the outcome of the disabled actor imbuing the disabled figure with the lived experience of disability, not the reproduction of their physical impairment. This affirms that disability is not the sum total of a physical impairment, but that it has a rich multi-dimensional culture and approach to living. True authenticity and richness of disability culture challenges the historical propensity of performing the socially expected idea of disability. Disabled actors know the tension of the binary and are aware of reductive definitions about

disabled and nondisabled people through their lived daily experience of what society expects and understands about them.

Historically, people have been segregated by who is "productive" or "dependent" in our society (Foucault 137; Garland Thomson "Disability and Representation" 526-527). Traditional acting techniques, models and ways of thinking have been created with the "productive" body in mind. Disability inevitably complicates these ways of acting and thinking about performance because the disabled body does not fully comply with this process. In fact, much of the time, acting techniques explicitly work towards removing any form of inconsistency that would complicate the signs the actor produces onstage. It is commonly iterated to disabled actors that their impairments "would detract from the playwright's or director's intent for a nondisabled character" (Sandahl, "Tyranny" 255). Disability has become so imbued with meaning that any crooked walk or altered speech signifies pity or fear (Lewis, "Dramaturgy"; Johnston, *Disability* 45). One of the goals in actor training is to remove the "imperfections" of the actor's body so as to not distract the spectator/audience with unnecessary signification (Sandahl, "Tyranny" 255). Ideally the neutral actor's body becomes a vessel for transformation into the figure. The neutral body is grounded in the belief that the inner/outer state of the figure is built on top of the actor's body. Therefore: "[a]ctors who cannot be 'cured' of their idiosyncrasies to approach neutral may be considered physically and emotionally 'inflexible,' unable to portray anyone other than themselves or those like them" (256). The neutral body aims to prevent unwanted signification which would interfere with meaning signified to the spectator. From this vantage point, disability is often viewed as an inconsistency since it cannot completely conform or disappear in the way a nondisabled "ideal" neutral actor's body is believed to do. Through the visual presentation, the materiality of a physically disabled body is more present than its nondisabled counterpoints.

In addition to how actors are trained, spectators also bring their real-world experience of disability into the theatre. Their lived experience informs how they receive the meaning generated by the fictional event. Michael L. Quinn discusses how the performer's identity and celebrity status can interfere with the signification of the figure and the actor's overall performance (155). The spectator's familiarity with the "personal qualities" of the actor can supersede the fictional world's construction (Quinn 155). This "outside knowledge splits the acting sign much like the sign is split by Brecht in his *verfremdungseffekt* [alienation effect], though celebrity acting requires no space/time disruptions to achieve its structure" (Quinn 156). The spectator's prior information and perceptions about the actor is brought into the theatre and alters their reception of the actor's performance. Kuppers links Brecht's alienation effect to disability performance, as the presence of the disabled performer can make the disabled presence within the play both "recognizable" and "unfamiliar" (*Disability* 55). The alienation of the disabled actor's presence in the play can force the spectator to confront their preconceived understandings about what disability means in the play and society.

Semiotics is the study of meaning generated in society (Elam 1), and by extension onstage for the spectator. In performance, "the actor's body acquires its mimetic and representational powers by becoming something other than itself" (Elam 8). The actor's representation of the figure signifies meaning to the spectator. Keir Elam notes that Brecht's Epic Theatre used the "duality of the actor's role as a stage sign-vehicle" through which the performance makes the actor "transparent," while at the same time communicates their "physical and social presence" (9). Brecht was able to disrupt the conventional meanings generated by the sign-system and make the actor "opaque" which defamiliarize the spectator's reception of what was signified (Elam 9). Because of the duality of the actor/figure body, the spectator is presented

with “second-order” meanings, which are decoded by the cultural context of the spectator/audience (Elam 11). C.S. Peirce’s “trichotomy of sign-functions” is a way to discuss various significations within our culture using the icon, the index and the symbol (Elam 19). The icon refers to the similarity of the object that is signified, such as a photograph and its subject (Elam 19). The index is a sign that “refers to the object that it denotes by virtue of being really affected by that object” (Elam 19). For example, the stop sign is meaningful not as an object, but for its imbued meaning to cease movement. Signs are either natural, based upon more constant “physical laws,” or artificial, referring to the human interpretation of the meaning (Elam 18). These are indexical signs, which are constructed by the current cultural meaning. Symbols refer to signs that, through use, reflect meaning that is dissimilar to the object to they refer (Elam 20).

Visible disabilities are categorized within normative society as iconic signs, and the “assumption that there is an iconic correspondence between what is real and what is represented” is relevant to disability in theatre (Johnston, *Disability* 53). The paradox affecting disabled people is their “invisibility as an active member in the public sphere, and hypervisibility and instant categorization as passive consumer and victim in much of the popular imagination” (Kuppers, *Disability* 49). When visibly disabled performers appear onstage, their external appearance of being real is read and cannot go unnoticed. In the production of *Kill Me Now*, Joey’s iconic signs that denote his impairment are his speech pattern, physical body and wheelchair use. Spectators and “audiences are trained by convention to read disability as a metaphor, or meaning-maker, in the play” (Sandahl, “Why” 236). These iconic signs about disability tend to generate feelings of pity and fear, and confirm what is normal or abnormal for spectators/audiences (Wright 83-89). When a nondisabled actor plays a disabled figure, the iconic sign is confirmed. However, when a disabled actor plays a disabled figure, their presence

can defamiliarize the iconic signification and counter this pervasive reading. In this case, the disabled actor/figure can be perceived as an indexical sign because of the "wealth of character-related experience" the actor brings to the performance (Johnston, *Disability* 57). Because visible minorities cannot be absorbed into normative realism aesthetics due to their enculturated iconic signification, the alternative viewing of disabled actors onstage can be achieved through indexical signs (Johnston, *Disability 56*). Indexical signification can shift how disability is understood; not as a natural sign that denotes historical misconceptions about disability, but as an artificial sign that can be reconstructed to mean something more to the receiver. Erika Fischer-Lichte examines the materiality of the performer's body. She states that figures are:

> … no longer composed of inner states which the actors express with their body. Rather, the character is defined by what is brought forth by the sum of the performative acts, which in turn constitute the actor's own physicality. To say that the spectators' attention is directed towards the actors' individual physicality merely means that it is directed towards the only condition of possibility for the dramatic character to emerge. No dramatic character exists beyond individual physicalities of the actors (86).

Knowledge of disability's current positioning in the real-world assists the examination of how spectators perceive disability in performance. Signs and their meanings are linked to culture and cultural biases. Meanings of what the disabled body signifies—undesirable, pitiful, or evil—impede spectators from immersing themselves in the theatrical experience.

Sandahl also notes that when a nondisabled actor portrays a disabled figure, they "routinely generate excess meaning" ("Difference" 90). Nondisabled spectators/audiences are unaware of the excess meaning that nondisabled actors produce when they portray disabled figures, whereas for the disabled spectator/audience this excess meaning is perceived as

inauthentic and not believable. It is evident in the accolades that nondisabled actors receive when they play disabled roles that the nondisabled critics/community perceive these performances as authentic and believable (Sandahl, “Difference” 90). When considering disabled actors playing disabled roles, however, much focus lies on the actor’s ability or inability to fulfill the roles. Sandahl asserts that it is more difficult for the spectator/audience to forget about disability and to prevent collapsing disability within a metaphor with the embodied presence of a disabled actor onstage (“Difference” 89). She clarifies the binary in the sign system and offers the opportunity to re-think what disability *can mean* in performance, beyond what it has meant.

Actors build figures using many techniques that work either from the outside-in (physical to psychological) or the inside-out (psychological to physical). David Proud, a UK actor and scholar, captures an inside-out technique with his “Circles of Disability.” It presents layers the disabled actor to use to build their figure (114-116). There are four circles that identify the layers an actor uses. The first circle, at the centre is the actor’s self and their knowledge of own their disability; the second circle is the figure's disability; the third circle is any other characterizations of the figure; and the fourth is the performance of the figure in the play (Proud 114).

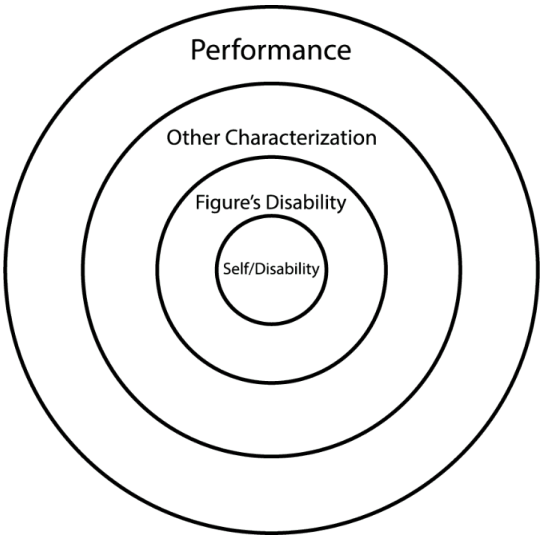

Figure 3. Adapted reconstruction of David Proud's Circles of Disability

Proud says the actor puts on a series of masks and the actor's disability is one of those masks (115). Disability theorists assert that disability is performative in everyday life. In public, disabled people have an inherent mask that is informed by and/or conforms to the stereotypic expectations and their perceived impairment (Kuppers, *Disability* 6). In theatre performances, spectators/audiences can misinterpret disabled figures' impairment as the actors' own impairment. Disabled actors cannot "lose" their impairment, but they can disguise their disability within the figure's impairment (Proud 116). Proud's Circles of Disability illustrates the various masks that cocoon an actor in their performance. This concept may prove useful as a critical tool to examine the meaning making of disability onstage.

The Res*cript*ting Wheel

Theatre traditionally privileges a nondisabled perspective. In doing so, it dismisses the knowledge and value gained through adopting a mindset of an integrated/inclusive disabled actor/spectator/audience. One such decentring concept, offered by Ash McAskill and Lisa Schlesinger, is called "slow theatre." Slow theatre decentres the creation of a production from the traditional method(s) based upon the *ideal body* towards a model that creatively accommodates disabled people within it (McAskill 41). When disabled artists are placed central to the creative process, the system shifts, and can extend the normative idea of time. McAskill argues that slowness in theatre "moves beyond being a specific measurement of pace to being an *important mode of perception for valuing human diversity*" (41). Fastness of pace emphasizes nondisabled normative practices of how theatre is made and operates. Slowness compels theatre-makers to work and think differently about both theatre and society.

