

TCP Talking Disability Transcript – Ep 3 – Dyslexia

Chella Ward (00:01.581)

Hi everyone and welcome back to another episode of Talking Disability, a special series from the Classics podcast. My name is Chella Ward and I'm joined today by two guests who are going to be helping us to have a conversation about dyslexia and learning difference and the way that it influences or doesn't influence their interest in the ancient world. I'm going to pass first of all to each of them in turn to introduce themselves and then I'll be asking them some questions to help us to have a conversation.

Marcus, can I pass to you first to tell us a little bit about who you are and what you do? Thank you.

Marcus (00:36.44)

Thank you, Chella, and thank you so much to the podcast for hosting us. I am currently a British Academy postdoctoral research fellow at UCL, and my research is about, well, I look at contemporary queer and trans performance practice there, and I think about the way that tragedy and the tragic have informed or get reworked in choreographic practice and live art more broadly.

Chella Ward (01:04.365)

Great, thank you Marcus and Ronnais can I come to you next?

Ronnais (01:07.721)

Yeah, hi, I'm Ronnais. Thank you for having me on the podcast. I'm a first year PhD researcher at the University of Leeds. I'm studying material religion and human environment interactions in Roman Italy. I did my undergrad at Leeds as well, and then I've just finished my master's in St. Andrews.

Chella Ward (01:29.911)

Okay, brilliant. Well, thank you both and thank you both ever so much for making the time to join us. We're really, really grateful to have you on the podcast. I'd like to start by asking you a little bit about how you found your way into classics. But I wonder whether before we do that, just for the sake of listeners who might be unfamiliar with some of this terminology, perhaps we should say a little bit about what dyslexia is and perhaps some of the ways that it affects how you learn or how you engage with the ancient world. Does anybody want to try out a little definition or a little introduction for the listeners?

Ronnais (02:09.099)

So I could go first. So I have double deficit dyslexia, which is normally kind of considered the most severe form of dyslexia. And I take significantly longer to process kind of phonological parts of sentences. So like every single phoneme, which is the sounds associated with individual letters. And then I also struggle with rapid automatic naming, which is basically kind of retrieving words for things. So both of them together kind of really slow down my processing speed. And it's not, it's not just like a learning difference related to reading, but it's also about thinking, talking, memory, processing and listening. And they all kind of involve language and words.

Chella Ward (03:05.484)

Brilliant, thanks Ronnais, I think that's really helpful. Is there anything that you would want to add to that, Marcus?

Marcus (03:10.679)

that yeah, that articulation is really helpful. And I recognize that a lot of what you described, Ronnais and I had a chance to talk before this. And I think we've we felt or wanted to articulate something that the other guests in this podcast have, which is that dyslexia is experienced differently. And there's this kind of wide range of, of how it presents or, or how different people encounter it or changes their relationship to the to the world. And, and for myself, it's also really like memory is like a major component of it or processing and memory. And it creates for me all of these different kinds of glitches in relationship to language, writing and thinking. Yeah.

Chella Ward (03:58.232)

Great, thank you. I think that is really useful because I think for many listeners or at least, you know, certainly for me, before I became interested in disability and learning difference, I think I also had that impression that it was primarily about reading and writing. So to think about it as also being about memory, also being about processing and you used a phrase there, Marcus, that was something like, it's about sort of interacting with the world. I think that's a really, really useful kind of reframing of dyslexia.

So let's talk a little bit about the relationship with the study of the ancient world that's sometimes called classics. And I suppose it's that term classics that I'm going to use for the rest of this podcast. But I don't mean by that sort of narrowly only the study of ancient Greece and ancient Rome. I'd love to ask you both, how did you find your way into the study of the ancient world? What was it that kind of first interested you? What's that kind of journey been like for you? Marcus, can I start with you?

Marcus (04:56.685)

Yeah. When I moved to the UK when I was 15 and when I did and kind of was going to school in the UK for the first time, that's when I first encountered classical studies as a subject as an option. Before that, I'd always been interested in ancient myths or encounters with the ancient world in multiple forms. And I actually didn't pick or at least the way that I remember it, which is liable to lots of mistakes or misreadings, but is that I actually signed up to do geography. And then when I kind of came back to school, then like after the summer break, I'd been put in a classical studies class. And kind of, and that was really the end of it, in that I kind of became obsessed or fell really deeply for thinking about the ancient world through myth, tragedy and epic.

