

Disabled Narratives

Disabled arts workers indicated a surprising amount of crossover in their beliefs and understanding of disabled representation within arts work, as well as within narratives on-stage and in media.

Topic 1: Appropriate/Inappropriate Narrative Approaches

That the disabled participants experienced similar patterns around disabled representations being made. That disabled participants experienced limitations in disability represented in media and the stage.

Topic 2: Narrative Desires

That they often desired similar types of narratives to be introduced regarding the representation of disability on stage.

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Funded by
UK Government



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Topic 1: Appropriate/Inappropriate Narrative Approaches

Themes developed were:

Theme 1: Diagnoses that are Represented/Not-Represented

Theme 2: Other People Playing Disabled Roles

Theme 3: Appropriate Narrative Approaches

Theme 4: Appropriate Representation

Theme 5: Television/Film Representations Remembered

Theme 1: Diagnoses that are Represented/Not-Represented

1. Do I generally feel seen when watching depictions of my disability? I don't often see depictions of my disability, when I see them I don't often feel seen, but I do feel something. I do feel... It gives me hope. That we're on a journey, but we may never be there, but it's something.

2. So it's so hard for me because when I'm reading these questions, I've got, like, I've got 10 conditions or something coming up in my mind that are those Inside Out characters.

3. I mean I would just love some representation really today I mean I just go to you know of any Fibro representation but I haven't seen any, I also have EDS and I don't see any of that. I think there's a lot more neurodivergent representation than there is of like physical conditions.

4. So I don't have depictions of fibromyalgia, or M.E, or joint hyper-mobility. I've seen some depictions of Autism.

5. There's a bit of a thing in our family of just noticing depictions of depression in particular more than bipolar because it's less common to see bipolar represented.

6. I think it's more just having some would be quite nice, in terms of my physical conditions. Very specifically any CFS would be a major one because that's a lot of very very misunderstood, 'you're just tired all the time', and that's just not it at all.





7. So when you only have one story to refer to for a certain type of person then you just kind of flatten everybody's experiences to being like that.

8. *On addiction and representation of their experiences:* No, I'd say it's irregular because I think they don't usually address it, I think they go for something more dramatic. Yeah, I can't think of where it's been a focus really. A lot of times honestly it's been depicted in like teen TV shows and stuff like that. And then a lot of it cycles around like abusing like medication used to treat it and all this.

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But I don't, I don't think mines really juicy enough (pause) honestly. Might be nice though. Maybe that's what's missing, maybe that's the next project. I don't know. There's something in there right?

9. *On autism:* I think there are often characters who have similar conditions to mine. How many of those are done well or by people with the actual conditions, I couldn't tell you. I could tell you it's very small(!) but I couldn't give you size numbers.

10. (Long pause) Yeah, I'm struggling to remember examples of bipolar so it's more, it's more depression and then because like depression... it's not that it's totally different, it just manifests kind of differently with bipolar.

Theme 2: Other People Playing Disabled Roles

1. Very very regular experience seeing people play characters that are disabled that actors that aren't, you know what I mean. Very regular I mean.
2. I watched that show Heartbreak High and the character who is played by Chloe Hayden is autistic, and is autistic in real life.
3. It totally depends on depiction. I've never felt unsafe. I've felt annoyed - going 'oh what's the point of this'? Or like, I'm really happy that my voice doesn't exist because other people get to do this instead which is nice and I think that's good for everyone. That's sarcasm.
4. My fun fact is that in the UK or America West End Broadway or off West End there has never been a genuine wheelchair user play Nessa Rose.
5. See it's a casting problem because people are so often under pressure of time. And for small things or quick things they're casting who they know already. And then for anything bigger, there's such pressure, you know, there's this whole industry of agents and folk pushing at stuff that the interesting choices get squeezed out and how you... how could we... it'd be interesting to see if you put some funding in place to encourage casting disabled characters in roles where it doesn't say they have a disability or not... because it does change it and make it far more interesting.