I propose a tool which I conceptualize as a wheel to shift established nondisabled scholarly and critical lenses that are used to examine performances of disabled figures/actors. A

tendency in theatre scholarship and spectator/audience reception is to collapse disabled actors' and figure's impairments, but for nondisabled actors, the separateness from their disabled figure's impairment is maintained. To reconsider how these performances are analyzed, I posit a reconceptualization of Proud's Circles as a Wheel called the "Res*crip*ting Wheel." It is a tool for decentring how scholars, critics and spectator/audiences examine performances; shifting from a nondisabled standpoint towards a disabled sitpoint. The wheelchair is a universal symbol to denote disability, and for the user, a vehicle of movement. This image is both a symbol and a mechanism to capture the elements and movement of the performance. The Res*crip*ting Wheel, like a wheelchair, has spokes, and at the centre (the axis) of the Wheel is the body around which are the spokes (the ways of viewing the body). I propose seven spokes: the actor's self, which I place opposite to the figure's self; the actor's disability versus the figure's disability; the spectator/audience's perception of the actor's disability versus the spectator/audience's perception of the figure's disability; and the sum total of the performance of the actor within the production. The Res*crip*ting Wheel can be examined below:

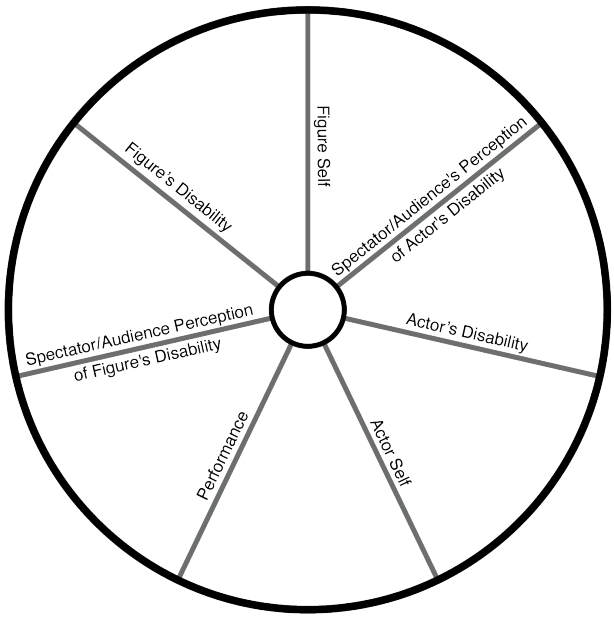

*Figure 4. The Res*cript*ing Wheel*

The positions of the spokes allow theatre-makers, scholars and critics to compare and contrast information available about the actor and figure. It acknowledges that there is movement between these elements. Likewise, it captures the flow between how the fictional reality of the play and real-world elements interplays onstage and influences the receivers' subjective experience. The Wheel enables its users to consider a more fluid understanding of disability onstage. When analyzing performances, the spokes are useful for nondisabled people to parse disabled actors from the roles they enact. The rigidness of a spoke captures the constant material available about the text and the actor(s) and the wheel's movement emulates the fluidity of the meanings that are in flux throughout the receivers' subjective experience. This Wheel does not measure the success or failure of a performance; it is a means to closely examine how to visually deconstruct disabled and nondisabled performances of disability onstage.

As the Wheel spins, the individual spokes cannot be perceived; instead, they are experienced simultaneously. This symbolizes the visual inability for spectators to view individual spokes, just as when a wheel rolls, the individual parts of a wheel are not perceptible. When a spoke is perceived individually, it means the Wheel has stopped or slowed down. Attention is drawn to the particular spoke(s) that has disrupted an assumptive norm, meaning that the spectator's observation of the fictional world as an entirety has been disrupted. If the spokes become invisible to the receiver, this means the reality of the fictional world is intact for them. Of course, individual spectators/audiences' perception of any fictional world is variable, as disabled and nondisabled people may observe a play differently.

The Res*cript*ing Wheel allows for two levels of analysis: the first level focuses on the real world (**actor's self** and **actor's disability**) and the fictional world (**figure's self** and **figure's disability**). The second level examines the semiotic and materiality presented by the actor in the

performance, and received by the **spectator/audience** in how they interpret the meaning and materiality for the figure versus the actor in the production. This analysis is based in the aforementioned frameworks of how the actor creates and maintains the fictional world throughout the production. Veltrusky identifies three key features of acting that he considers important to creating a *successful* performance: "distinctness," "the breaking up and building up" of the actor's body and the creation of the figure's body, and the "consistency" within their performance (Veltrusky 103).[22] I will utilize two of Veltrusky's key features (consistency and distinctness) in my analysis of the 2017 co-production to assist in identifying traditional markers of the actors' success in creating and maintaining the fictional world for the receiver. For the purpose of this thesis, I will focus on the work of Taylor and Wojcik in the figures of Joey and Jake. I will highlight instances where the performance was successful in maintaining the "consistency" or "distinctness" (where the wheel spins) and when the performance breaks the verisimilitude of the fictional world (where the wheel stops and the spokes are seen).

***Kill Me Now*– The 2017 Royal MTC and NAC's Performance**

The 2017 co-production used a mixed cast of disabled and nondisabled actors playing disabled figures. I will examine the following spokes, which I place in opposition to one another to facilitate a 'compare and contrast' of the available information: the actor's self versus figure's self, the actor's disability versus figure's disability, and the overall actor's performance that

[22] In this examination, I will not apply the second key feature of Veltrusky's "breaking up and building up" of the figure by the actor. This determination (as I discussed in the previous section) privileges one particular body, a nondisabled one, that focuses on *eliminating* what can be considered as excess information being generated by the actor. My approach in using "consistency" is based on the information presented in the play and onstage. I question, is the actor consistent in their acting choices and the production's narrative? While I examine "distinctness" solely with the lens based on the actor versus the figural information in my Wheel. I question, what is clear in the actor's construction of the figure that is separate or similar to the figure? I also use distinctness to emphasize the differences between the disabled actor from the disabled figure.

contributed to whether the wheel spun or stopped. The analysis of the spectator/audience's perception of the actor's versus the figure's disability will be examined in Chapter Five.

During a performance the spectator experiences simultaneously all the spokes of the Wheel in a dynamic of spinning, slowing and stopping. In order to offer an analysis of the various spokes in this written medium, I have placed my analysis of Taylor/Joey and Wojcik/Jake's side by side and I indicate the two spokes that each section of the table is examining. This aims to capture the experience of the simultaneous spinning and alternating focus on the spokes, just as the spectators would do within the performance. It is my intention to emphasize that each element of the Wheel is in motion for each actor/figure. The written presentation format below disrupts the usual sequential and linear reading. This change alters the speed with which content may be read, and thereby provides an opportunity to the reader to consider elements in an alternate way.

Actor versus Figure's Self	***Actor versus Figure's Self***
These two spokes rely on the information that the spectator/audience has about the figure/actor prior to the performance. It includes the actor's biography and the play's description of the figure, as well as the information that the spectator may gather before and during the performance. These spokes serve as a reminder to not collapse the actor and figure into one.	
Taylor/Joey: Myles Taylor is a 28-year-old student at the University of Winnipeg studying film and theatre. The Royal MTC and NAC was his first professional production. He expresses several times in	**Wojcik/Jake:** Cory Wojcik is a seasoned actor with multiple theatre, television and film credits. Wojcik seems to physically match Fraser's figural description: a middle-aged, sturdy man. There are also several

interviews the similarities he feels between Joey and his younger self, such as his personal struggle to fit in, the need for independence, and to find love (Langston "Q & A"). Joey is a 17-year-old high school student. Taylor is 11 years older than Joey. The ostracization of Joey and his perception that his appearance is repulsive may be felt more strongly by the spectator when they must reconcile the physical presence of the disabled actor. The production highlighted that Taylor is disabled, therefore the spectator/audience may consider whether Taylor/Joey's impairments are the same or similar. This links to Quinn's celebrity sign-system of the indexical signification of disability and the misconceptions of disabled people playing themselves. In comparing Taylor/Joey, this can begin to complicate the flattening experience and push for more critical understanding of the disabled actor's performance and of disability.	similarities between Jake and Wojcik. Wojcik is a secondary school teacher, while Jake teaches at a post-secondary school. Wojcik identifies his occupation as well as his role as a husband and father in the play's program. This relationship is important to him and gives Wojcik an understanding of fatherhood. However, Jake's wife is deceased, and he has only one son. The similarities between the figure's and actor's selves are interesting, but in this consideration, the oscillation between the actor and figure's bodies remains congruent and familiar to the viewer. Here, there is no assumption that the similarities provide Wojcik with unique qualities to portray Jake. This also serves as a reminder that although the two have different lived experiences, the oscillation between the actor and figure's bodies does not highlight a difference, and the performance by Wojcik is attributed to his acting abilities and not merely performing himself onstage.

Actor versus Figure's Disability	***Actor versus Figure's Disability***
These two spokes are similar to the actor versus figure self spokes. However, this focuses on the information that the spectator learns about the disability/impairment of either the actor and/or their figure before and/or during the performance. It serves as a reminder about the information we know about the actor and figure so as to not collapse the two into one.	
Taylor (the actor) identifies as disabled, with cerebral palsy (CP) and is an electric wheelchair user. Taylor's disability does not affect his voice or speech. Unlike Taylor, Joey (the figure) has an unspecified rare condition of "an extra chromosome" that affects "particularly his hands," voice and mobility (Fraser *Kill Me Now* "Characters"). As such, Joey, like Taylor, is a wheelchair user. However, Joey is described as being "severely disabled" and is more restricted in his abilities than Taylor. Joey's speech is iconic and audibly signifies a difference to the audience. Taylor and Joey share a lived experience of disability and adeptness in using a wheelchair. Taylor's familiarity with using lifts and other assistive devices that facilitate an interdependent living, similar to Joey. But this	**Wojcik (the actor)** does not identify as disabled, nor does Jake (the figure) initially. Jake is later diagnosed with spinal stenosis. The transition from nondisabled to disabled is both sudden and difficult for Jake. The reality of Jake's diagnosis is never truly explored, as he has all the definitive answers and never considers alternative treatments. Due to this lack of exploration in his condition and the pace of the playtext's timeline, Jake quickly arrives at the idea of suicide or assisted death and outpaces the spectator/audience's understanding of his decision or of its implications. Jake is barely able to get out of bed, he uses a cane to walk, needs assistance to take his medications and pour his liquor, all of which are iconic signs that carry extra-textual

is not a concept as well understood by nondisabled people. Taylor's comfort with these aspects of daily living as self and as figure onstage further defamiliarize the normative misconceptions about disability. This visible difference of a disabled performer versus a nondisabled performer may contribute to a slowing or stopping of the Wheel for the spectator. The ability for spectator/audience to compare and contrast disabled figures with nondisabled actors applies to the other cast members of Wojcik and Houle, and also to reformulate and index the familiar to the unfamiliar signification about disability in performance. Taylor's performance lends authenticity to the production since it is informed by a lived experience of disability. His presence in the production also challenges any possible erasure of disabled people, as he is physically present for the spectators/audience, his fellow actors, and production team to engage with. His presence brings to the foreground the	meaning about a loss of independence. Jake's resulting desire to die is linked with the lack of independence and his view of his own worth. His downward spiral is fast, as is his overt judgement of himself; it is unrelenting once stated. Although Jake has a medical diagnosis, there is much ambiguity around its progression and unexplored treatment options. These incongruencies contribute to occasions where the Wheel slows or stops in the construction of reality onstage. Wojcik's manifestation of the iconic signs of impairment is detached from any medical knowledge and lived experience. As such, the consistency of the performance wavered in contrast to the *authentic* body of Taylor onstage. This potentially led to a misconception of spinal stenosis as a disease and not a disability, which softens the spectator/audience's need to confront the meaning generated about disability onstage as a life not worth living. Because Wojcik is nondisabled there is no actual presence of

analysis of performances of disabled figures and actors, in addition to any inherent barriers in the theatre buildings. This is a move forward in the iterative process of change.	disability for Jake. As such, the ending of the play can be romanticized as dignified, as end-of-life journeys for disabled people are often painted in the media. With this usage, the spectator/audience need not confront this trope with an actual disabled person's presence.
Performance—When the Wheel Spun	***Performance—When the Wheel Spun***
When the Wheel spins, none of the spokes are visible. As such, I will not highlight any of the individual spokes but how the perception of the overall performance generated a believable fictional world for the spectators/audience.	
Myles A. Taylor, a relatively inexperienced actor, constructed and performed a consistent and distinct Joey. His figural construction for Joey's voice/speech were convincing and consistent. However, there were times where his presence was upstaged physically by the blocking, or lessened through the script (by having few lines within the larger scenes). In particular, with the blocking around the kitchen table, there was literally *no room at the table for Joey*.	**Cory Wojcik** is a seasoned performer and was physically and vocally strong throughout the run. His distinctiveness from Jake was clear, especially in his curtain call when his gait was less laboured than Jake's. The spectators saw the actor's body and re-contextualized the fictional body of Jake that Wojcik had constructed. This meant the iconic signs that were employed by Wojcik to signal Jake's impairment were thus re-enforced as commendable acting. The