Chella Ward (05:50.36)

think that story of the accidental classicist is something that I hear more than I think I would hear it, right? It seems to come back and you can obviously see in your work today that interest in myth and its various different kinds of manifestations is obviously

still there. What about you, Ronnais? How did you get into the study of the ancient world?

Ronnais (06:09.223)

So I'd also say that I'm an accidental classicist. I accidentally found my way into studying classics when I attended Runshaw College and started my A levels. At the time I was really interested in history and I decided that classical civilization would complement my choice to study history. But before enrolling at Runshaw I'd never even heard of the subject and I literally knew nothing about the ancient world.

Ronnais (06:35.721)

I was actually intending to drop the subject after my first year of A levels as I took an extra A level. However, I actually really enjoyed classical civilization and I dropped government and politics instead. I just had a really amazing teacher and I couldn't be more grateful to her for kind of introducing me to the ancient world and kind of a subject that has kind of changed my life for the better.

Chella Ward (07:02.061)

Thank you. That's really interesting. So you've both talked there about the kind of beginnings, you're both sort of starting at that mid teenage years, maybe slightly later, early college kind of age. I kind of wanted to talk a little bit about the rest of that journey. And I'm interested to hear how dyslexia has shaped or not shaped. I mean, it might not have had any impact on it whatsoever, but how has dyslexia shaped your journey as you've kind of made your way through perhaps different kinds of educational institutions or different sort of ways, modes of interacting with the subject. And Ronnais, I'm going to come to you first, if that's all right.

Ronnais (07:43.882)

Yeah, so I think my dyslexia is like very closely kind of connected to my journey in classics. So during college when I actually first started studying classical civilisation, I was really terrible at reading and I hadn't actually read a book from start to finish and it was something that I was very ashamed of. And at this time I wasn't diagnosed with dyslexia despite the fact I could barely read and I was only actually diagnosed with dyslexia halfway through my undergraduate degree. But the course, the kind of structure of A-level classical civilization meant that for the first two lessons of the week, I'd study Greek art. And because of my dyslexia, I'm a very visual learner and I often think in pictures to understand different concepts. The study of Greek art...especially statues, architecture, vases, really suited my learning style and through the help of my teacher it naturally came to me to analyse material culture through looking at the images of physical objects and verbally taking information in about like the historical context. However, the other two lessons of the week were Homer's Odyssey and this was a major source of anxiety for me.

And I didn't actually want to go to my teacher at age 16 and admit that I couldn't read properly. Every time in the past, during like primary school and high school, I'd gone for help and told them that I was struggling to read. I was just completely dismissed and

invalidated. So I viewed my issues of reading as like a flaw in my own ability, not because I had a specific learning difference.

I was desperate to avoid reading The Odyssey so much so that I watched The Odyssey from 1997 with Isabella Rossellini as Athene. But unfortunately for me, the film is nothing like Homer's Odyssey. So out of pure kind of fear of being kicked off the course because I didn't understand The Odyssey, I became really determined to read The Odyssey.

Ronnais (09:58.747)

And most of the information I didn't really take in the first few times that I read the book, but after rereading it lots of times and trying very hard to kind of understand it, I actually really enjoyed it. So without A-level classical civilization and having the opportunity to use Greek art as a stepping stone into being curious about the ancient world and learning how to read.

I wouldn't even have the opportunity to have accessed higher education. And I think due to these experiences, it made me extremely passionate about studying the ancient world. And then it hugely influenced my decision to actually go to university and to study for a PhD so that I can carry on learning about something that I'm really passionate about.

Chella Ward (10:49.709)

I think it's so important that you pointed out there the way that some of those structural ableisms shaped your journey or shaped the interaction between dyslexia and your journey through the study of the ancient world, because I think that story about sort of being made to feel ashamed around reading, know, that really speaks to a kind of structural ableism that I think lots and lots of people will probably have had some kind of experience of. But the interesting thing about the way that you told that story was that you started with

Well, dyslexia actually makes me really good at visual learning, right? I'm good at Greek art because perhaps I've not had this experience of dependence on text and the kind of text centric approach that people might have if they'd come to the ancient world through perhaps, let's say classics rather than perhaps classical civilization, right? That's something that's a very...

perhaps a UK specific difference, but we usually think of classics as more of a focus on languages and literatures and classical civilization perhaps as more focused on art and history. I'm generalizing a little bit too much there, but it's sort of interesting to think about some of the ways that that more visual focused learning might have been more accessible to you through classical civilization. So thank you so much for explaining that to us. And I think there's things that I want to come back to there. I'd love to hear more about that moment of diagnosis that you raised kind of coming in the middle of your undergraduate degree. But perhaps we'll come back to that. Perhaps I'll come first to you, Marcus, to say perhaps a little bit about how dyslexia shaped your journey through the study of the ancient world.

