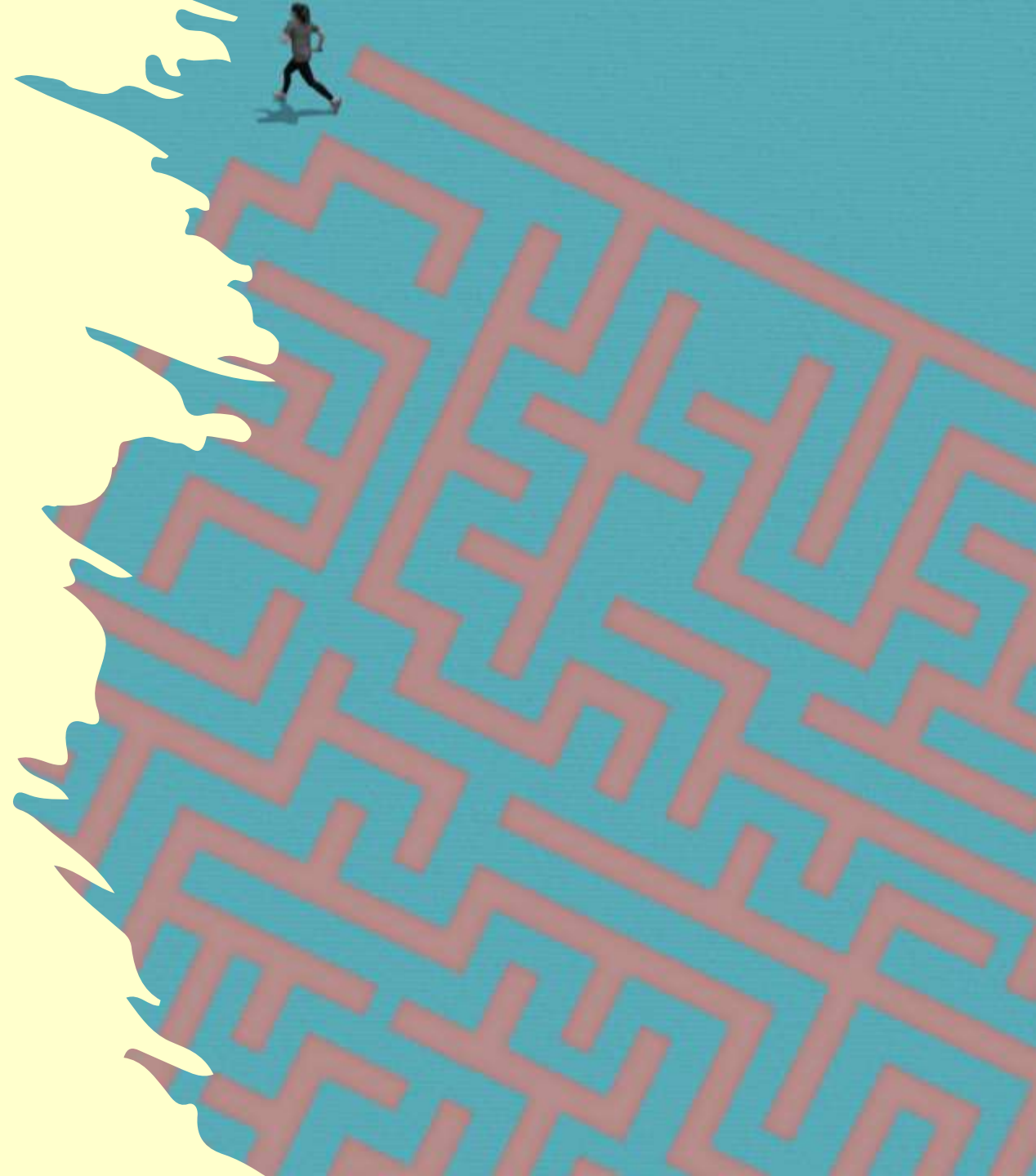


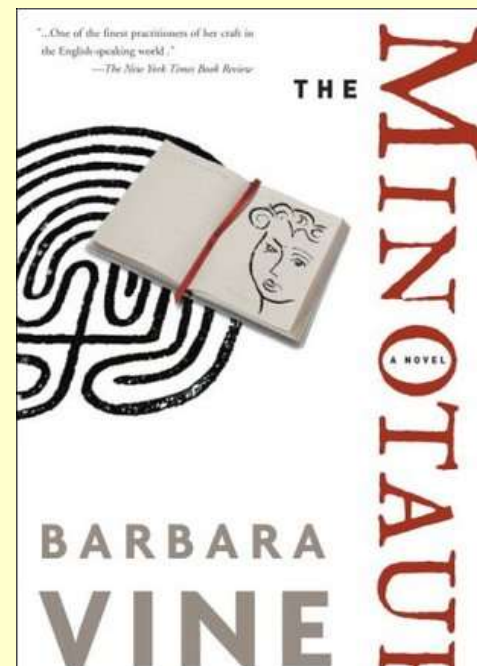
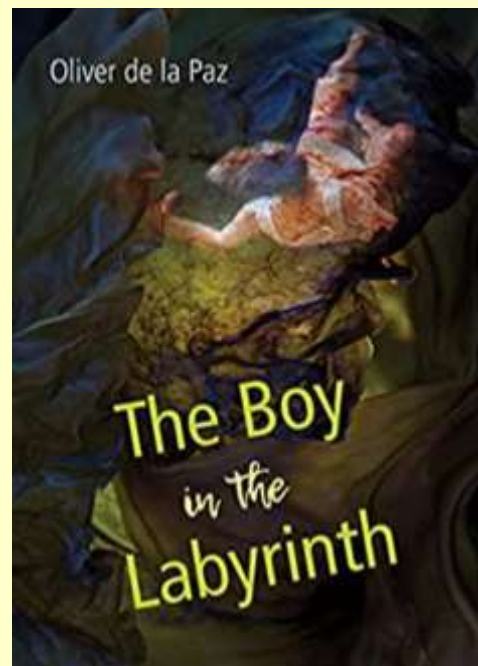
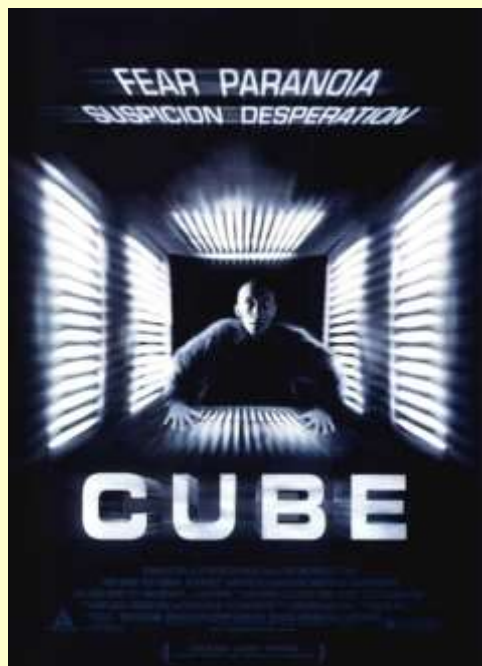
Minotaurs, monstering and the representation of autism in popular culture