6. So, and then like performance, if you watch someone who doesn't have that experience play it. It's a real slippery slope into like very stereotypical performance.

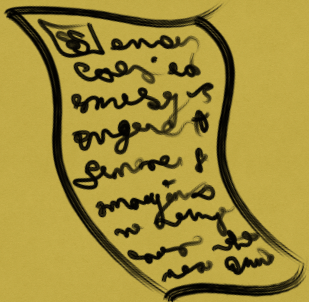
7. It's hard to say whether it's the exact disability because they don't always specify what disability the character has and I also don't think that actors should be expected to disclose private medical information in order to get a role, so they shouldn't have to you know have to share exactly what their disability is to make sure that it matches with the character. I think it's more about making sure that they have the same understanding and the... whatever life experiences are important to the story in order to be to be playing it. So I think nowadays I'm seeing a lot more of you know disabled are being written by disabled writers.

8. *On experiences of seeing someone play or write their disability:* I think becoming more regular, it's only ever been in fringe theatre. Like very small you know people writing their own stories and putting them on kind of a thing.



Theme 3: Appropriate Narrative Approaches:

1. There isn't a lot and there isn't a lot that I feel is done with detail, with nuance or well. And you can feel that.
2. I find comedy very precious and it is one of my favourite tools, but I can feel where it is sometimes done... used in a way that is more to just be a way to enable an audience to actually engage with the subject matter. And, uh, sanitises... that's usually what I see.
3. I don't have a problem with people who don't have a condition writing about that condition if there's a ring of authenticity to it and again it doesn't need to be that it has to chime with my experience because you know, I know that other people's experiences... is very different but I don't. Yeah it doesn't threaten me or bother me as long as it's good. And equally I've got very **wary** about writing about things I haven't experienced and then realised that actually other people are a lot more open to it if it's good... And actually by showing it to someone who does have the condition and looks at it and goes this is crap because of x, y, and z like that's how folk learn and that's how you get a better depiction.
4. *On feeling good from depictions:* With other wheelchair users and mobility aid using characters, as long as they are played by disabled actors. It makes me feel the opposite if it's an able-bodied actor playing the same character.



5. I think because I'm very academic and I've studied this career, and I've met... I'm quite high functioning as a person. I can always like understand why they put a non-disabled performer on stage because we are in an industry that believes that you can act anything and write anything; without like historical context taking into account that maybe that's not the best idea. And they're always like well you know what that character needs to have capabilities so that we can do our storytelling the way we want to do it. Like, we can't have a wheelchair user because we want to do some physical theatre nonsense and you're like well maybe you should just think about the way you're telling that story differently rather than doing that thing.

6. I don't know, I actually don't know the truth of the actors scenarios. I do suspect some people were doing that for sure which... I don't know if I find that obnoxious or not. I don't think... I don't think I'm... I kind of don't think I mind but I will say just as actor I think I think... I don't know how someone would feel, who isn't an actor but as an actor I kind of think just the luxury of like you know learning your lines and like being able to stay focused at work whatever else... must be nice... if you're doing something like that. It's kind of what I think, but yeah I don't know if I take the issue with it, I can't think of anything specific, right? I wouldn't know really.

7. For me, the big one is I want to see us behind stage. I don't want to see only on stage. When a production says they are disabled led. I want to see that in every level of production. And there are companies who are doing that, but often you'll find the people in charge of that company are ultimately non-disabled people who are definitely platforming us. But there's still a...(pause) the narrative is I feel If you are disabled but can work to a professional standard, you are worthy enough to spend time with us. What I want to see a change is, is what the

professional standard is in terms of expectations of timetable, conditioning and like presentation.