Marcus (12:28.557)

I resonate with a lot of what you've described, Ronnais, about that internalization of the kind of structural ableism around dyslexia in that when I was at secondary school, I was also really reliant on supportive teachers. And I think throughout undergraduate and master's similarly have also really relied on the support of professors, academics.

because I had a feeling or I had been brought into having a feeling that I couldn't write or that I wasn't good at writing. And sometimes that gets articulated also through like effort, you know, like if there were spelling mistakes or mistakes in grammar, it was like, I was lazy or I hadn't checked it thoroughly enough or I hadn't read the text carefully enough. And so there's something about being bad at writing or bad at the some core components of like professional academic work or that I had had internalized and I didn't have a diagnosis either until I was like early on in my PhD.

And it was due to the kind of care of my supervisors at the time, who I think maybe it's because I was writing for them more regularly, rather than undergrad maybe writing an essay for an exam once a term or at the end of the year, that there was something about the regularity of writing with them or submitting writing to them where they suggested that this is something that I pursue getting a diagnosis or thinking about if I had kind of dyslexia. And that, again, I recognize also the approaching thinking through sensation, visuality, sound or things in addition to text or approaching text in a different way. I think because I work on performance or with performance, that has been my way, that has helped me kind of go through, or has helped me with some of the areas that still feel like I struggle with. And then the other thing I think that has been a challenge is questions of time and effort and the sense that it takes longer or that it's slower.

Marcus (14:55.117)

practice, writing and reading us lower practices, which can be really generative and enables like other connections to form, but when there's a deadline or, you know, when, marketing is due or when, or when you feel that like success in academia is based on a capacity to produce a certain amount of work or overproduce to produce loads and loads of work. I feel like those are challenges. Yeah, challenges.

Chella Ward (15:27.245)

There's so many different ways that I want to respond to what you've just said. I'm thinking especially about your very interesting point about laziness. And I'm thinking about the ways that, you know, laziness as a concept is often ableist, it's often racist, it's often gendered. It's one of these concepts that carries within it a normative sense about what can be done in a particular given time. So when we accuse somebody of laziness,

That's often as a result of structural ableism because we're often saying you didn't accomplish something within the normative frame of time that we had given you to accomplish it. And by normative there, mean the amount of time that it's assumed that somebody with a body or mind presumed to be normal would have accomplished

something within. I'm thinking about how that is sort of one of the first things to come out of the disability justice movement.

is the rejection of what becomes known as normative time, right? These kinds of normative expectations about what should happen within particular chunks of time. And that, you know, has huge consequence for anybody who's in a historical discipline, because that's also the way that the way of telling the time across the history of the world will begun to be rethought. I suspect I should not leap into that huge area of interest about which I could talk for a very, very long time because I'd much rather hear from both of you.

So I wonder whether we, to keep me from jumping into that abyss around what's known in disability justice movements as Crip Time by analogy with Queer Time or Woman Time or other non-normative ways of framing time, to stop me from leaping onto that very interesting topic, I wonder whether we might talk a little bit about the question of diagnosis because you both raised, you know, this idea of having been diagnosed relatively late, you know, in a sense, either for you, Ronnais, during your undergraduate degree and you, Marcus, you know, as part of your graduate work during your PhD. I wonder whether you might, and it's okay if you would rather not talk about it, but I wonder if you might tell the listeners a little bit about what that was like, whether that was helpful to have a diagnosis, because I think this is something that,

Chella Ward (17:42.999)

People often have very different sorts of feelings around. Marcus, do you want to start?

Marcus (17:50.71)

Yeah, it's a complicated question and it brings up like a complex set of feelings. I think because even having access to that diagnostic process was in a way contingent on being in a... or I felt like the speed at which I was able to access it, how I was able to kind of receive it and the ways that it was then kind of implemented was partly because I was on a graduate program at the University of Oxford. And there was also a member of staff there.