Cora Beth Fraser

The Open University

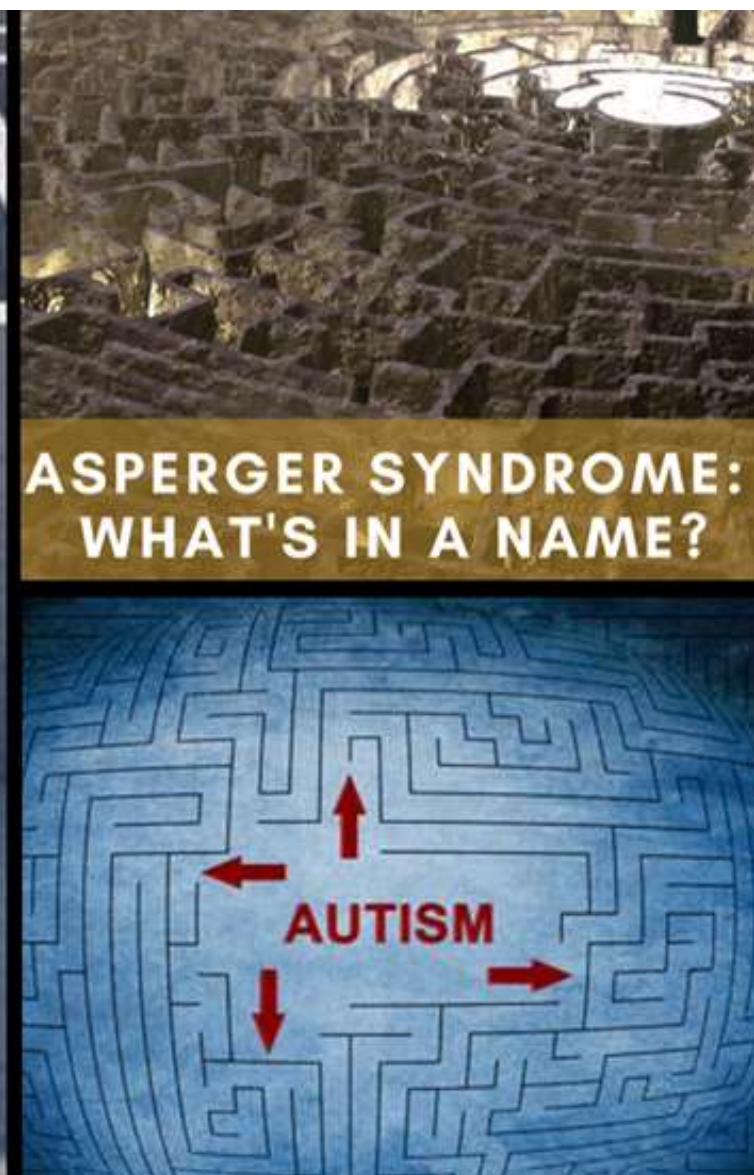
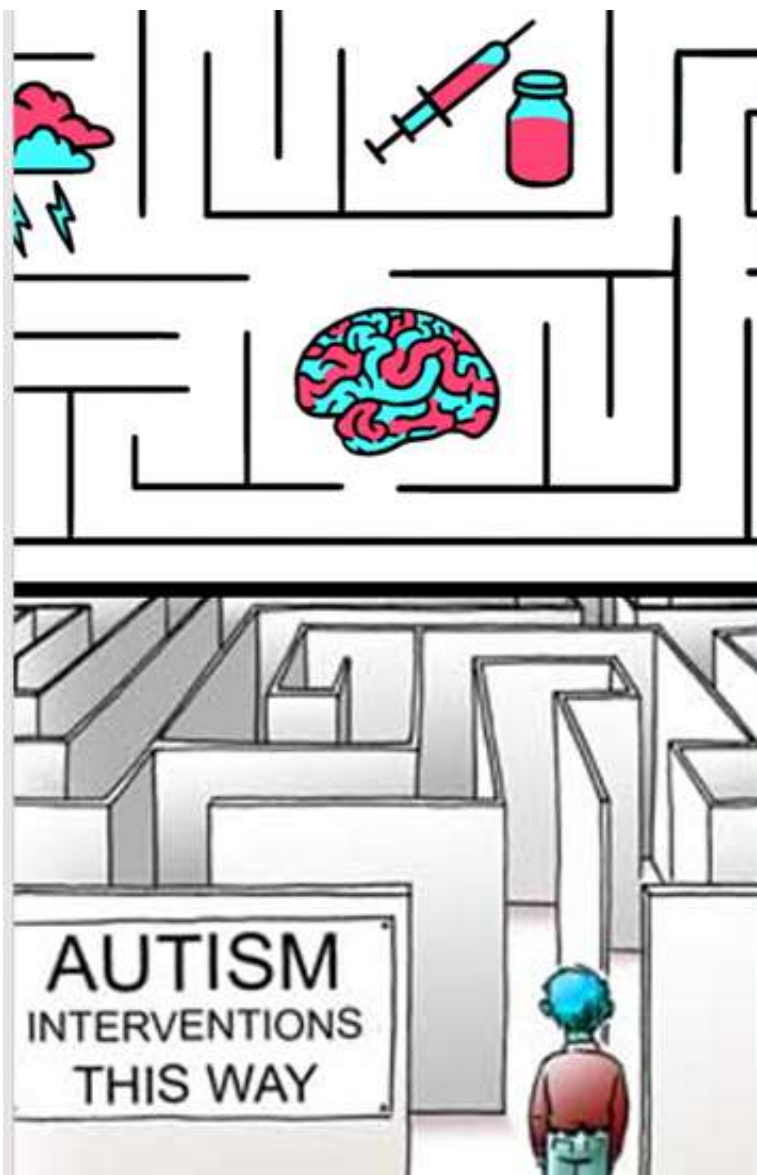
CoraBeth.Fraser@open.ac.uk





How and why do people turn to the Labyrinth to make sense of autism?