In scene fourteen Taylor used his lived experience of disability to inform his line delivery in response to Bajer; Taylor used Bajer's acting choice for Robyn of speaking slowly to Joey (the assumptive nondisabled perspective of being disabled as hard-of-hearing or in need of talking to them differently). This acting choice offers several considerations. At this point in the performance, Joey's speech is somewhat familiar to the audience and is better understood. Robyn's emphasis of Joey's speech defamiliarizes the audience's connection to his speech pattern once again and reconfirms an iconic signification in the play—his difference through his voice. This could serve to continue and cement normative beliefs about disability. However, with Taylor's acting choice—to mimic Robyn's slow speech and miming—the sign (Joey's voice/speech/disability) is indexed and transforms the unfamiliarity of Joey's vocal to Robyn's *misunderstanding* about Joey's	division between the fictional and real world elements held fast for the spectator. Wojcik's characterization of Jack as a nondisabled father was very clear. In the first scene, Wojcik established clearly his role as parent and caregiver of Joey. From the outset, the closeness between Joey and Jake effectively generated the verisimilitude of the fictional world of the production. Wojcik added humour which the spectator/audience responded to, such as making a sound effect of squirting out cream before rubbing it on Joey's bottom. Although the audience responded with laughter, the choice infantilized Joey, which is consistent with how Jake perceives Joey in the script. Wojcik's performance in this scene also carried forward some of Jake's misconceptions of Joey's abilities, through his believable figural conception. Wojcik's ability to establish an easy dynamic between Jake and Twyla in scene three continues the consistency of the

impairment. The spectators/audience are invited in on the joke, thus shifting them towards a disability centred lens rather than the *othering* lens, which the playtext and Robyn's slow speech emphasizes. Taylor's lived experience of disability informed this acting choice and brought a new element to the scene. Although this moment within the play is significant in removing the collapsing of disabled actor and figure, the second spoke is still present within the performance for the spectator because of the societal impetus to visually and aurally classify disabled and nondisabled people. The frequently asked question to disabled people of "what happened to you?," which Sandahl and Garland-Thomson discuss, is often ever-present within the spectator's mind and influences their interpretation of the meaning of disabled bodies onstage. Because there were few instances where the iconic sign of Joey's impairment could be indexed, any decoding of meaning generated from the	verisimilitude of the fictional world for the spectator/audience. He effectively played with the text's double-meaning behind winning the hockey game (also about having a sexual encounter with Robyn). This allowed Wojcik to further emphasize both the closeness and secrets present that Jake and Twyla have as siblings. For the spectator/audience, Wojcik made clear his "distinctiveness" from his figure, Jake. The critical community identified his acting as wonderful and nominated him for awards (to be discussed in Chapter Five). The "consistency" of Wojcik's performance maintained the Wheel spinning for the nondisabled spectators/audience. It is typical in society for nondisabled actors to play disabled roles. What is interesting about this production is that there is the ability to contrast the differences in the "believability" of an actor's performance or the "authenticity" of the performers' body for the spectator/audience. I would like to note here

performance was not often challenged. As a result, the spectator/audience was not defamiliarized from their normalized semiotic reading of disabled figures in production. Overall, Taylor developed Joey into an unforgettable figure, which affirms Sandahl's assertion that disabled actors in disabled roles are not easily forgotten ("Difference" 89). Taylor offered different layers to the play and his role, drawing from his lived experience, such as in scene fourteen. The credible performance of Joey's voice/speech was based on Taylor's lived knowledge of other disabled people. Taylor challenged his spectator/audience both as Joey onstage and as himself off stage during talkbacks/interviews. He countered any spectators/audiences' misidentification that Taylor and Joey were the same. As such, in my evaluation of his performance, Taylor's work fit to the two of Vultrusky's key, "distinctiveness" and "consistency."	that the measure of the believability or authenticity is often skewed in a nondisabled model of analysis. There are several instances in the actors' performances that the Wheel may have spun for nondisabled spectators/audiences, however for others, such as disabled spectator/audiences, it might have slowed or stopped. I would argue that the times the wheel spun for Wojick's performances consistently for all spectators/audiences was at the beginning of the play when Jake is nondisabled. His interactions with the other figures, Joey, Rowdy, Twyla and Robyn, are believable and consistent. However, once Jake becomes disabled, many of the actor's impairment mannerisms become more muddied and affected the verisimilitude of the production's world. One's perception depends entirely upon one's lived experience and knowledge about disabled people. I would hazard to say most nondisabled spectator/audience members would not have perceived many

	inconsistencies with Wojcik's portrayal of Jake, something that is evidenced by the critical responses. It is imperative to consider why the Wheel spins for nondisabled performances but stops for disabled actors' performances.
Performance— When the Wheel Stopped	***Performance— When the Wheel Stopped***
When the Wheel stops, one or more of the spokes are visible to the spectator/audience, which disrupts the performance's believability of the fictional world and provokes a real-world examination of the actor's performance.	
Taylor: There were a few instances where the verisimilitude of the performance was broken and the Wheel stopped spinning. Most notable is during the inciting incident where Jake and Joey fight. In the park, Joey swings his arm out to hit Jake, causing Jake to fall down and require medical attention, ultimately leading to the diagnosis of spinal stenosis. The text here is awkward and the staging did not appear realistic. Taylor was not able to move enough to make the hit seem believable or consistent with his disability. Also, Jake's reaction to avoid the hit did not appear to be	**Wojcik's** performance broke the verisimilitude of the production a few times and the first set of spokes became noticeable. The inciting incident when Wojcik/Jake collapses onstage after the fight with Joey is a very significant moment in the play. As I discussed in the analysis of Joey, the un-credible execution of the staged hit hindered believability in the scene. A transition follows this moment, in which the spectator sees Wojcik's quick movement up from the ground and cross upstage where he then sits in a wheelchair, ready for the next scene—*all*

sufficient to warrant the extreme dire outcome of the scene (even if it is not Joey's hit but the reaction of moving away from it that initiates the chain of events). Taylor/Joey's disability and body did not provide enough perceptible strength to be read as a convincing enough blow to send Jake to be sent sprawling. It was a significant event in the story, as the fight sets up Jake's diagnosis of spinal stenosis that ultimately affects his desire to live. Admittedly, it is a difficult and awkward dramaturgical scene for a director to stage. This might be due to Fraser's nondisabled conceptualization and construction of Joey's disability in the playtext. In addition, the fight director was not sufficiently familiar with choreographing with a disabled actor. The resulting scene was passable in that they constructed something that was safe for both actors, but disappointing in that the scene was not convincing. It broke the spectator's perception of the fictional world slightly, as	*the while speaking his lines to Robyn*. The spectator/audience's suspension of disbelief is challenged by the conflicting auditory and visual information, and the first set of spokes of the actor versus figure's selves become more present. I acknowledge that transitions are a convention of theatre and neither live within the fictional world nor the real-world, but they do still communicate information to the spectator. In this instance the fictional world's illusion was challenged. Another instance where the first set of spokes are apparent is during scene sixteen where Jake's mobility is so limited that he uses a cane. The design choice to have the furniture on wheels caused a disruption in the reality onstage when the chair moved and made it more difficult for the cane user, Jake, to sit down. There were several instances at the beginning of the run where Wojcik caught himself and accommodated the movement of the chair. However, a true cane user would not have had the ability to do so. The second

Taylor's physicality emerged over that of his figure. Another instance of the Wheel stopping and highlighting the second spoke, occurred on a preview night in Winnipeg. During the opening scene, where Joey is in the bathtub, Taylor is seated in a hydro-lift. During the scene, Jake turns on the automated lift to raise Joey out of the tub. During this one performance, Taylor was not centred on the lift and he nearly fell out of the bathtub. Fortunately, Wojcik caught Taylor before he fell. However, the spectators were reminded that they are viewing the actor's body (a disabled actor) and not the figure's. This caused tension in them for the rest of the play, whenever—for instance—Taylor crossed the stage close to the toe-rail. This reminder of authenticity lessened the total believability of the production, as the first set of spokes the actor's body became more physically present than the figure's, thus stopping the Wheel and the suspension of disbelief for the	spoke set is vivid as well because the figure's disability versus the actor's lack of disability is emphasized. Another instance of the Wheel stopping was in scene twenty-four when the transitions made evident the first and second set of spokes. After Jake has a seizure, he becomes more reliant on medications, and remains in bed, and has slurred speech. Scene twenty-four is the moment of inspiration for Jake to write what may be his next novel. During a transition, Wojcik needs to move from the bed to the kitchen table. The fictional world is broken when, during the blue transition light, the spectator can perceive the actor getting out of bed with ease, not use the cane to walk, grab the alcohol and writing materials, then sit down at the kitchen table. In addition there was an instance during the run when Wojcik forgot the pad of paper under his pillow and jumped to get it before the transition light chanced back to the scene lighting. This creates a break in the realism of the play. This

spectator/audience. Thus, any potential of the performance to defamiliarize the spectators/audience of their normalized conceptions of disability was not challenged. This leads to a possible confirmation for the spectator/audience that the actor and the figure's disability were one and the same. As a result, it could be interpreted that Taylor was playing himself and not the figure Joey.	scene also serves to display how deteriorated Jake is, which is visually jarring in opposition to the actor's abilities during the transitions. This inconsistency, along with the playtext's dramaturgical construction of Jake's quick choice of suicide, may lead the receiver of the production to question whether Jake's desire to die is due to his pain intolerance or his inability to accept a disabled life as liveable.

In applying this Res*cript*ing Wheel to the actors' performance analysis, it reminds the examiner that the disabled actor is separate from their disability. It also provides a means to determine where aspects of the actors' performance may contribute to breaking the illusion of the fictional world. In the case of Taylor, when the Wheel stopped, the propensity is to view the second set of spokes, as it is not still culturally well understood that disabled actors are not playing themselves onstage. The stopping of the Wheel can confirm misunderstandings about disability's meaning, that is still pervasive in society today. Wojcik's ability to remain distinct from his figure highlights his abilities as an actor, and his ability to perform the impairment was celebrated by critics. When Wojcik's performance stopped the Wheel, the impairment was perceived as temporary, and this is currently considered acceptable and believable (I may go so far as to say commendable) within nondisabled examinations of performances by nondisabled actors. In addition to the pace of the playtext, the separation of actor's body versus figure's body may possibly facilitate the acceptance of Jake's suicide by the spectator/audience. The spectators/audience are aware that they are not witnessing the death of a disabled person, rather a

nondisabled person who is performing a figure with an impairment. This TAB condition and acquisition of a disability is so imbued with meaning that a nondisabled person who portrays this onstage can reinforce the dangerous normative narrative that disabled lives are not worth living. Furthermore, the spectator/audience does not need to confront any unfamiliar or vulnerable feelings about disabled people or what it means to be disabled.