So I actually received the diagnosis through the kind of staff disability service that was working there. What it really enabled me to think more about was dyslexia, as, was dyslexia the many different ways that one could be dyslexic. And I don't think I would have been able to understand how, you know, that there was a kind of, that I was encountering a lot of, I was getting exhausted, I was, you know, missing deadlines, or I was kind of negotiating all of those pressures, that actually there was a, there was a way to make a structural critique of why that was happening. And that the diagnosis helped.

in a sense to say, okay, I can now articulate this along the terms of this is to do with the neurodivergence. This is to do with a kind of like disabling structure or debilitating structure of the university around capacity and thinking and time and forgetting or making mistakes. But at the same time, again, it can be quite medicalizing.

And or a kind of kind, can be quite a you end up you can end up in a kind of medical framework for thinking around neurodivergence or on or neuro queer ways of engaging with writing or thought or queer and Crip ways of writing with writing and thinking and interacting with others. And that can be that can be limiting. And there's a lot of paperwork, bureaucratic paperwork and having to articulate yourself within a kind of still potentially limiting set of frameworks. Yeah, so those are some of the experiences.

Chella Ward (20:24.205)

I think a lot of what you say there kind of echoes some of the larger critiques around what's known as the medical model, The presumption that the medical model is sort of the only way to embrace disability learning difference. And by the medical model, what I'm implicitly making the comparison with is the social model. And these are two models that are used in disability justice and disability studies to frame disability. The medical model is usually critiqued because it's almost like a kind deficit model in that it presumes that there's some form of deficit in the body or the mind of the disabled person and that that has to be sort of remedied by things that are called cure or therapy, for example, versus the social model which would explain disability as a consequence of societies and ableist environments. So it's interesting that you managed to find a way for diagnosis to sort of give you language to talk about those environments, right? Those structural ableisms and the way that those played a role in your experience. Is there anything, Ronnais, that you'd like to add to that conversation about diagnosis?

Ronnais (21:40.491)

I also agree that it's very complex and I think it's a hard thing to process. I think there's like a lot of mixed emotions. So for me, I remember feeling quite angry at some points because my dyslexia was very obvious in school and I was constantly dismissed. I was constantly criticised for stuff that I couldn't help. I got to the point where I believed that there was no way that I could be dyslexic because teachers had constantly told me that I wasn't. So I think I was quite angry how long it took me to get diagnosed and maybe I could have had more kind of help and intervention when I was a lot younger because I think dyslexia affects my self-esteem quite a lot. So I have imposter syndrome in academia.

But I think a lot of it stems from kind of the work culture and kind of how much emphasis is put on productivity and reading and I struggle with that. So I think I have a lot of kind of issues around self-esteem that might not have been the case if I was diagnosed a lot earlier, but then again, it was a very positive experience. It kind of gave me the vocabulary to express what I was struggling with.

It gave me kind of reasons why I was struggling and it helps me kind of understand myself better and I can give myself grace kind of when I'm struggling. So yeah, I don't kind of beat myself up as much when I don't know, I might make up a Latin word or kind of struggle with the spelling of stuff. So it is very helpful, but I think it's a lot to kind of take in and there's lots of different emotions.

Chella Ward (23:36.94)

Yeah, I think it's so interesting that you've both talked about it in a way as providing a sort of language to be able to sort of speak back to something almost. And I think that that's a really interesting connection between what the two of you have said. I wonder whether you could tell me a little bit about the way that dyslexia affects the work that you do, if at all. mean, you we all make situated choices as researchers, right, in terms of the work that we do. sometimes, I mean, we've had guests on this podcast who will say, well, I chose to work on disability in the ancient world, for instance, because I was interested in seeing whether the experiences that I'd had were reflected, you know, across this kind of long history.

And whereas for other people, that's relationship between their own positionality and their work, even though it's of course there, it might be less visible or visible in different ways, or it might be expressed in different sorts of connections. So I'm wondering whether, are there any ways that dyslexia has affected the work that you do? Ronnais, I'm going to start with you, if that's all right.