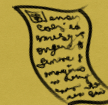
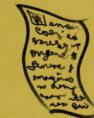
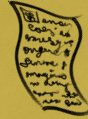
8. If you want to make work that is purely accessible, because we have like accessible versions of shows, which are great! If those are great options and I think there's room for shows that do all their own stuff and have an accessible version. But equally I don't think a show that is completely accessible is less worth of a show that can do lots of things because there's lots of things that you can't do with an accessible show. Lighting decisions. Sound decisions. I feel some people would go well, actually, you can't... you're not fulfilling the full possibility of this idea. And like no we're making a different kind of show and that is a narrative that I want to see more of.

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And when it's like a piece of work, that is actually about my experience that feels like: 'Oh, okay, is this work actually being made for me or is it being made for everyone else to feel better about my experience?'. Um, Which is a big question that's come up. A friend of mine saw a show that I didn't get to see where he was questioning the narrative around, like there were lots of disabled characters, but the narrative is still from a non-disabled character coming in and improving their lives and he was like, 'I don't know if it's actually uplifting or if it's making non-disabled, people feel better about like the lives of the disabled people that they see?' Right?

9. And there's a question over like authorship over those stories. And like I think we'll see a lot of presentation of ourselves in forward-facing roles on stage. But, I don't know if we see it behind stage on a decision level making or storytelling design. Which is hopefully something we can change, but it does mean that we... sometimes we can go in with good faith and feel

like our stories are not the focus or are not being presented in a way that we would engage. And that's totally, you know, individual. Each person experiences stories...And sometimes, you know, stories being told by non-disabled people can really hit you and go that actually, you know what, that is very accurate to me. Or has shown me in a way that I feel safe. I feel seen. But not always, and it's, you know, it's impossible to generalise every production in the world or every version you see but like... and you can never know how you're gonna feel until you see it and sometimes you'll watch it and go I really felt I was emotionally engaged and you may leave and you go, actually, I've got some issues.



Theme 4: Appropriate Representation

1. I think something that is missed, is especially within society a bit but also within disability communities is the importance of differences. The importances of the differences between white disability justice, and black disability justice and being able to innovate, create, experiment with a resilience of holding that knowledge, and that awareness. I think that the need to feel a feeling of unity and unifying - like we all experience this commonality. Can actually mean that, when you in that shared experience, bring up differences, it feels like something that is separating and dividing rather than something that feeds that togetherness and that belonging and the possibility of change that actually can transform things for different people in different ways. And I think that that's something that actually makes me feel more isolated is being treated in a way that doesn't really integrate what my experiences of being black and disabled, and how disabling, actually, even just experiencing racism, anti-black racism as a disabled person can be/how that impacts. How that can make you more sick. How then you can experience that from "disability informed" spaces and how that can hurt. And the wounds there that require healing.



2. *On addiction narratives:* And again, that really helps with the perspective stuff because like mind you... my mother was off the rails like she was... she was committing a positive suicide and it was getting bad, it was getting very bad kind of impossible to deal with. But she was... She wasn't always functional. She was mostly functional. And I think that that made it not as bad, it just made it like a constant sort of presence like was not helpful to see that set. I think so.

I think so because you know, it, a lot of things that go along with those situations and those kind of like disabilities, a lot of its abuse.

3. I know black disabled actors that I have seen in things. And it's not that their part needs to be about their disability. But the character that they were playing, I didn't relate to and they weren't like, they weren't a key part of the story.

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It was that they were acting, black and disabled, great, but actually a black disabled character where their wholeness is, a key part of the story and their wholeness is a key part of the story. And and actually, I don't think it's a (laughs), I think I would like... because I haven't seen it, I think I would like to see *some* of the aspects of being black and disabled being some part of the story because it's I mean, it's a part of my (long pause) it's a huge part of my life. So yeah, I haven't seen that storytelling happen really in a way that I could even comment on. I think it's missing, I think that's being missed.