Conclusion

Acting and performance is currently primarily understood and discussed from a nondisabled perspective. Theatre productions historically cater to the nondisabled spectator/audiences. This position also influences the attitudes used to critically examine and interpret productions. Although this chapter cannot address the topic through the lens of a vaster disabled spectatorship and perspective, I offer instances where theatre-makers, scholars and critics can roll towards a more inclusive perspective. It is important to shift the attitudes that are held about disabled people, acting and performances. The ways actors are trained informs how theatre operates and how the disabled body is performs and is perceived productions. Pursuit of the neutral body and other acting techniques privilege a nondisabled body and heighten the perspective that disabled bodies generate excess meaning in performance. By extension, there is the assumption that nondisabled actors who portray disabled figures do not generate excess meaning for disabled spectators. These attitudes reflect the performance from a nondisabled lens. The hypervisibility of disability is akin to the signification awareness of the actor/figure split with regards to celebrity. Disabled actors can defamiliarize the spectator from the iconic signification of disability and generate indexical meaning that shifts society's pervasive conception of disability. It is very rare that the question of authenticity of disability is examined through a disabled lens. The Res*crip*ting Wheel, with its seven spokes, removes the nondisabled

position of privilege, and does it in a dynamic and movement-based form. It hopefully provides impetus for disabled actors and theatre-makers to contribute to a new system of meaning making. The Wheel is an assistive device for theatre-makers, scholars and critics to consider and examine both disabled and nondisabled performances in a parallel and equitable manner, and to question how they contribute to the generation of meaning onstage. By extension, I hope the use of the Wheel may contribute to building a more inclusive meaning of disability within society.

CHAPTER 5—CRITICISM OF THE CRITIC AND DISABILITY

In this chapter, the role of the theatre critic is explored. Critics serve as an informed spectator/audience member whose views influence the general reception of a play through their published interpretation of the production. They contextualize the production and performances of the actors, often informing the reader about the history, culture and narratives that plays offer. The content of their reviews and the language they use will either confirm or challenge how disability is perceived in productions and society. Critics have an inherent power to demonstrate what is permissible in performance and in public spheres. This chapter serves as an opportunity to examine how disability is discussed in reviews, with a particular focus on how they frame disabled actors and figures for their readers.

Language and social context can frame a diminished space for both disabled figures and actors due to the pervasive stereotypes and narratives currently present in society's lexicon. In "Casting Without Limits," Richard Schechner investigates the potential for critics and producers to encourage spectators/audiences to reinterpret the steadfast theatrical conventions that dictate which actors can and cannot portray certain figures (26). He suggests that critics can reframe the ways in which they perceive bodies and the meanings that certain bodies and figures exemplify (Schechner 29). The critic has discretion over which performances they choose to review. Not writing a review can be a powerful statement of resistance to the inclusion of disability or other minorities and a devaluation of their work[23]. Schechner is specifically concerned with the marginalization of actors by gender (female), ageism (older generation) and ethnicity (people of colour), however his perspective is particularly relevant to disabled artists. The language critics

[23] As we know in the theatre community, having reviews, especially positive reviews, can affect the acquisition of grants and other future productions you might wish to create.

use reveals cultural biases and establishes boundaries of what makes good or bad art (Schechner 29).[24] Critics control discussions by "establishing […] practices" that end up restricting what is deemed to be a "good" performance (29). It is also done through either their condemnation or praise of conventional "conformist" and normative practices (29). This influences the reader's perception of the production. Their reviews may re-inscribe barriers, stereotypes and misconceptions about people onstage and in society, or serve to shift, challenge and re-conceptualize meanings by using alternate language and perspectives.

Language signification is rooted in Foucault's understanding of subjectification, meaning "the action of making or being made subjective" (Galvin). The words used in the description of subjects "are very powerful tools of representation;" they can affirm what is normal or abnormal for society through the act of labeling (Galvin). Interpellation, the internalization of the subjectification, identifies the power that a name and label hold within society since the language operates within the real-world sign system (Galvin). The concept of interpellation, first coined by French Marxist Philosopher Althusser in 1971, is the "practice of subjectification" which is "facilitated by locating the subject in language" (Galvin). This internalized system of identification thus influences the perception of disability by individuals and society. Galvin asserts that language is fluid, ever shifting, and it is fundamental to examine the language society uses as a reflection *or influencer* of current social perspectives. An examination of the pervasive adjectives used to describe disabled experiences is essential to be able to delineate how a disabled person's life is perceived. The choice of one adjective over another can exert subversive control over society's perception of disability.

[24] For example, he cites "[c]ritics, wanting to be 'modern' in their thinking while also defending 'high art,' attacked or ignored women who over-stepped the boundaries, calling them 'mongrels' who 'mocked masculinity' and belittled the drama" (Schechner 29).

For my analysis, I use critical responses to three productions of *Kill Me Now*: Workshop West (Edmonton), Kaliyuga Arts (Hudson), and Park Theatre (London), as well as the critical responses to the 2017 co-production in Winnipeg and Ottawa. I will elucidate how the different perspectives of each critic colour the way they discuss the production. I apply the Res*cript*ing Wheel to consider how critics view the separateness of figure versus actor in their critiques, and how they draw upon conventional narratives as reference points when they analyze disability onstage. In exploring these themes and the language the critics used, I will reveal the endemic power a critic has to shape, confirm, or challenge the perception of disability in theatre.

I begin with a brief review of the chronology of *Kill Me Now* in production. *Kill Me Now*'s first full production was in 2013 by Workshop West Playwright's Theatre in Edmonton, Alberta, directed by Brad Fraser. The cast comprised of David Horak as Jake, Matthew Hulshof as Joey, Melissa Thingelstag as Twyla, Linda Grass as Robyn and Patrick Lundeen as Rowdy. Next, Kaliyuga Arts in Hudson, New York, produced the play in October, 2013. John Sowle directed this production and cast Steven Patterson as Jake, Samuel Hoeksema as Joey, Kay Capasso as Twyla, Molly Parker-Myers as Robyn and JD Scalzo as Rowdy. In 2015, the Park Theatre in London, UK, produced the play with Braham Murry as director and featuring Greg Wise as Jake, Oliver Gomm as Joey, Charlotte Harwood as Twyla, Anna Wilson-Jones as Robyn, and Jack McMullen as Rowdy. None of these actors identified as disabled. In 2017, the Royal MTC and NAC co-produced the play with Sarah Garton Stanley as the director and featuring Cory Wojcik as Jake, Myles Taylor as Joey, Andrea del Campo as Twyla, Sharon Bajer as Robyn, and Brandon Houle as Rowdy. It was the first production to hire a disabled actor to play one of the play's disabled figures, Joey.

Here I examine how the critics describe Jake and Joey and the actors who portray these figures as a means to determining how the various critics perceive and frame disability within their reviews. I prioritize an examination of Joey and the actors who portray him, as this is the figure that provides the clearest opportunity to examine disabled versus nondisabled acting and critical responses to their performances. I draw upon critics from well-established newspapers and blogs that are local to the site of the production. Blogs are of value, as they are becoming increasingly the way in which theatres gain critical reviews for productions. This analysis will highlight how conventional practices of theatre criticism can be a powerful tool in both reinscribing and challenging pervasive attitudes regarding disability.

Critics and Professional Standards

Critics provide a greater understanding of a production for spectators/audiences by identifying the ways in which each performance conveys the stories. They often provide context for the play and how it is situated within society by analysing the direction, acting, and production choices. Liz Nicholls (*Edmonton Journal*), Colin Maclean (*Edmonton Sun*) and Ben Dextraze (*Gigcity.ca*) offer critiques of the 2013 Workshop West production. All three provide the reader with context about the production, the playwright Brad Fraser, and his previous work. Colin Maclean, however, states that it is difficult to review *Kill Me Now*'s plot due to the play's structure and his desire to not give anything away. Given the play's already descriptive title *Kill Me Now*, I believe there is not much that a critic could reveal through a critical examination of the plot. In an effort to not *spoil* or reveal too much about the play's plot, the critic must determine how much information they will divulge to the reader. Yet, the information they choose to disclose or omit will help frame the reader's understanding and experience of the production. For the 2013 Hudson production by Kaliyuga Arts, the reviews by Jay Blotcher

(*Chronogram*) and Steve Barnes (*Times Union*) provide context about the theatre company and its founding members, Fraser and his work, and then they each summarize the play. Similar to the Edmonton critics, they do not offer much in the way of contextualizing disability in society or within the play. Neither critic question Fraser's take on disability, nor do they offer a discussion of disability. These omissions, therefore, do not advance the reader's knowledge of disabled people; instead what is not discussed can reinforce or erase the disabled experience.

The London production at the Park Theatre had a longer run with more critiques: Anne Cox (*Stage Review*), Paul Taylor (*The Independent*), Heather Neill (*The Arts Desk*) and the disability artist, Colin Hambrook (*Disability Arts Online*). Several critics focused on Greg Wise's return to the stage after his absence and provided context for both the play and Fraser. They somewhat discussed casting of nondisabled versus disabled actors (to be examined later in this chapter). In the 2017 co-production in Winnipeg, I examined the critiques by Randal King (*Winnipeg Free Press*) and Joff Schmidt (*CBC*), and in Ottawa, the Capital Critics Circle reviews by Iris Winston and Jamie Portman, as well as Patrick Langston's review in *Artsfile*. These critics also provide context for the play and Fraser, and offer additional context for Taylor, cast as Joey. This initiated some discussion about the integration of disability in theatre.

Overall, the critics conformed to the professional standards by dispensing the expected contextual information. I do question if the critics in 2017 read the playtext to assist them in discerning what choices the playwright versus the director/actor(s) made. Below I examine the critics' distinction between the performance of disability (figure) versus disability (lived experience), as the Res*cript*ing Wheel explores in Chapter Four.

Res*cript*ting Wheel—Spectator/Audience's Perception of Figure versus Actor's Disability

Carrie Sandahl introduces the term "representational conundrums" "to describe challenging, puzzling, or paradoxical issues that are unique to or complicated by disability's presence" ("Using" 130-131). Her term is fruitful when examining society's *need* to identify disabled bodies. These representational conundrums facilitate a labeling of and therefore a conscious awareness of the way critics and society perceive authenticity of the diagnosis paradigm—a paradigm that privileges an exclusionary and medicalized notion of disability by focusing on the individual's impairment. This authenticity paradigm refers to the rendering of disability or impairment as the totality of the disabled person's lived experience. Its presence is evident when a diagnosis is unclear; critics will often supply their own diagnoses, especially when spectators/audiences perceive the figure as *having or needing* a diagnosis. Indeed, then the figure represents the particular diagnosis, whether "the playwright intended it or not" (Sandahl, "Using" 139). The critics then "compare the character's amalgam of symptoms to a medicalized 'truth,' and use the comparison to allege misrepresentation or to praise verisimilitude" ("Using" 139). Critics hold the unique powerful position of mediators between production and the public: they can emphasize or diminish the generation of meaning within a theatrical and social context.

The language that critics use to describe disability is culturally telling of the critic's own perspective. Colin Maclean of Edmonton describes Hulshof's performance as "an impressive display of the humanity behind disability" due to his ability to indicate that he is disabled by "contorting his face and gnarled hands" (Maclean). This comment suggests that there *might* be human qualities underneath the external, physical display of impairment. At least the critic acknowledges here that there may be more to a disabled figure than their impairment. Many of the critics use ableist language that frames a disabled person as both a victim of circumstance

and passive players in a dependent life. Maclean describes Jake's acquisition of a disability as being "struck with spinal stenosis which renders him an invalid." This sentiment suggests passivity and provides no room for active agency on the part of the figure (Jake.) Maclean thus frames and emphasizes the normative socially constructed and accepted narrative.