Ronnais (24:47.731)

Yeah, so I think I slightly touched on this before, but because of my dyslexia, I'm a very visual learner and I think and remember stuff in pictures. So I think as a result of my dyslexia, I'm naturally drawn to archaeology and material culture. And whilst I do enjoy ancient literary sources, I'm very interested in the physical remains. So a lot of my work during my university degrees have been focused on material culture and archaeology. And I actually really enjoy doing physical excavations at archaeological sites. It's like a nice break to have from reading and writing. I've been lucky enough to work at sites such as Vindolanda, Nora in Sardinia, Filarinovi and Villa di Taito in Italy. And I found that physical excavation suits me really well because a lot of it relies on visual analysis rather than language based analysis. So in archaeology, you might be looking at the different colours of soil or the different shapes of seeds and bones. And I think because of my dyslexia and that I'm a very visual learner, I'm actually very good at doing archaeology.

Chella Ward (26:07.831)

think that's a really great way to put it. And I'm wondering, Marcus, whether that might sort of chime with some of your, because I know your work a little bit, I know that it's to do with bodies and embodiment, and I'm sort of wondering whether that might chime with some of the ways that dyslexia might have affected your interests.

Marcus (26:25.517)

Absolutely. think working through or thinking about bodies and embodiment and patterns of embodied relation or the ways that bodies relate to the environment around them in performance or through performance in live art has been a way, has kind of driven my research. That's what I'm really interested in when I write or when I'm when I'm producing research. It also has kind of given me a way of approaching texts to again think perhaps about the embodied process of reading or to engage with texts as materials. That's been really helpful. the, Ronnais, when you're talking about like

the seeing images when you're reading. I recognize that in my experience of like working with both literary texts, but also like theoretical texts. there's something about the like, yeah, material of theory that really makes me excited. And recently, I've been thinking about it a lot more in terms of like how I write or how I approach writing. And I think there's something there.

Because I also am really drawn to kind queer theory or work through queer theory and decolonial theory, that there's something about bad writing or writing badly as in like resisting the ways that we are kind of trained or disciplined to kind of write or the things that we're kind of trained or disciplined to like think about or think with. Yeah, I'm trying to explore a little bit more.

And like, what does it mean to like, to kind of collapse the like academic form of an essay or an argument in a way that you could reveal something else? And so yeah, I'm like also informed here by people like Fargo Nissim Tabaki, who's written on like resisting craft, when the academic craft is being used to support, you know, programs of colonialism or the ongoing kind of genocide in Palestine, like there's something about, like institutions are, we're currently in a moment where institutions are really at work, or we're being asked to of remove the wrinkles or the difficulties from our writing or our thinking. Yeah.

Chella Ward (29:09.389)

I think it's so interesting to think about what is essentially structural ableism, that is the imposition of normative ideas about what makes good writing, what makes good reading, what makes good academic practice, to think about that in connection with some of the ways that academic institutions support ongoing injustice. You mentioned the genocide of the Palestinian people, other kinds of colonial and neo-colonial injustices that are lent weight to, you know, by not just universities, but by the idea of certain kinds of normative academic thinking. It's really interesting that you make that connection between the imposition of norms onto researchers and the way that colonial norms are exported around the world through certain kinds of Eurocentric academic thought as well.

I think that's really important and kind of ties back to what I was thinking when I was listening to you, Ronnais, which was that really you're sort of opening up the practice of what it means to read and write, know, by reading and writing in these kind of differently embodied ways in such a way as to actually start to offer ways of reading and writing becoming more just, more equitable, more approachable practices for so many people. So like all liberation movements, this is not just about reading with dyslexia or writing with dyslexia. It's actually about imagining a much more just world for academic thinking and well beyond academic thinking too. I wonder whether, so one of the reasons that we initially thought about setting up this series of podcasts was because

We wanted precisely to start driving towards that more just world for academic thought within the study of the ancient world specifically. And so as part of that, we wanted to have more conversations about disability. We wanted people to know more, but we also wanted people to be able to understand in their teaching practice or any of the other

kinds of practices that they're involved in as part of the community around the ancient world.

We wanted them to know what they could do to support learners with disabilities. I wonder whether to help us think through that, I wonder whether you might tell us a little bit about what sorts of challenges or sometimes called barriers you might have faced within the study of the ancient world and some of the ways that you might have overcome them. Marcus, can I come to you first to say a little bit about those barriers and challenges?