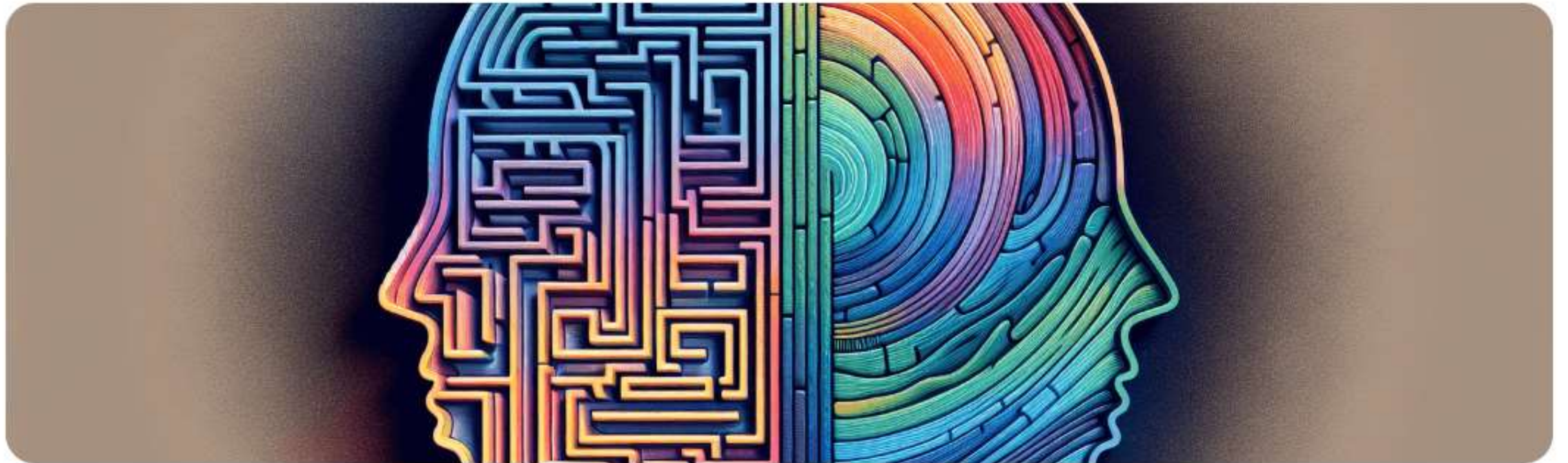


Sociopath vs. Autism - What Sets Them Apart?

Unveiling the distinctions: Sociopath vs. Autism. Unravel the complexities and understand the unique traits that set them apart.

By Brighter Strides ABA

June 19, 2024





Minotaur themes in popular culture

What are they, where are they, and why do they matter?

The Minotaur is...

- A child who becomes a monster
- A danger to other people's children
- Shaped by the desires and fears of his family
- Only partly human
- Different by his nature
- Male
- Unique
- Frightening
- Confined in a special prison
- Separated from peers
- The subject of stories told about him



SPARKSHOTS



float









PIXAR



pad



FLOAT gives us

- a frightening child
- a horrified audience
- parents who see the child as a danger to their own children
- a father who locks the child away
- restraint of a child (rocks, lead)
- a boy who is non-speaking
- a unique child who is socially isolated
- 'Why can't you just be normal?'
- difference as a source of family grief, distress and social alienation



FLOAT doesn't give us

- a child celebrated for special traits
- community acceptance
- a family who puts the child first
- positive dialogue
- an attempt to find other kids with similar characteristics
- acceptance of the child's communication needs
- a message for autistic children





for Alex

Thank you for making me a better dad.
Dedicated with love and understanding
to all families with children deemed different.