4. I saw a production called Meet Fred which has been done by Hijinx, which is a Welsh company. Which isn't explicitly about those conditions, but Hijinx is a company that works with learning disabled artists to program them to stage and Meet Fred is one of the most accurate presentations of my life I've ever seen on stage. And it's a puppet and I it's like one of the greatest shows I think I've ever seen. Cause when I wasn't laughing, I was crying. And it was about those themes without explicitly saying, this character is this, it's just Fred is Fred who's a puppet and when puppet Fred tries to interact with the world, but it's not designed for him.

[inaudible] problems. I was like, oh I get what you're saying but also damn. It's puppets. Yeah. I wonder if the audience get what this is or not. Because it very obvious, but yeah.

5. Like you know for example Curious is a show that uses Frantic Assembly stuff. So they're having to, like, if they want to cast their fantastically, they can but then they have to put the qualifier that actually, they have to be able to do this amount of work. Which allows them to maybe go 'well, we need this very certain type of thing'. Which you know we are able to do. I probably couldn't play curious anymore because I've forgotten how to do all the performer stuff because I've been doing like writer and directing stuff for the last four years rather than like actual performing.

6. *On representation of autism:* Yeah, there's lots. I feel like you know there's the famous ones. You know, National Theatre did a tour The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime, which was actually very good, I felt. I know the book has a lot of criticisms, but I felt the production was very well made. Though I may be unable to comment because I was crying from the third line till the end of the show.

7. *On disabled arts workers:* That's the narrative that I struggle with is that like we do what is best for the work, when I feel like the work should be the best for everyone who's taking part of it in it. That's the narrative shift I want to see behind stage and about the work we make.

8. *On working on a project with disabled and black narratives and creatives, and finding narratives of representation:* And I really related to the script and the experience. I think as it came from a place of lived experience, and then the casting and creative team was intentionally

chosen to reflect that lived experience. And there was the authenticity that I felt, that there was less... there wasn't really a space to reach to, and it made it easier.

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Otherwise no.

9. Well fibromyalgia, where I have heard about it on TV or in film or something like that very, very infrequently... it's been a joke. It's like, oh, 'You're saying you've got fibromyalgia or something!'. And I know with ME as well, the representation of both of those conditions in the medical community and the wider public, and the media is like many conditions that people that were raised as girls have, are seen as like a 'hysterical made-up women's problem'. - 'A lazy don't want to do stuff thing;'. Or just doesn't really exist or it's like some kind of period thing, right? Or it's like 'oh, you're too tired'. And actually it's really, really... I feel it's mocked and so, the other side of not being represented or being misrepresented is that it's actually a joke. It's actually the butt of a joke and that's something that I find is really hurtful and harmful in the fact that it is the way that it's being, it's actually still being taught. It's a constellation of symptoms, that you're given but you don't know really what's wrong with them and it's kind of like...

10. I think when I see a positive depiction, it's helpful in getting to feel things that I don't necessarily get to feel watching like, Into the Nighttime and Meet Fred I had an emotional experience that I don't often get to feel. Now, did I feel safe in that? When I went to go and see Meet Fred, no, I felt the audience were really actively annoyed at me for actively engaging emotionally with a piece of work that was about me, or experiences similar to mine. And that my laughing and my crying was a bother to the audience. When actually no, I'm acting... I am emotionally engaged with this piece of work in a way that you aren't sorry. It was my experience



was getting in the way of that. Which I think is actually a general thing that like, when I engage with a piece of work, if I find something funny, I'll laugh at it. And that can often be a problem for everyone else in the room or other people in the room, not everyone. But like, sometimes I feel like I'm not safe to emotionally engage with a piece of work.

11. I think that the way that complex trauma is treated as something that we have low tolerance for as a collective... to hold or less containers for... is something that I feel sad about.

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I just feel like more and more beings that wouldn't associate themselves as having complex trauma absolutely do and so I find it confusing to me that the narratives around that and the narratives around healing are very harmful.