Marcus (31:54.294)

Absolutely. Thank you. I think that, again, this thinking about the more just, more equitable way of studying and thinking and working in academia is completely related to this. And I think we've touched on it before, this question of time, this assessment of like, of what is a normative amount of that should be produced by bodies of structures of assessment but also like the classroom itself can be really spaces where yeah can be quite hard spaces to access for multiple reasons. mean like very practically one thing that I've found has helped is like understanding that that can actually be many stages to producing an essay that like don't begin with writing but that planning an essay can involve

And this came from both of my supervisors actually from Fiona Macintosh and Felix Budelmann both suggested that I begin writing by arranging images on the page or by producing a of PowerPoint presentation or by talk and then by talking. So that's often how I'll work is that I'll arrange images in quotes and then I'll speak through that kind of the constellation of those things and writing will be produced either through that speaking being transcribed by speech to text software or by like taking notes and then kind of repeating, re-repeating. But yeah, I mean, I kind of struggled to articulate it earlier when I began answering this question, but like the university is an incredibly like debilitating or it can be a really debilitating structure.

The amount of work that we're asked to produce the amount that we like expect or demand from one another, the like hours that we work. And I'm informed really by Jasbir Puar's work on like the right to main when she's looking at Israel, Palestine, but also connecting it to broader structures of debility that it's exhausting, it's extracting and exhausting those of us who work within it, but also come to study in universities. And so there's a radical possibility in rethinking that work in collaboration with many others who are in struggles for justice and liberation around kind of access of race, class and gender, like to have a kind of decolonial CRIP and queer university approach to education means like dealing with or working together to reroute how we're being exhausted by the university.

Chella Ward (34:54.829)

I love that idea of the possibility of another university, right? Of a university that's really thought through from the perspective of, you know, these kinds of justice-focused critiques, whether they're disability-focused, racial equality-focused, or, you know,

other forms of justice. Ronnais, are there particular kinds of challenges that you have faced or overcome that you want to tell us about?

Ronnais (35:20.043)

So I agree with Marcus and what we were saying before about kind of time constraints and how much longer it takes for dyslexic people to do kind of simple tasks like every single word takes us so much longer to read and it just kind of everything adds up. So like we don't just need extra time in exams but we need extra time for every single task that we kind of carry out.

And the only way that I've actually managed to get through my undergraduate and my masters is by working kind of really extreme long hours in the evenings, early mornings and over the weekend. And I found out that just kind of leads to burnout. So I think it's really important that dyslexic people can get extensions to kind of, kind of counteract the burnout.

I found in St Andrews when I was doing my masters that when I actually asked for my first ever extension and it was on my disability support plan, I just kind of got completely dismissed and got told that I shouldn't be able to apply for an extension based on that ground. So I had to kind of really fight to get an extension. So just making basic extension requests for people with dyslexia a lot more accessible, I think is a really helpful thing. And then on top of the time issues that I face, a lot of my issues are related to learning ancient languages or even modern languages.

I just don't have enough time in the day to dedicate the time I need to learn Latin or ancient Greek or modern languages fluently. The only way that I actually got to an intermediate level in Latin during my undergraduate was to actually stay up till 3am most days to revise the Latin grammar and then the vocab and I was really struggling to keep up with the workload. I found during my PhD that I'm no longer putting the pressure on myself to kind of keep up with language learning and work but I think there are ways that you can kind of help dyslexic classicists learn and engage with languages a lot easier.

I found from my experiences that open book exams or portfolios in Latin was really helpful. The assessment format kind of took the pressure off memorising lots of grammar and vocab off by heart and I could learn stuff at a slower pace. When I struggled because of my dyslexia in the Latin online exams, I could just look things up in a dictionary or an online lemmatiser.

and it made the whole process of learning a language much less stressful. then secondly, language resources such as PowerPoints and class notes from university language modules should be made accessible to all students who want to learn a language but aren't formally taking the class. So it allows dyslexic classicists to learn at their own pace and they don't feel pressured to keep up in class, which is often too fast paced for dyslexic learners. That's an approach that I'm actually using at the minute to learn Italian during my PhD. And I think also allowing students to take language modules on the side of their degree means that it doesn't negatively affect the outcome of degree

classifications, which I think was a major source of anxiety for me. I was worried that if I took Latin in my final year as an undergrad, it would like bring my degree classification down because I struggle with it so much. So I think just kind of removing that anxiety really helps.

Chella Ward (39:14.583)

think what's so helpful about what you've said there is how practical all of your suggestions really are. I there are a number of things that you've said there that those of us who teach either in higher education institutions or even perhaps in schools can immediately implement some of those things that you suggested. And I especially liked the way that you brought up the question of really needing to take the pressure out of language learning, right?