Creating a monster



Before taking this survey, in which ONE, if any, of the following ways had you FIRST heard about autism? (Please select the option that best applies. If you had not heard of autism before taking this survey, please select the "Not applicable" option)

Unweighted base	2159
Base: All UK Adults	2159
By word-of-mouth from a friend/ relative	13%
By knowing, or knowing of, someone with autism	25%
From an information leaflet, or similar	2%
From a professional who works with people with autism (e.g. doctor, social worker, care worker, teacher etc.)	7%
Through a charity that works with people with autism	1%
Through a documentary	14%
Through a fictional TV programme, film or book	3%
Other	5%
Don't know/ can't recall	21%
Not applicable - I had not heard of autism before taking this survey	0%
Prefer not to say	8%

From 'Aspie supremacy' to vaccines: The toxic autism politics of Trump's second administration

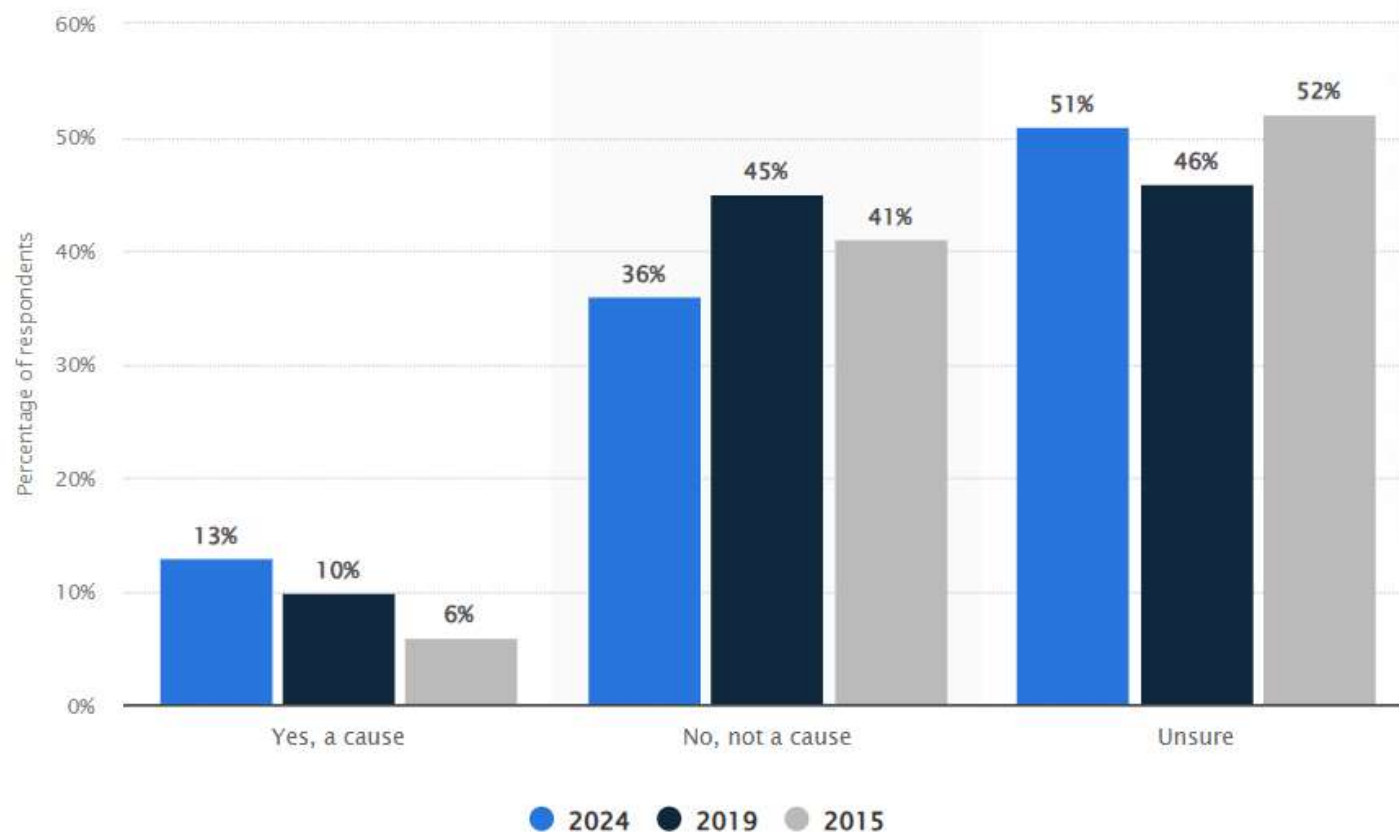
From Elon Musk to RFK, the right has developed an obsession with pushing two seemingly contradictory — but equally damaging — theories on autism, writes [Eric Garcia](#). And this obsession is bleeding into everything from Trump cabinet picks to policy