12. And the show was about [them] being autistic and just like experiencing the world of neurodivergence and all this and the rampant anxiety he felt constantly like social anxiety, especially, and then the medications that kind of ruled his life and all of this... But there was something in it that like did kind of resonate with me and it was like this wild anxiety afterward after an interaction where you're thinking about it for hours, sometimes about like something you said or a misstep you made.'

13. The Secret Garden that's just closed at Regent's Park Open Air which was beautiful and that story contains as far as I know 3 disabled characters all of which played by disabled actors. And I mean... one of them Colin the character is meant to be like really really ill, so I don't necessarily expect them to have an actor that has that illness because like that just wouldn't be feasible but they had a wheelchair using character played by a wheelchair using actor.

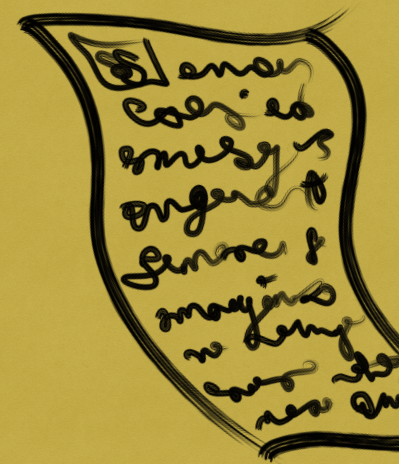
14. The only one I can really go for is how to dance in Ohio because that's the only one that's like specifically my disability which I haven't seen I've only heard the soundtrack. I would I wouldn't say that it was totally accurate to me I think it was based on characters that have I think significantly higher support needs than I do, and therefore it's like not really accurate to my experience. However I'm so aware of the fact that it is accurate to someone's experience, it's not just like they've not just you know written what they think because they don't know. It is accurate to someone's experience.

15. I don't know, I think it's just like it's about having a range of things when we only have one or two things it's really easy for us to kind of go, well, why didn't you do this? Or why did you do it that way? We aren't allowed be rubbish. Like, I think this is about a lot of minority identities is that we are so limited in our scope of what we can be presented as that, there's no room for lots of different types where there isn't room for shows where you're just there inconsequentially. Because then we're like well you've given us a presentation but you're not done anything with it, but that's because there's so little of it that when we see it, we want it to engage in a certain way. And that's different for every individual person who goes and sees something. But like, if there was a wide range of representation we could have times where it's rubbish! And it's fine! Because There's enough of the rest of it. We're like great. We can experiment more. We can experiment more with our narrow tips and our voices in in on stage. What what does that look for?

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What's the intersectional version of these different experiences? Because often I feel like we're met with one thing. But it doesn't... like lots of people like myself and know lot of others who

have intersectional of relationships with their identities. And like actually going to see that on stage is like, that's too many, there's too many things that for the audience to handle. We can't, no no that's too much and then they might get confused or they might get lost. And I'm like bugger them. That's what I would say the two main narratives I want to see changed.



Theme 5: Television/Film Representations Remembered

1. My Big Fat Mad Diary, she is undisclosed. I think they kind of code it as mad... general mad. This Way Up, I watched it before and I watched it again with Aisling Bea, and they also coded it as mad, had a breakdown, was a bit upset, like seemed that she was dealing with depression, she tried... they mentioned that she had taken an overdose and that was an attempt to take... to unalive.

2. So, the only media I can think of at all, that ever uses the term borderline personality disorder is a TV show called Crazy Ex Girlfriend ... And I like related to that a lot actually cause like that's similar to how I felt about it. Like it's a framework that helps me understand things. And I think that that's kind of my feeling about it is that if you've heard of BPD you've either watched that show or you've heard it used as an insult. Because it's often used as insult. There's like it, like it's a high risk [inaudible] the website Reddit and but it's used a lot on that website. Like Borderline is used as short-hand for a horrible person. Which is really gross. It's really gross and horrible.

3. I watched this show on BBC, where the blonde one from Derry Girls was a character that has bipolar. I don't have bipolar, but I have such an extreme episode with my CPTSD and depression and anxiety that it still felt like a very... to me, I could really relate to (it), and I thought it was done quite well.