There is a tendency for critics to discuss the presence of disability and impaired bodies onstage without extrapolating upon the meaning generated about disability within these productions. In doing so they further reinforce existing stereotypes and do not provide the reader insight into the experience of disability in the play. Many of the "representations of disability are metaphors for nondisabled audience members' concerns" (Sandahl, "Using"139). Barnes' description of Joey uses language that underlines to the reader the pervasive societal convention of a disabled life that is limiting and devastating. He defines Joey as someone

> who has an unspecified but profound disability that affects motor coordination and speech…The boy's brain is unimpaired, which worsens his teenage sullenness and eruptions because he's all too aware of how helpless and different he is. Joey gets around in a motorized wheelchair and can use a tablet computer, but for almost everything else, from feeding to matters of intimate personal hygiene, he relies on his father (Barnes).

The description of the figure Joey as passive, twitching and effortful to exist is present in most of the reviews. Joey's life is defined in binary terms of dependency versus independency. This assessment is carried forward into the 2015 London review where Cox states that Gomm's (Joey) "limbs are jerky and unresponsive, his speech slurred and occasionally difficult to understand, and his body bent at angles" (Cox). Cox congratulates Gomm for producing the (expected) performance of disability. Neil's review does not speak to the other qualities in Joey brought forth by Gomm's performance, thus limiting the perception of the figure to the physical. The

language that critics use to describe fictional bodies on stage influences readers potential feelings about those bodies and leads them to generalize about disabled people within society.[25]

Discussions of disability could not be avoided with Stanley's integration of Taylor in her production in Winnipeg and Ottawa. However, many of the critics still avoid actually discussing Taylor's performance. King, in Winnipeg, does not discuss Taylor's own disability, nor does he address the uncomfortable issues of ethics and perception related to casting disabled actors. Sandahl cites that a common trope for critics who review disabled performances is to either avoid the actor's disability or delve into the autobiography of the actor (Sandahl, "Using" 138). In Winnipeg, Schmidt of the CBC did not describe Taylor's disability nor his performance of Joey in his review. Like many critics of this production, he focused on the disability theme Fraser offers in the play. Schmidt links disability to the quality of performance and script; he writes, "perhaps fittingly for a play concerned with disability, it's not hard to love *Kill Me Now* in spite of its flaws" (Schmidt). Schmidt's metaphoric use of the word disability frames disability as a narrative trope that is flawed but loveable due to the capacity of the viewer to accept the flawed. His review underlines entrenched perceptions of disability as pitiable, and the success lies solely for the nondisabled actors in their abilities to portray these disabled figures. Portman's review applies a language of diminishment in his description of Joey as a "youngster," "dependent," "clumsy" and "vulnerable" (Portman), thus infantilizing Joey, who is almost 18, and dismisses the figure's autonomy. While King states that Wojcik, as Jake rose to the challenge of this role, first as a "working-class-hero" and then once Jake acquires spinal stenosis, he "morphs into something more technically demanding, a challenge Wojcik meets with

[25] I am linking back to what Tobin Siebers discusses about discerning the meaning of disability as a way for us to know "how some bodies make other bodies feel" (*Disability Aesthetics* 4).

sensitivity" (King). With this sentiment, the review confirms that this play is to be viewed through stereotypical tropes of disability: the heroic parenting of a disabled adolescent and the life robbing experience of disability when personally experienced. The review does not provoke a layered discussion about how the actors or figures can offer the spectators/audience a positive perspective of the disabled experience that may counter normative misunderstandings.

Narratives about Disability

I previously discussed various narratives that are often used in discussions about disability. Director Sowle, speaking of the Hudson production, says it was refreshing that Fraser did not depict disabled people as "moral paragons," since the disabled are often portrayed as "saintly" in TV, film and theatre (Blotcher). Patterson, who played Jake in the Hudson production, states that "these are very human characters" where the "disabled characters [are] as flawed and as human as the rest of us" (qtd. in Blotcher). While it may be that their production of the play did not impart the heroic or saintly perception of the disabled experience, and it did include disability *as a human experience*, these summations continue a flattening/universalization of the disabled experience by inherently saying that disability is knowable to everyone just by virtue of being human. In my perspective, there is an inherent dismissal of disability by aligning the disabled experience with the normative experience. The readers are not invited to challenge their preconceived understanding of what disability is, nor do they gain more insight from the play. When a production of this play adopts a realistic approach to its staging, the spectator/audience are more likely to make connections to their own "realistic" world in society. It is therefore the responsibility of the production to share how this experience of disability is both a normal lived reality and provide the opportunity to challenge the nondisabled normative experience disability differently. Critics who examine the production

have the responsibility to not dismiss differences and uniqueness of the lived experience, nor to consider disability as knowable to all just because there are some shared human qualities. If critics have insufficiently informed themselves and are unable to address differences in a nuanced way, they will end up flattening the experience. It is their responsibility to become informed before writing their review.

In *Disability Arts Online*, disabled UK artist Colin Hambrook's response to *Kill Me Now* drew a comparison between the play's themes to that of the propaganda of Nazi Germany in the 1930s, and then to the 2014 surveys of the British public on their feelings towards disabled people. He asserts that the negative perception is rooted in the discomfort the nondisabled society has with disabled people, and that "the predominant narrative about disabled people is that we are literally and metaphorically 'useless eaters'" (Hambrook). Hambrook then comments that Fraser seems to equate the inability to masturbate as akin to not having meaning in life. Hambrook is disturbed at how the critics are enamored with the perceived *truth* that is in *Kill Me Now*. He wonders if nondisabled people believe that disabled lives are worth living, or whether, in the Foucauldian sense, people in society have a "desire for power over other's lives and deaths" (Hambrook). Hambrook underlines the conundrum the disability community has with how the discourse of disability is rooted in the value of what is a meaningful life.

What is evident in many of the critical responses is that the critics are not cognizant of the dangerous stereotypes in the play that they can then reinforce in their reviews. I do believe that reflexive and informed critical reviews of *Kill Me Now* could have the potential to stimulate discussions about how society conceives of disabled people, and can raise the awareness of the disabled experience in spectator/audiences.

Identification of Disability

The need to identify the disabled person's medical diagnosis of the actor or figure is a reductive searching for authenticity from a medicalized perspective. The determination of an actor's or a figure's disability is falsely prized within normative society as a way to make someone's condition and lived experience knowable. Barnes' critical examination of the production in Hudson fits well with the other critics' preconceptions of disability to the point that he thought the actor playing Joey *must* be disabled. This reinforces a static understanding of disability rather than moving the conversation forward toward new, complex and richer meanings of disability. In the London production, Cox comments that there "must have been discussion about employing a disabled actor," however "whatever the reason for casting Gomm, he is absolutely convincing" (Cox). He may be convincing to many nondisabled spectator/audience members because of the socially enculturated perception of disability.

In Winnipeg, Randall King does what many critics do: he identifies a medical diagnosis where one is not provided. Carrie Sandahl notes similar tendencies in reviews of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime,* when critics ascribe the medical diagnosis of autism to the main figure, despite the author of the novel making "public proclamations against doing so" ("Using" 140). King misappropriates Taylor's impairment to be the same as Joey's. He qualifies a slight difference between the actor and the figure stating, "unlike his character, he [Taylor] speaks offstage with articulate ease. If you talked on the phone with him, you wouldn't know you were speaking with someone with a disability" (King). Here King highlights the aspects in which Taylor could pass as a nondisabled person. The critic does differentiate between Taylor and Joey and notes how the removal of the visual cue of disability removes the perception of impairment. Furthermore, it cements the ideology in society that having a definable impairment

means that then it is knowable and understandable. King continues, stating that Taylor "proves every bit the actor as everyone else on the stage. Such is his power that by the play's moving conclusion, the word "disability" as applied to Taylor proves not just inappropriate but joyfully irrelevant" (King). I am sure it is not intentional, but this statement demonstrates an ableist assumption of disability as undesirable, and as something that would limit Taylor's acting ability. King's surprise that Taylor was able to match the acting ability of his cast mates presents Taylor as the exception. Making someone the exception further hinders the disability community's movement to challenge society to recognize the *variability* within disability.

In Winston's review of the Ottawa production, she further posits that the need for authenticity is why Stanley "insisted that an actor with a similar disability play the key role of Joey and that he should maximize any speech impediment and minimize physical coordination" (Winston). Here, Winston falls prey to the problematic understanding of disability being solely a physical condition and not one that has a lived experience rich in culture and community. Her review, in part, does not challenge ingrained thinking in her readership. Taylor himself notes the reactions other figures in the play have of Joey as limiting his potential by only viewing the chair and hearing his speech as "the entirety of his person" (Langston). This links to what I previously discussed about the flattening or universalizing of disabled representation by the general public. Winston criticizes Joey for being very difficult to understand and views this aspect of his work as problematic for the entire production. However, as we know, Fraser intentionally wrote Joey's lines with their own spellings *so that* Joey would be difficult to understand. Thus, any actor taking on this part is responsible to create this speech pattern. (It does make me question if Winston read the play). In conflating the figure's and actor's impairments, Winston reveals her mislead belief that the traits of the actor can be indistinguishable from those of the figure. In

addition, this critical view limits any consideration of the figure's greater contribution to the narrative, and the actor's contribution to creating a complex, authentic figure. And, in particular with Taylor as Joey, it limits any possible shift in understandings of disability.

A Good Actor—Authentic Casting

The pervasive perception is that authentic casting centres on the binary of only disabled actors playing disabled roles, versus nondisabled actors playing disabled roles. This binary distracts from any richer discussion about what *authenticity* onstage actually means as a concept and if it entails more than a physical disability or diagnosis. Despite popular belief, casting of disabled actors is not about making the disabled figures more authentic by their presence. Instead it is about how the disabled actor can enrich and inform the figure from their lived experience of disability; they contribute new, unique knowledge to the performance, as opposed to reinforcing clichés, familiar to the spectator/audience. The perception that disability is solely a physical impairment perpetuates normative thinking and is reflected in critics' reviews.

All the critics from the first three productions lauded the various nondisabled actors who portrayed Joey *authentically*. For example in Edmonton, Dextraze comments that Hulshof portrays Joey "believably…right down to the speech impediment." It is clear that the positive evaluation this critic gives Hulshof is based on their perception that the impairment was successfully *physically* manifested onstage, however what about the actor's ability to construct the essential *inner* life of the disabled figure? The critic's measure of believability seems to be rooted in the nondisabled actor's ability to appear physically disabled and evoke the enculturated feelings of pity in the spectator/audience—despite the fact that the actor is only *performing* disability. Then, the actor will "overcome" their disability at the end of the play when they walk out for their applause (Sandahl, "Disability Identity" 239-240). The separation of the nondisabled

actor's and figure's body is perhaps more visibly definitive for nondisabled spectators to discern the differences in acting versus reality. This is not to say that it is a conscious choice, but an implicit one that is cemented through historical and ongoing practices in society that exclude disabled people from being incorporated. It leads me to contend that, unfortunately, critics and spectator/audiences are more comfortable with familiar representations, as they comply with engrained cultural and theatrical expectations.

In the reviews of the 2017 production, Winston (Ottawa) appears frustrated with the notion of authentic casting. She states that she does not agree with the necessity to cast a disabled person for a disabled figure since costuming and "competent acting" can "deal with these issues." [26] This is highly reductive; again, it conflates disability as requiring solely a physical representation. It is worth emphasizing that language is a factor; "authentic" casting can have different meanings to different people. Authenticity is used to describe disabled people being cast in disabled roles in order to play themselves. The word is also used as a positive call from the disability community to stop pervasive misunderstandings about disabled people. Winston's position appears to emphasize that the only offering a disabled person can provide as an actor is to play themselves; whereas a nondisabled person who physically takes on and mimics the physical disability is considered competent, if not excellent. Much of the time "authenticity" is used from a nondisabled standpoint, one that confirms, as Winston's statement does, the engrained perspective that disability is only the *lack* of ability, and that a disability onstage is a set of physical mannerisms that nondisabled actors can perform. Authentic casting does not need

[26] "It is not necessary for a one-legged man to play Long John Silver in a dramatization of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* or a blind woman to play Susy Hendrix in Frederick Knott's *Wait Until Dark.* Competent acting and the right costuming will deal with these issues" (Winston).

to eliminate nondisabled actors from disabled roles any more than disabled actors should be eliminated from *any* role on the basis that all they can only play disabled. And, of course, the idea of having disabled actors perform disabled figures is centred on the need for integration and inclusion, not just as a means for authenticity of performance. If disabled actors can be seen as professional and capable actors, any limitation to their playing only roles written as disabled figures leads our discussion back to the actor's ability to create an authentic characterization of a figure and not just manifest disability.