Thursday 12 December 2024 15:48 GMT • [Comments](#)



Distribution of U.S. adults who believed certain vaccines cause autism from 2015 to 2024



DOWNLOAD



PDF



XLS



PNG



PPT



Age group

18 years and older

Method of interview

Telephone interview

Supplementary notes

Original question: From what you have read or heard, do you personally think certain vaccines do – or do not -- cause autism in children, or are you unsure?

Figures may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.



Autistic woman wrongly locked up in mental health hospital for 45 years

Returning to the site of the hospital - which cannot be named to help protect Kasibba's identity - Dr Staite pointed out a hole in the fence. It had been cut out, she said, so Kasibba could watch people walking by from the outside space of the locked annex where she was held.

It is thought Kasibba, who is now in her 50s, was trafficked from Sierra Leone before the age of five. She lived in a children's home for a while, but that placement broke down and, by the age of seven, she was moved into the long-stay hospital.

Dr Staite said that staff had described Kasibba as "dangerous" and an "eye-gouger".

She discovered a single incident in the records which appeared to have led to these accusations of violence. Decades earlier, when Kasibba was 19 and before she was placed in long-term segregation, a fire alarm had gone off and the locked ward was being evacuated.

Kasibba was distressed and, in the confusion, she was approached by another patient. She scratched her, causing a cut to the other patient's eye.

"That was how the incident was talked about ever since, 'she's an eye gouger and she caused so much harm to this other person'," said Dr Staite. But "it just didn't ring true", she said, that a middle-aged woman with a learning disability who had lived in the hospital for decades could be that dangerous.

Mechanisms of cultural monsterring are:

- Happening now, and need to be understood urgently;
- Enacted through narrative;
- Sometimes well-meaning;
- Bound up in considerations of what is 'normal';
- A danger to personal freedoms;
- Often internalised.