It's not that you don't want to learn languages, ancient or modern. It's that you want to find ways to learn languages without that pressure of languages being marked against your degree. And that seems to me to be a of equality issue, not just for people who live with dyslexia, but also a way of confronting the kind of persistent class socioeconomic issues that come up in classics, especially around prior access to Latin and even to Greek, which often, particularly in the UK, tends to be something that you have more likelihood of having had access to if you went to a high performing or a free paying school, for example.

So some of the things that you're suggesting there, and this has been a sort of through line in our conversation, hasn't it? Some of the things that you're suggesting there that would be helpful for students with dyslexia around taking the pressure out of Latin learning would also, I think, be helpful for other groups of students who are marginalised by certain sort of normative patterns in the university. So that's really helpful, thank you. There's so much more that I want to talk to you both about, but I do have kind of half an eye on the time. So I wonder whether I should draw this to a close, perhaps with my final question, which is, what is one thing, and I suppose I'll ask you to be sort of relatively brief in answering this question, because sometimes when you ask people one thing, they give you 10 things.

What is one thing that you would want people within this discipline. So it could be students, it could be other students with dyslexia, it could be teachers, other kinds of staff members, university support staff. It could be anybody who has any kind of interaction with the ancient world. What's something that you would want that person to take away from the conversation about dyslexia that we've had here? If they could only take one thing, what do you think? What's important for you that they take away? And Ronnais, I'm going to start with you, if that's all right.

Ronnais (41:37.643)

So it is something that kind of makes my life a lot more difficult and puts me at a huge disadvantage to everything that I do. But equally, I wouldn't be here without it today. And it has a lot of positives as well, such as big picture thinking, pattern recognition, resilience and thinking outside the box. It is a really positive thing as well as a negative thing.

Chella Ward (42:09.303)

I think that's really come out really strongly of what you've said, know, throughout our conversation that this is also something that gives you strategy, that dyslexia is also something that gives you strategies to do things that perhaps other people who don't have dyslexia perhaps couldn't do or couldn't do as easily or couldn't do in the way that you can do. So I think that's really worth insisting on. Thank you. What about you, Marcus? What's one thing that you would want people to take away?

Marcus (42:35.137)

This is really hard. I think that, or I really resonated with what Ronnais, you were saying in the answer to the last question. There's something about the way that, it's like the pressure that's put on people and bodies coming into institutions, or the way that institutions, higher education institutions interact with those bodies is one of incredible pressure.

And so it's, think there is a, if there was one thing that people took away from this episode would be how to undo or dismantle some of that pressurizing and how to treat each other with, and Ronnais used this word earlier as well, with a kind of grace and a care that's about acknowledging that we were we're all going to make mistakes and errors and to be imperfect. And there's a way of embedding that that kind of radical imperfection in what we do. And that could open up the ways that we view each other as as valuable or not or less valued kind of collaborators, colleagues, students lecturers, members within the organization. But that in itself feels quite a lot than some of the kind of material things that I think would be necessary to like transform the institution itself. Because we really encounter it at every level in interviews, for jobs, in the job market, in the ways that, yeah, institution, yeah, institutions run. So I don't really think I've given you one thing.

Chella Ward (44:36.183)

Well, I think you've given us a very clearly articulated kind of aspiration, right? Something to drive towards. I love that idea of radical imperfection. I'm gonna use that phrase an awful lot, I think. And I was also thinking as you both were speaking about this question about care and about community. And what for me has really come out of this conversation is a question that is something like, how do we as a community better recognize all of the various unique ways and better value all of the various unique ways in which everybody is engaging with this discipline. What can we do to stop being focused on standardizing or normalizing or pressurizing around grading and these kinds of things, which are all sort of processes of imposing norms on something. How do we stop that from being the driving force? and start to find our driving force in what you, have called this kind of care. And I think, Renee, you used the term grace, this idea that everybody is bringing a unique perspective and way of doing things that's really, really valuable. I don't have the answers to that question. I don't think we're going to find it in the few seconds that remain of this episode. But I do want to say a huge thanks to both of you, Marcus and Renee, for your time.

And I want to say a huge thanks also to all of our listeners for listening. This has been an episode of Talking Disability from the Classics podcast. Thank you so much, everybody.