One aspect that can get lost in the binary discussion of who is allowed to perform disabled figures is the following question: what *is* authentic representation of disability? The language of disability scholars highlight terms such as *authenticity*, *representation* and *disabled* actors as a way to lead the nondisabled community towards re-thinking standards of normalcy that have generated the above binaries, and to offer complex and uniquely beautiful ways of considering the totality of the disabled experience (Fox and Sandahl 127).

Conclusion

Theatre criticism is an important tool to educate spectators; critics mediate the production and can shift our understanding of the performances. They operate as a social device that has the power to reimagine theatre. If we change what is presented onstage but not how it is perceived, we still have not moved forward the discussion of disability and the understanding of these performances. It is akin to Ahmed's comments about "non-performatives" in that, if the structures in place remain the same with only the *talk* of integration/inclusion, then there is no real integration/inclusion (117). If disabled people are integrated/included onstage, but the structures that analyze performances for the public do not shift their perspective about disability,

then there is no change made. As Gavin states, simply changing the words we use does not resolve the problem; it is through actions that shifts will happen.

Critics hold an influential position in advancing a richer understanding of disabled people through their critiques of theatrical productions. Their word choices shape perspectives and may perpetuate marginalization and isolation of disability and disabled people. A re-evaluation of the role of critics along with recognition of the position from which they write—often the nondisabled experience—is necessary to openly address how certain attitudes can further isolate disability rather than expanding all physical and attitudinal spaces to include the world's largest minority group in theatre and society as a whole.

CONCLUSION

Disability in theatre has historically been limited by the meaning generated about disability and the value disabled people hold in society. In the Foucauldian sense, theatres are institutions that re-inscribe meaning through the figures (characters), narratives, metaphors, and spaces (physical and attitudinal). The meanings shape the perceptions and influence whether or not disabled artists and people are integrated and/or included within theatres. The intention of this thesis is to participate in the iterative development of disability in theatre by revealing and unpacking the practices that create barriers in theatre and society for the integration and/or inclusion of disabled artists and spectators/audiences. In doing so, hopefully, it can provide momentum to shift thinking about disability's role in theatre. Disability will not be integrated/included into theatre or society by:

> a scheme, as with any equality issue, this will only be solved with a complete understanding of the situation and a fundamental change in how we think about disability. Moving from seeing weakness to seeing strength, from unemployable to employable, from worthless to valuable [….] we need a fundamental change in how we think about disability (Proud 9).

The theatre holds power in society. It is a rich, generative tool for world-making and rule-breaking. It can challenge society and even create tangible global change. If theatre is to reflect society, it must include the stories that reflect all of its members' lives. It must compel its members to be part of the construction of theatre, and communally contemplate the shared and different experiences for society to continue to grow. To do this, theatre must evolve, and shift the way that it is structured, it must shift who it perceives as legitimate members of the entire theatrical process, shift how it applies people's lives in its storytelling, and how it produces

work. This thesis is an urgent call to re-think, re-imagine and re-interpret what disability can mean within a text and on a stage.

The examination of Fraser's play in this thesis exemplifies the need for playwrights to be cognizant of their intentions and the meanings generated when they use disability to frame disabled figures' impairments and narratives. This attentiveness must be carried forward by theatre-makers, producers, scholars and critics in how they perceive of and articulate disability because it impacts how spectators/audiences will experience disability. Their work can either reconfirm or challenge the receivers' current opinion of disability in society. As Proud states, they must take responsibility for their thinking about disability, and do the work to shift it in their work. Only through rigorous re-thinking can change occur.

By incorporating disability scholarship with and alongside traditional dramaturgical analysis, I have attempted to highlight areas that concern disability representation in a text and onstage. By shifting the traditional literature review approach to respond to the questions Fraser offers in his preface to *Kill Me Now,* this thesis attempts to openly question the barriers to the integration/inclusion of disabled people in theatre. One intention of this thesis is to reveal the present need to examine all levels of the theatrical process, and assess how disability is either integrated or included within: is there integration/inclusivity in the text itself? Is integration/inclusivity part of the production process, from planning to casting and onwards? How is disability integrated/included in the performances? Or in the theatre and its relationship to its patrons? And is it there for the spectator/audience and within the critical reception? Disabled people's integration/inclusion must be present at every level in order to spur the necessary changes in physical and attitudinal spaces in theatre and society.

The analysis of this thesis sheds light on the power within figural constructions to convey a deeper meaning of disability, and the influential power of a production as a whole on the generation of meaning onstage. The figural analysis discerned in this thesis identifies Jake as the dominant figure, although Joey is a very close rival. If a production sought to, it could attempt to make Joey the dominant figure. This may shift the inherent nondisabled perspective in the playtext sufficiently towards a more disability-centred one. With such a successful move, it could prevent the play from re-inscribing (rather than challenging) pervasive stereotypes about disability. Ideally, the discussions in Chapter One and Two will suggest to future directors of this play to first ask *why* they want to produce it, and *how* they can answer the disability community's call for better representation onstage.

This thesis is a present invitation to institutions to act now: to shift their perspective to better address the need for access, accommodation and inclusion. The examination of both the physical and attitudinal spaces of the 2017 co-production reveals how barriers to access and the integration and/or inclusion of disabled people within the theatrical process can be adjusted and addressed. Derbyshire's IAQs challenge the privileged position that theatre-makers have when constructing and producing a play. The 2017 co-production proves how the production succeeded in shifting the traditional theatre process to integrate a disabled performer into the entire process and contributed to the box office success of the production for both theatres.

Traditional theatre practices, standards and critical evaluations of productions are built on the premise of nondisabled body and thus do not recognise *yet* what is to be gained by integrating or including disabled performers. The Res*cript*ing Wheel serves as a tool for scholars to examine performances of disability by both disabled and nondisabled actors. The 2017 co-production provided the opportunity to apply the Wheel to an analysis of both a disabled and

nondisabled actor in their performances of disabled figures. It revealed a more specific understanding of the meaning generated onstage; the contributions of the lived experience of disability. The third set of spokes in the Wheel focuses on the critic as an informed type of spectator. This allowed for an analysis of the critics' use of language, their social responsibility and their inherent power to maintain or shift perspectives. Critics can either re-inscribe normative assumptions or, by doing the requisite research into areas they are less familiar with, they can shift their perspective of disabled people. Their impetus to shift their perspective can facilitate the process of educating theatre-goers through their reviews and challenging them to re-think their positionality.

Kill Me Now, a play with *three* disabled figures, unfortunately still manages to flatten and even erase the disabled experience by framing of the narrative from a nondisabled standpoint. While there are moments in the text that can combat or possibly mitigate the pervasive medicalized ideology within the play, these instances are overwhelmed by the general tenor of the dominant figure of Jake. Jake ultimately encapsulates the widespread, dominant narrative of giving up when one acquires a disability, and the erasure motif of disability of preferring death over a disabled life. The 2017 co-production made strides toward a more integrated process through casting a disabled actor, by adapting the rehearsal and performance spaces, and by offering instances for the disability community and the nondisabled spectators/audience to interact and unpack the performance post-show. However, despite these changes, it was not sufficient to reconcile the fear and pity of disability that Jake represents with the lived experience of disability that Joey is supposed to present. The talkbacks did not provide enough time to be able to re-contextualize the play for the majority of the theatre-goers, as previously stated, it was a play for nondisabled people. What I find encouraging about the production history of *Kill Me*

Now is that the last two productions in 2017 and 2018 have cast disabled actors in the role of Joey. This acknowledges the essential presence of disabled people within works that use their bodies to signify meaning, on a stage and off.

This thesis contextualized merely one script*, Kill Me Now*, and its co-production. A more informed perspective of disability in theatre can be built by examining multiple texts and productions from disabled perspectives. I hope that more playwrights, producers, theatre-makers, spectators/audience and critics will question: how is disability used and what does it signify, and to whom? Is the process and production shifting and expanding toward a fuller range of meanings? And do the meanings generated more accurately reflect the fluidity and diversity of the disability community? Future research can provide a close reading of other texts and productions since, as Sandahl discusses, disabled themes, characters (figures), and stories are not often given the space within academic circles to truly examine and reflect on what meanings are being generated, reinforced or challenged ("Using" 141). In generating more research that analyzes disability in texts and productions written and performed by both disabled and nondisabled people, scholars and theatre-makers can begin to build a more complete level of understanding within academia and artistic practices. They can offer resources that extend thinking past the binaries, past engrained or surface consideration, and offer a more fluid appreciation of how lives are lived, and in the richness of an inclusive artistic experience.

Funding is of course a crucial consideration in theatre. Future research should include an evaluation of how productions that integrate/include disability are able to do so. Disability is often excluded due to the concern of the cost. However, financing is more of a structural and attitudinal barrier. Although not a focus of this thesis, I demonstrate unanticipated areas of cost *savings* in the 2017 co-production, for instance, regarding the electric wheelchair. While arts

funding is most often limited, we saw how Stanley, the Royal MTC, and NAC were able to prioritize the integration of disability, and this resulted in a shift in the theatrical and social perspective towards disability. Since society operates within economic systems that hold the power to influence practices in physical and attitudinal spaces, an analysis of how directors and companies may restructure priorities to afford integration/inclusion should be examined further. Also introduced was that the integration/inclusion of disability within performance and the theatre buildings increases the potential spectator/audience and therefore revenue.

Additionally, theatre-makers and scholars, must continue to examine how nondisabled and disabled spectators/audiences attend theatre and think about performances that use, integrate/include disabled characters (figures) and actors, and/or use disability narratives within works. Understanding how theatre spectators/audiences interpret the meaning generated about disability onstage is crucial to examine, as this is how theatre-makers and scholars can more fully measure any shifting mindset of society and be responsive to theatre-goers. In doing so, it can become clearer for whom the work is intended, who is seen and heard, whether normative understandings of disability are being re-enforced—or ideally—challenged and re-thought. Then, theatres can reflect a wider range of humanity and how disability is understood within society.

Disability in theatre is a large concept and field of study. This thesis cannot and does not represent the entirety of this field. In order to fully grasp these concepts, there must be a vast commitment at all levels within powerful institutions—universities, theatre companies, granting committees, theatre-makers, scholars and critics—to shift their perspectives of what disability in theatre can signify. It is easier to maintain the comfort of status-quo practices that use disability as a metaphor/trope for nondisabled figure's benefits. Change requires more effort. It takes added effort and possible dis-comfort to re-think normative storytelling and figures. It requires

generosity and curiosity for theatre spaces to become inclusive and respectful for the disability community. Both nondisabled and disabled artists, scholars and critics must *desire* to bridge gaps and to work together to find new creative possibilities that allow everyone to flourish, expanding what humanity can mean onstage and off. It excites me as a young theatre scholar, artist and disability advocate to consider the potential we have to grow and to form a new theatre—one that is inclusive of all peoples' stories. With this thesis, I hope to have awakened your imagination to what more we can learn if we truthfully investigate all that it is to be human by re-thinking, re-imagining, and re-interpreting disability in theatre.