4. Yeah, I've not seen a lot of compelling... there's been a few things recently with characters that have a certain disability, there's even like this... this guy maybe has like muscular dystrophy or something but he's like gay and trying to date and that's nice.

5. But actually, in terms of CPTSD as well and depression and anxiety... not many. There's been a few coming of age things. I watched Everything Now she had Anorexia, but I related to them. I've also had eating things in my life. But some of the underpinning stuff that was being dealt with resonated.

6. I've watched Modern Family a few times and I'm quite sure that Luke is coded to be and his dad are coded to have ADHD or it's mentioned in the show.

7. It's really tough (question) because I haven't seen a lot of my disability specifically, but I think there's a lot of kind of... I dunno my answers I suppose apply to disability in general and there's a lot of similarities especially like... I sort of think when my brain sort of thinks wheelchair users as a kind of do you know what I mean? It often doesn't specify what the disability is or it's like or it's something like Wicked where it's like fantasy and not really anything, I mean she had an accident.

8. It's not as much my disability because I don't think my experience has been or my disabilities... I haven't got much experience And, I've seen many depictions and then the ones I see I'm not I'm not too sure about the lived experience of the writers so I can't comment too much on it but something that I watch that felt really strange to me was the disability protest scene in Sex Education. And I don't know if they had... I don't know if they had people that

were disabled that wrote it, but it felt... there's something that I noticed that happened with a lot of popular shows where they realise that they had to make a decision to like double down on being problematic. Or show that they had awakened and then include that in their writing, in a really meta and obvious way.

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'We're saying 'they' now!' (laughs), and like: 'Look wheelchair'! And like: 'This is our episode where cancel culture exists! We're writing it in, we're writing these things in!'

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I started seeing that happen in all these shows where like, 'okay, we're going in this direction', and that's what it kind of felt like that, 'we've done queer, we've done trans, and now we've got to do disability, or we're out.' And um it didn't feel very good.

9. Watched this show on Netflix, can't remember what it's called, but there's this red-headed actress, who just played a tiny, teenager model, and it's kind of coded that she's autistic that she's clearly autistic. And I actually enjoyed watching that show.

10. And I'll be honest with you, actually, when I think of Fleabag, like, I don't know that she was necessarily. I don't know, she was neurodivergent or if that was the thing but she's kind of an anxious individual and like the way that she would like leave the moment and have that like side commentary. That spoke to me because like I know we all sort of do it but it was like the deliberateness of like leaving the moment and speaking to camera. It's like a total removal from the present experience and that felt real, that felt like true to my experience where I'm just like out of the moment completely, kind of trying to deal with what's going on, but in this separate other space, and like in the meantime, you're just sort of like, not there and not quite



not... responding in the way that you're supposed to and carrying on like social norms or whatever. And I found that comforting, I know it wasn't really about that, but like I found it relatable and it made me feel a lot, made me feel a lot better actually.



11. I guess sometimes I have a problem with like... so it's like organisation and cleaning. Sometimes I hold on to things like that are a bit funny and I remember in The Aviator Leonardo DiCaprio he played that guy that eccentric rich guy I think was obsessive compulsive which I am not. Remember he's like pissing in bottles in his room and holding onto weird trinkets and had weird rituals and things like that. And I definitely do that. Like I definitely well I try not to piss in bottles very often... but definitely weird rituals to soothe myself.



Topic 2: Narrative Desires

Narratives requested were:



Theme 1: Narratives where disabled people exist in a space without the Disability, Neurodiversity or Long-Term Illness being the focus of the narrative.

Theme 2: Narratives where disabled people are not a traumatic experience for others and also sometimes not heroic.

Theme 3: Narratives where depictions of Disability, Neurodiversity and Long-Term Illness defy tropes/stereotypes.



Theme 1: Narratives where disabled people exist in a space without the Disability, Neurodiversity or Long-Term Illness being the focus of the narrative.

