

Two autistic queers

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Two autistic queers are sitting in a room. It sounds like the beginning of a joke, yet the result of this story is far more productive than any ableist or queerphobic punchline could surmise. We have decided to meet today, so that we can write an introductory paragraph to our shared publication into a journal, but this is not actually the focal point of talk. Instead, we reflect on the strange reality that we will be published as actual scholars when we have just recently been mere students. A kind of imposter syndrome arises, deluding us both into strange, convoluted tales that speak of coincidental luck and well-placed performances of ability that we have gotten to this moment. To accept that we have worked hard and produced valuable knowledge seems much harder to believe. And yet, in the eyes of the other, we find a genuine curiosity and thankfulness for the theories we put forth.

Fabius for one is still surprised that the interview they gave resulted in such an amazing piece of writing, convinced that Aloíta merely cherry-picked smart sounding bits and pieces out of a chaotic rant. Aloíta is first and foremost grateful for Fabius' thoughtful challenging of the philosophical components of her ideas, giving her some much-needed confidence in her thinking that was previously marred by doubt and self-criticism. But in speaking these worries out loud we realise that what we are doing to ourselves, is what we criticise so deeply in our pieces. Our imposter syndrome makes us see ourselves through an ableist lens that asserts that for autistic people to produce knowledge, they must conform to normalised standards. Yet how can that be a true assessment, when both of us found a depth of knowledge in the other's neurodiversity.

We began to dig deeper into this idea of internalised ableism, quickly dispensing the idea that we are not actually valuable scholars. What becomes clear, is that, by ourselves, we struggled to trust our intuitions, smothering them under expectations of what we ought to do. Yet together, we enforced the exciting forms of thinking that our autism brings to the table. Rants became truer to the internally consistent but externally chaotic associative thinking, while the hyper focus on certain minute details was embraced rather than ignored. The fact that both of us could unmask and be as queer as we wanted to, in jokes flying all around, only contributed to the growing sense that our ideas had value.

Slowly but surely, we came to understand ourselves and the ableist world that attempted to simplify us by hearing the particular, yet similar experiences of the others. Discussions of atrocious representations and discourse on autism made us shout in anger, roll our eyes in frustration and gulp in sadness. Yet these feelings were quickly moulded into laughter at the absurdity of our own perpetuation of ableism, as well as the potential that we have as neurodiverse people to reject these ideas by our mere existence. Despite being physically distant during the later writing process, the intellectual bond that was forged in this moment acted as a weapon against the false idea we had so deeply let guide our thinking as an Other with shame. But now we stand tall together, metaphorically only as the chairs are comfy, proclaiming that our ideas have value not despite our autism, but because our neurodiversity makes us see, feel, and think in wholly unique ways. And it is now up to the reader of our essays to join us in celebrating difference in all its beautifully strange occurrences. Thank you, have fun, and please be as weird as you want to be.