APPENDIX

Table 3. Scenes and Corresponding Page Numbers for Kill Me Now

Scene Number	Page Range
1	1-12
2	12-15
3	15-17
4	17-22
5	22-27
6	27-30
7	30-31
8	31-34
9	34-41
10	41-42
11	42-44
12	44
13	44-49
14	49-57
15	57-70
16	70
17	70-73
18	73-76
19	77-78
20	78-86
21	86-91
22	91-94
23	94-97
24	97
25	97-106
26	106-109

WORKS CITED

"Accessibility." *National Arts Centre/ Centre National Des Arts*, [n.d.] nac-cna.ca/en/visit/accessibility.

"Accessibility." Royal MTC, [n.d.] www.royalmtc.ca/Your-Visit/Accessibility.aspx.

Ahmed, Sara. "Commitment as a Non-performative." *On Being Included Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life.* e-book. Duke University Press, 2012, pp. 113-140. doi-org.proxy.bib. uottawa.ca/10.1215/9780822395324-005.

Arrell, Douglas H. "Brad Fraser." *Canadian Encyclopedia*. 1 Jan. 2010, edited 4 Mar. 2015, www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/brad-fraser/.

Barnes, Steve. "'Kill Me Now' powerful look at human relations." *Times Union*. 9 Oct. 2013, www.timesunion.com/entertainment/article/Kill-Me-Now-powerful-look-at-human-relations-4881687.php.

Barton-Farcas, Stephanie. *Disability and Theatre: A Practical Manual for Inclusion in the Arts.* Routledge, 2017.

Belsky, Drew Danielle. "Accountability, Agency, and Absence: Embodying Radical Disability Values in Artistic Production." *Mobilizing Metaphor: Art, Culture, and Disability Activism in Canada,* edited by Christine Kelly and Michael Orsini. University of British Columbia Press, 2016. pp. 289-308.

Bajer, Sharon. Personal Interview. By Andrea Connell, 7 May 2017.

Blotcher, Jay. "'Kill Me Now': Theater for the Apocalypse." *Chronogram.* 1 Oct. 2013, www.chronogram.com/hudsonvalley/kill-me-now/Content?oid=2203502.

"Biography". *Bradfraser.net*/ DragonFyre Design, [n.d.] www.bradfraser.net/#bio.

Birkett, Dea. "Why can't theatre imagine what it's really like to be the parent of a disabled child?" 26 Feb. 2015. *The Guardian,* www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/feb/26/theatre-parent-disabled-child-kill-me-now.

Bordo, Susan R. "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity: A Feminist Appropriation of Foucault." *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing,* edited by Alison M. Jagger and Susan R. Bordo, Rutgers University Press, 1989, pp. 13-29.

"Brad Fraser". *Performancewiki*, 8 Mar. 2016, performancewiki.ca/Brad_Fraser.

Bruno, Christine. "Casting disabled actors: Taking our rightful place onstage?" *Casting a Movement: The Welcome Table Initiative,* edited by Claire Syler and Daniel Banks. Routledge, 2019. pp. 85-87. doi-org.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/10.4324/9780429488221.

Bulmer, Alex. "Inclusion: Building a Culture of Desire and Resilience." *Theatre Research in Canada,* vol. 37, no. 2, Fall 2016, pp. 258-262. *EBSCOhost,* search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=120421056&site=ehost-live.

Corrigan, David Rockne. "Q&A with playwright Brad Fraser: "I have no choice but to be who I am"— The outspoken playwright is back in Edmonton to direct his new play, and he's glad to be back." *National Post.* 30 Aug. 2013, www.nationalpost.com/entertainment/theatre/qa-with-playwright-brad-fraser-i-have-no-choice-but-to-be-who-i-am.

Cox, Anne. "Kill Me Now—Review." *Stage Review.* 25 Feb. 2015, www.stagereview.co.uk/theatre-review/kill-now-review.

Davis, Lennard J. "Visualizing the Disabled Body: The Classical Nude and the Fragmented Torso." *The Body: A Reader,* edited by Mariam Fraser and Monica Greco, Routledge 2005, pp. 167-181.

Decottignies, Michele. "Disability Arts and Equity in Canada." *Canadian Theatre Review.* vol. 165. pp. 43- 47. doi:10.3138/ctr.165.009.

Del Campo, Andrea. Personal Interview. By Andrea Connell, 4 May 2017.

Derbyshire, Jan. "Infrequently Asked Questions, or: How to Kickstart Conversations Around Inclusion and Accessibility in Canadian Theatre and Why it Might be Good for Everybody." *Theatre Research in Canada,* vol. 37, no. 2, 2016, pp. 263-269. *EBSCOhost,* search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true@db=a9h&AN=120421057&site=ehost-live.

Dextraze, Ben. "New Brad Fraser play too fast for its own good." *Gigcity.ca.* 7 Sept. 2013. www.gigcity.ca/2013/09/07/new-brad-fraser-play-too-fast-for-its-own-good.

Eales, Lindsay. "(Dis)quiet in the Peanut Gallery: Performing Social Justice through Integrated Dance." *Mobilizing Metaphor: Art, Culture, and Disability Activism in Canada,* edited by Christine Kelly and Michael Orsini, University of British Columbia Press, 2016, pp. 141-161.

Eisenhauer, Jennifer. “Just Looking and Staring Back: Challenging Ableism Through Disability Performance Art.” *Studies in Art Education,* vol. 49, no. 1, Fall 2007, pp. 7-22. *EBSCOhost,* doi:10.2307/25475851.

Elam, Keir. *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama.* Routledge, 2002.

“Episode 24: In the Moment”. From *What it is Podcast*, 30 Aug. 2013, whatitispodcast.com/2013/08/30/episode-24-in-the-moment. Accessed 12 Jan 2017.

Fischer-Lichte, Erika. *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics.* Translated by Saskya Iris Jain. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Foucault, Michel. “Docile Bodies”. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison.* Translated by Alan Sheridan. Vintage Books, 1979, pp. 135-141.

---.“Language of Space.” In *Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault and Geography,* edited by Jeremy W. Crampton and Stuart Elden. Routledge, 2007, pp. 163-167.

Fox, Ann M. “Chapter 6: Reclaiming the Ordinary Extraordinary body: The Importance of *The Glass Menagerie* for Literary Disability Studies.” *Disability Theatre and Modern Drama: Recasting Modernism,* edited by Kirsty Johnston, Bloomsbury, 2016, pp. 130-151.

Fox, Ann M. and Carrie Sandahl. “Beyond “Cripping Up”: An Introduction.” *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies,* vol. 12, no. 2, 2018, pp. 121-127. *Project MUSE* muse.jhu.edu/article/694070.

Fraser, Brad. *Kill Me Now.* Playwrights Canada Press. 2015.

---. “On Characters and Casting.” *Kill Me Now.* Playwrights Canada Press. 2015, pp. ix-xi.

Fries, Kenny. “The Fries Test: On Disability Representation in Our Culture.” *Medium.* 1 Nov. 2017, www.medium.com/@kennyfries/the-fries-test-on-disability-representation-in-our-culture-9d1bad72cc00.

Fulmyk, Alison. Personal Interview. By Andrea Connell, 5 May 2017.

Galvin, Rose. “The Making of the Disabled Identity: A linguistic Analysis of Marginalisation.” *Disability Studies Quarterly,* vol. 23, no. 2, 2003, pp. 149-178. dsq-sds.org/article/view/421/589.

Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie (*see also* Garland Thomson). “Disability and Representation”. *PMLA,* vol. 120, no.2, 2005, pp. 522-527. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/25486178.

---. “Staring Back: Self-Representations of Disabled Performance Artists.” *American Quarterly,* vol. 52, no. 2, 2000, pp. 334-338. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/30041845.

---.*Staring: How We Look.* Oxford University Press, 2009.

Garland Thomson, Rosemarie (*see also* Garland-Thomson). *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature.* Columbia. 1997.

Hadley, Bree. *Disability, Public Space Performance and Spectatorship: Unconscious Performers.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Hambrook, Colin. “Assisted Suicide in the Theatre: Kill Me Now!” *Disability Arts Online*. 26 Mar. 2015, www.disabilityarts.online/magazine/opinion/assisted-suicide-in-the-theatre-kill-me-now.

Hargrave, Matt. *Theatres of Learning Disability: Good, Bad, Or Plain Ugly?.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Houle, Braiden. Personal Interview. By Andrea Connell, 3 May 2017.

Hurly, Erin. *theatre & feeling.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Irving, Hannah and Audrey R. Giles. “A dance revolution? Responding to dominant discourses in contemporary integrated dance.” *Leisure/Loisir* vol. 35 no. 1, 2011. pp. 371-389. doi-org.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/10.1080/14927713.2011.648415.

Jacobson, Rose and Geoff McMurchy. *Focus on Disability & Deaf Arts in Canada*. Canada Council for the Arts, Dec 2010, canadacouncil.ca/research/research-library/2011/09/focus-on-disability-and-deaf-arts-in-canada.

Johnston, Kirsty. “Great Reckonings in More Accessible Rooms: The Provocative Reimaginings of Disability Theatre.” *The Routledge Handbook of Disability Arts, Culture, and Media,* edited by Bree Hadley and Donna McDonald. Routledge, e-book, 2019, pp. 21-35.

---. *Disability Theatre and Modern Drama: Recasting Modernism*. Bloomsbury, 2016.

---. *Stage Turns: Canadian Disability Theatre.* McGill-Queen’s University Press. 2012.

“Kill Me Now.” By Brad Fraser, directed by Sarah Garton Stanley, performances by Sharon Bajer, Andrea del Campo, Braiden Houle, Myles A. Taylor, Cory Wojcik, Royal Manitoba Theatre Company, 29 Mar – 15 Apr. 2018, John Hirsch Mainstage, Winnipeg.

"Kill Me Now." By Brad Fraser, directed by Sarah Garton Stanley, performances by Sharon Bajer, Andrea del Campo, Braiden Houle, Myles A. Taylor, Cory Wojcik, National Arts Centre, 25 Apr. – 6 May 2018, Azriel Studio, Ottawa.

"Kill Me Now." *Points of View with Jillian Keiley* from 1 July 2017, nac-cna.ca/en/podcasts/episode/kill-me-now.

King, Randall. "Dark comedy addresses awkward aspects of teen's disability." *Winnipeg Free Press.* 31 Mar. 2017, www.winnipegfreepress.com/arts-and-life/entertainment/arts/dark-comedy-addresses-awkward-aspects-of-teens-disability-417823583.html.

Knowles, Ric. *How Theatre Means*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Kovich, Andrea. "Disability, Identity, and Representation: Notes from a Dramaturg." *Howlround Theatre Commons.* 27 May 2019, www.howlround.com/disability-identity-and-representation.

Kuppers, Petra. "Crip Time." *Tikkun,* vol. 29, no. 4, 2014. pp. 29+. *Gale OneFile: CPI.Q (Canadian Periodicals),* link-gale-com.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/apps/doc/A388053739/CPI?u=otta77973&sid=CPI&xid=44e3a0a2.

---. *Disability and Contemporary Performance: Bodies on Edge.* Routledge, 2003.

---. *theatre & disability.* Google Books, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. ISBN 978-1-137-60571-9.

Lobel, Brian and Jess Thom. *The Routledge Handbook of Disability Arts, Culture, and Media,* edited by Bree Hadley and Donna McDonald. Routledge, 2019, pp. 243- 250.