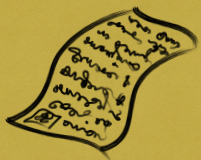
1. I'd like to see it woven into like, regular life and kind of like, the issues it causes without it being the focus. Like I don't want like a melodrama about ADHD. I want a character going through real life things who kind of has this and like how it affects their interpersonal relationships, how it affects their relationship with their self, how it affects their work? But without that being the drama if that makes sense, the primary drama. Like, I don't know a detective with ADHD or something, where like it just comes up but like the real issue is like murder.

2. I want it, I want it to feel commonplace. That's what I want. I want it to come up and seem commonplace that's what I'd like portrayed in media.

3. And also like getting to a place where it's not that you discount someone's disability but actually that the character's there for different purposes.

4. I understand why in a lot of drama you want drama but I'm really interested by nuance.

5. Now, that can often be a point of criticism because like oh, what's the point of them having it, if it's not important? It's like well, because I live every day where I have this condition. So, there are times where It's not going to save the world, but I am going to be there in the world that needs saving.



Theme 2: Narratives where the disabled people are not a traumatic experience for others involved, but also potentially not a hero.

1. In terms of onstage narratives. (Pause) I want us to stop being a tragedy, that'd be nice. [...] I would like to see us be able to be part of stories, where our condition is inconsequential.

2. But any kind of severe mental illness as well, you know, from you know, from One flew over the Cuckoo's Nest all the way through there's just so many really awful depictions of psychiatric units and then they're all full of rapists and murderers and, you know, completely unhinged individuals and actually it's a lot quieter and more sad than that, you know, which doesn't make for such good films. But yeah, particularly with film, I think there's a lot of really negative depictions of mental illness and a lot of hackneyed kind of shorthands and it doesn't do anyone any favours.

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But it is one of my soapboxes: 'That's not what it's like, it doesn't look like that!' You know... actually most psychiatric nurses want to be there, you know. Anyway.

3. Oh, geez. Yeah, I I think I think a lot of that like the stuff I've seen in media, especially with that sort of thing, when it comes to addiction and like, a lack of like self-regulation and stuff like that. A lot of it's quite tragic. Like, really, really dark.

4. Yeah I think I see every now and again a character who's like got a condition similar to mine but I'm not always convinced by the presentation of them, or if they even... If the story really

cares about that character and their condition, or if they're just there to be a problem for everyone else.



5. I guess, it's when what is that character conveying, is that character the focus of their story and the agency of their story on them. And is the emotional labour forced on other characters, without consideration of that main character. That's usually when it's bad like when they have no agency and they are simply emotional trauma for the rest of the cast. That's usually when I'm starting to go well, what's the point in even bringing this on stage if we're just trauma for everyone else? That's not helping me because I now feel that I am trauma to other people around me. Um, which I think is true in general, but that's not because of my disability. (Laughs).

6. Yes, like the one I mentioned, especially when it's like more severe. I think that puts things into perspective in a way that it is soothing, but then there's other times where like, you want to connect and sometimes it'll have the opposite effect. You're like, oh well, you're so bad. Look at that. Do you know what I mean? And so, you end up kind of like not having any sympathy for yourself or like gaslighting, you know, your own experience. Which isn't nice. If sometimes it is nice up, something kind of relatable.

7. And it's very much making out that disabled people are villains and criminals and they can't be trusted and they don't have control of their actions, but it's just... I mean I could go on forever about this show but it was awful and it is probably the only time that I've ever been triggered by a piece of art that I've seen and I would have left at the interval if it wasn't for the fact that I was like well if I'm already gonna like shout out and complain about it so I might as well at least have all of the knowledge to complain about it. But it was very much a case of I



appreciate that this play has existed and it's an old classic. I'm not saying I'm not into you know a erasure of old history or anything like that. But that doesn't mean that we need to be bringing it back up and putting it on again and today's day and age because it's disgusting and on top of everything else the actor playing the Brother was entirely abled-bodied, neurotypical.