Langston, Patrick. "Q & A with Myles A. Taylor: Disabled actor shows depth of his character." *Artsfile.* 27 Apr. 2017, www.artsfile.ca/5285-2/.

---. "Review: Ringed by sadness Kill Me Now affirms love and sacrifice." *Artsfile.* 28 Apr 2017, www.artsfile.ca/review-ringed-by-sadness-kill-me-now-affirms-love-and-sacrifice.

Lewis, Victoria. "A Great and Complicated Thing: Reimagining Disability." In *Casting a Movement: The Welcome Table Initiative*, edited by Claire Syler and Daniel Banks. London: Routledge, 2019. pp. 100- 111. doi-org.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca /10.4324/9780429488221.

---. *Beyond Victims and Villains: Contemporary Plays by Disabled Playwrights*. Theatre Communications Group: 2005. ISBN: 9781559362504.

---."The Dramaturgy of Disability." *Disability, Art, and Culture (Part Two).* vol. 38, no. 3, 1998. hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.act2080.0037.318.

---."The Theatrical Landscape of Disability." *Disability Studies Quarterly.* vol. 24, no. 3, 2004. dsq-sds.org/article/view/511/688.

Linton, Simi. "Chapter 3: Resassigning Meaning." *Beginning with Disability: A Primer,* edited by Lennard J. Davis. Routledge, 2018, pp. 20- 27.

Maclean, Colin. "New Fraser play delves into family." *Edmonton Sun.* 7 Sept. 2013, www.edmontonsun.com/2013/09/08/new-fraser-play-delves-into-family/wcm/72443181-b72f-4b3f-b9c5-d546f7bdf4e0.

Mcaskill, Ash. "Mobilizing a Slow Theatre Movement through an Atypique Artist Perspective." *Canadian Theatre Review,* vol. 175, Summer, 2018. pp. 41- 46.

McRuer, Robert. "Critical Investments: AIDS, Christopher Reeve, and Queer/Disability Studies." *Journal of Medical Humanities.* vol. 23, no. 3, 2002. pp. 221-237.

---."Disabling Sex: Notes for a Crip Theory of Sexuality." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2011, pp.107-117.

Mitchell, David T., Sharon L. Snyder. *Narrative Prothesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse*. The University of Michigan Press, 2000.

Mock, Roberta. "Globalisation's Marginalia: Anglo-Canadian Identity and the Plays of Brad Fraser. *Contemporary Theatre Review,* vol. 16, no.1, 2006, pp. 86-96.

Neill, Heather. "Kill Me Now, Park theatre: Greg Wise in a searing Canadian import about disability, parenting and mortality." *The Arts Desk.* 25 Feb. 2015. theartsdesk.com/theatre/kill-me-now-park-theatre.

Nicholls, Liz. "Springboards: off the page and on their feet". *Edmonton Journal.* 19 Sept. 2012. www.edmontonjournal.com/entertainment/theatre/springboards-off-the-page-and-on-their-feet.

---. "'Beverly kid' brings première home." *Edmonton Journal.* 4 Sept. 2013. www.pressreader.com/canada/edmonton-journal/20130904/282192238656639.

---. Brad Fraser's funniest play comes home." *Edmonton Journal.* 23 Apr. 2011 www.pressreader.com/canada/edmonton-journal/20110423/285452117719944.

Pavis, Patrice. *Dictionary of the theatre: terms, concepts, and analysis*. Translated by Christine Shantz, University of Toronto Press, 1998.

Patterson, Debbie. Personal Interview. By Andrea Connell, 26 May 2017.

Peers, Danielle. "From Inhalation to Inspiration: A Genealogical Auto-ethnography of a Supercrip." *Foucault and the Government of Disability,* edited by Shelley Tremain. University of Michigan Press 2015, pp. 331-349. *Project MUSE,* muse.jhu.edu/book/58073.

Pfister, Manfred. *The Theory and Analysis of Drama.* Translated by John Halliday. Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Portman, Jamie. "Kill Me Now packs a wallop at the NAC." *Capital Critics' Circle.* 29 Apr. 2017, www.capitalcriticscircle.com/kill-now-packs-wallop-na.

Program for *Brad Fraser's* Kill Me Now at the National Arts Centre, Ottawa. Playbill, 2017.

Program for *Brad Fraser's* Kill Me Now at the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, Winnipeg. Playbill, 2017.

Proud, David. *The Art of Disability: A handbook about Disability Representation in Media.* UK/ PublishNation, 2016.

Quinn, Michael L. "Celebrity and the Semiotics of Acting." *New Theatre Quarterly,* vol. 6, no. 22, 1990, pp. 154- 161. doi:10.1017/S0266464X0000422X.

Reid, Jenna. "Cripping the Arts: It's About Time." *Canadian Art.* 5 May 2016, www.canadianart.ca/features/cripping-arts-time/.

Ryan, Frances. "A. We wouldn't accept actors blacking up so why applaud 'cripping up'". *Beginning with Disability: A Primer,* edited by Lennard J. Davis. Routledge, 2018, pp. 335-336.

Salam, Maya. "Ali Stroker Makes History as First Wheelchair User to Win a Tony." *The New York Times.* 9 Jun. 2019, www.nytimes.com/2019/06/09/theater/ali-stroker-oklahoma-tony-awards.html.

Samuels, Ellen Jean. "My Body, My Closet: Invisible Disability and the Limits of Coming-Out Discourse." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies,* vol. 9, no 1-2, 2003, pp. 233-255. *Project MUSE,* muse.jhu.edu/article/40803.

Sandahl, Carrie. "Ahhhh Freak Out! Metaphors of Disability and Femaleness in performance." *Theatre Topic,* vol. 9, no. 1, 1999, pp. 11-30. *Project MUSE,* doi: 10.1353/tt.1999.0006.

---. “Disability Art and Culture: A Model for Imaginative Ways to Integrate the Community.” *Alter- European Journal of disability research,* vol. 12, no. 2, 2018, pp. 79-93. doi:10.1016/j.alter.2018.04.004.

---. “The Difference Disability Makes.” *Casting a Movement: The Welcome Table Initiative,* edited by Claire Syler and Daniel Banks. Routledge: London. 2019, pp. 88-99. doi-org.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/10.4324/9780429488221.

---. “Queering the Crip or Cripping the Queer?: Intersections of Queer and Crip Identities in Solo Autobiographical Performance.” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies.* vol. 9, no. 1-2, 2003. pp. 25-26, *Project MUSE,* muse.jhu.edu/article/40804.

---. “Using Our Words: Exploring Representational Conundrums in Disability Drama and Performance.” *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies,* vol. 12, no. 2, 2018, pp. 129-144. *Project MUSE,* muse.jhu.edu/article/694071.

---. “Why Disability Identity Matters: From Dramaturgy to Casting in John Belluso’s *Pyretown.” Text and Performance Quarterly.* vol. 28 no.1-2, 2008, pp. 225-241. *EBSCOhost,* doi:10.1080/10462930701754481.

Sandahl, Carrie, and Philip Auslander. “Introduction: Disability Studies in Commotion with Performance Studies.” *Bodies in Commotion: Disability and Performance,* edited by Carrie Sandahl and Philip Auslander. University of Michigan Press, 2005, pp. 1-12.

---. “The Tyranny of Neutral Disability and Actor Training”. *Bodies in Commotion: Disability and Performance,* edited by Carrie Sandahl and Philip Auslander. University of Michigan Press, 2005, pp. 255-268.

Schechner, Richard. “Casting Without Limits.” *American Theatre,* vol. 27, no. 10, Dec. 2010, p. 26-30. *EBSCOhost,* search.ebscohost.com/login.aspz?direct=true&db=ibh&AN=552333335&site=ehost=live.

Schmidt, Joff. “Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre’s Kill Me Now a messy, heartbreaking and funny look at disability.” *CBC.* 31 Mar. 2017, www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/review-rmtc-kill-me-now-1.4048440.

Seymour, Tony. “B. Able-bodied actors in disabled roles: modern-day ‘blacking up’…or is it?”. *Beginning with Disability: A Primer,* edited by Lennard J. Davis. Routledge, 2018, pp. 336- 343.

Shapiro, Lawrence. "Incorporating Sexual Surrogacy into The Ontario Direct Funding Program." *Disability Studies Quarterly,* vol. 22, no. 4. 2002, pp. 72-81. dsq-sds.org/article/view/373/493.

Siebers, Tobin. *Disability Aesthetics*. University Michigan Press, 2010.

---."A Sexual Culture for Disabled People." *Sex and Disability,* edited by Robert McRuer and Anna Mollow, Duke University Press, 2012, pp. 37-53. doi-org.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/10.1215/9780822394877.

---. "Disability as Masquerade." *Literature and Medicine,* vol. 23, no. 1, 2004, pp. 1-22. discussion 61–5, doi:10.1353/lm.2004.0010.

"Space: Definition of Space by Lexico." *Lexico Dictionaries English,* Lexico/Oxford Dictionaries, www.lexico.com/en/definition/space.

Stanley, Sarah Garton. Personal Interview. By Andrea Connell, 5 Aug 2017.

Taylor, Diana. *Performance.* Duke University Press, 2016. doi:10.1215/9780822375128.

Taylor, Myles A. Personal Interview. By Andrea Connell, 17 May 2017.

Taylor, Paul. "Kill Me Now, Park Theatre London, Review: An Unflinching Portrait of Disability." *Independent.* 16 Mar 2015, www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/reviews/kill-me-now-park-theatre-london-review-an-unflinching-portrait-of-disability-10111687.html.

Tremain, Shelley. "Foucault, Governmentality, and Critical Disability Theory: An Introduction." *Foucault and the Government of Disability.* Ed. Shelley Tremain. The University of Michigan Press 2005. pp. 1-25. *Project MUSE,* muse.jhu.edu/book/58073.

Vehmas, Simo, and Nick Watson. "Exploring normativity in disability studies." *Disability & Society,* vol. 31, no. 1, 2016, pp.1-16. doi:10.1080/09687599.2015.1120657.

Vodička, Felix. "The Concretization of the Literary Work." *The Prague School: Selected Writings, 1929-1946,* edited by Peter Steiner. Translated by John Burbank, Olga Hasty, Manfred Jacobson, Bruce Kochis, and Wendy Steiner. University of Texas Press, 1982, pp. 103- 134.

Vultrsky, Jirí. *An Approach to the Semiotics of Theatre.* Translated by Jarmila F. Veltrusky, vol. 6 Brno 2012. pp. 97-133.

Watkin, Jessica. “Inclusive Theatre Space: Bursting through Boundaries of Spatial Restrictions, One Project at a Time.” *Canadian Theatre Review* vol. 170 no. Spring 2017, pp. 103-107. muse.jhu.edu/article/656877.

Wiens, Stefanie. Personal Interview. By Andrea Connell, 3 May 2017.

Winston, Iris. “Kill Me Now: A play about courage and love.” *Capital Critics’ Circle.* Apr 28 2017. www.capitalcriticscircle.com/kill-now-play-courage-love/.

Wojcik, Cory. Personal Interview. By Andrea Connell, 3 May 2017.

Wright, Alexa. *Monstrosity: The Human Monster in Visual Culture.* I.B. Taurus, 2013.

Young, Stella. “I’m not your inspiration, thank you very much.” *TEDxSydney.* April 2014. www.ted.com/talks/stella_young_i_m_not_your_inspiration_thank_you_very_much?language=en.

Zayid, Maysoon. “I got 99 problems…palsy is just one.” *TEDWomen.* Dec 2013. www.ted.com/talks/maysoon_zayid_i_got_99_problems_palsy_is_just_one?language=en