8. And actually to see more horrible disabled characters would be a real step forward. That they're not always the heroic... struggling on.

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There's a BBC Three one about a guy with cerebral palsy and he's just a horrible person, and it's hilarious because it's like David Brent kind of style, but he's just horrendous and he'll do anything. Like he's pretending he's a refugee so he can get free meals and stuff, you know, because no one's going to challenge a guy with cerebral palsy. So to me that's a real step forward.

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So I'm trying to do that at the moment with something I'm writing where one of the characters' has cerebral palsy and it's not the be all and end all about them and it's not the reason they're in the play it's kind of just one to go well this is just them who they are and what's going on. And obviously because of the discrimination that they face because of the stuff that happens. And it's an important part of things. But it's not, it's not the whole picture.

9. And then I think on the other side, I think there's still quite a dangerous narrative of autistic people being dangerous or violent, it doesn't need to go as far as them being criminals but just being the villain or negative behaviour and it's very... it's a fine line because I also don't want to see any of this like super power nonsense but I think just being very careful as portraying

people with cognitive disabilities as being bad or evil or doing the wrong thing because I think there is still quite a lot of that out there.

10. I did have a thought, about the last question because I'm thinking quite explicitly about the text, where it says what a character's condition is, and not the times that a character has been written historically to have a way that they are played something like of Mice and Men which I know has been recently there've been more accurate or people with similar conditions to the ones that we we think the character has. But usually, when I've seen that production, I hate it because it's so clearly like done in a way that we are a tragic figure or a thing that is a problem for everyone else especially in that one like you know.

Theme 3: Narratives where depictions of Disability, Neurodiversity and Long-Term Illness defy tropes/ stereotypes.

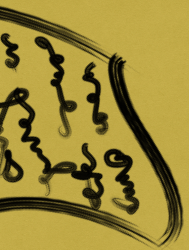
1. And I think you get a lot of depictions of depression as just straightforward sadness... Or that folk are just always in bed. And again, these tropes are like, I mean there's a reason why they're there. But, you know, the kind of agitated depression where you can't sit still and you're anxious and pacing, that's less common to see.

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And then again with with mania, it's it's less common to get a decent depiction of it. And, and I don't know whether again is the kind of salacious stuff that's more... So like films are mad for sexual disinhibition because that's far more glorious. I was just hearing this morning about someone that when they get really high, they fry their money... I mean I don't know, I find that interesting but I've not seen it depicted!

2. To draw characters where you've understood their disability but more than that you've understood them. So that it's not just so-and-so with this condition. It's this really finely drawn person who's really quite complicated and has all these different facets and elements and doesn't get on with their mum but you know, struggles to get up the stairs and it's richer and fuller because you've placed them in a in a proper living, breathing, person. And too often suddenly everything becomes two dimensional because they're just the person in the wheelchair or just the person with the mental illness. And so fleshing out characters...

3. I don't believe, and I could be wrong, because it's not my place to know if someone doesn't actively identify. But as far as I know, I've never seen it being written by someone with my



condition. As far as like I understand, you can usually tell even, when it's good, there's a presentation of it, that feels external. And there are cliches that will always come up. Because it's an easy narrative for the audience, the general audience to understand. And it, you know, sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't and I couldn't tell you...

4. The - production where they made the choice that - was, clearly neurodivergent in a way that is offensively played. It's one of the worst performances I've ever seen and it ruins the play. Not only because it's a bad performance but like, because it's just drab.

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A lot of these times where the character doesn't have an explicit label but the text is quite obvious. And usually that's never good. But also the way that people decide to play with that is almost always bad. I don't think I've seen a character like that that its good or has ever made me feel, you know what? That was good.

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They are... a character who has a different way of thinking is often played by stereotype rather than actively engaging with the way that that character's brain works.