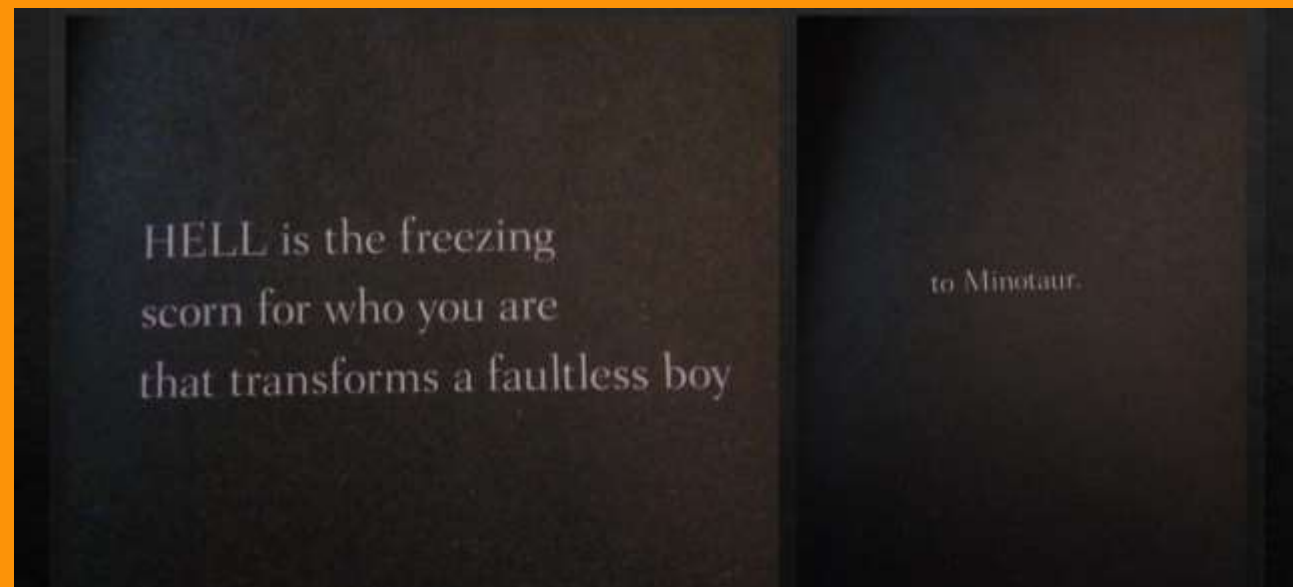
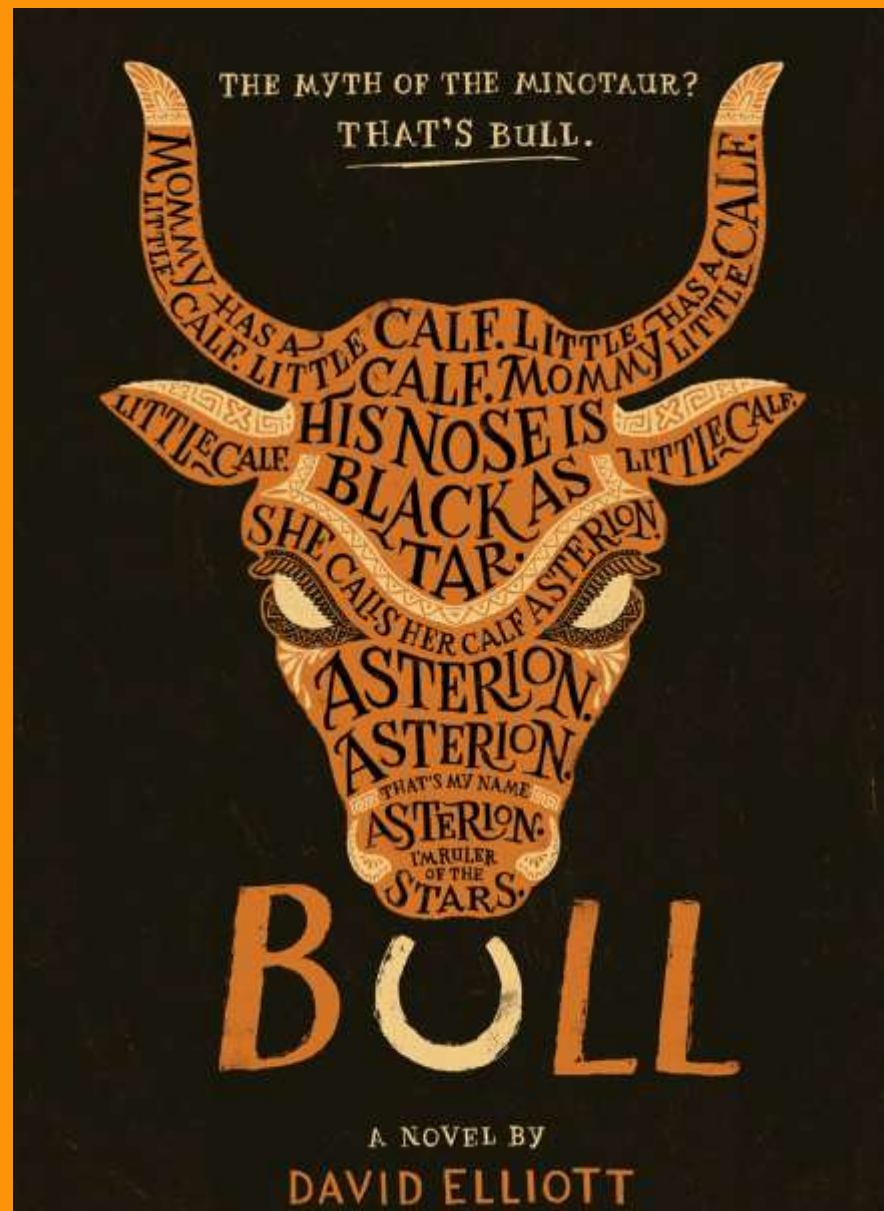
Maybe the Minotaur can help...





NAMING





Words we use

**Autistic
person**

Autism

Non-speaking

Verbal

**With learning
disabilities**

Words we don't use

Asperger's

Suffer

Deficit

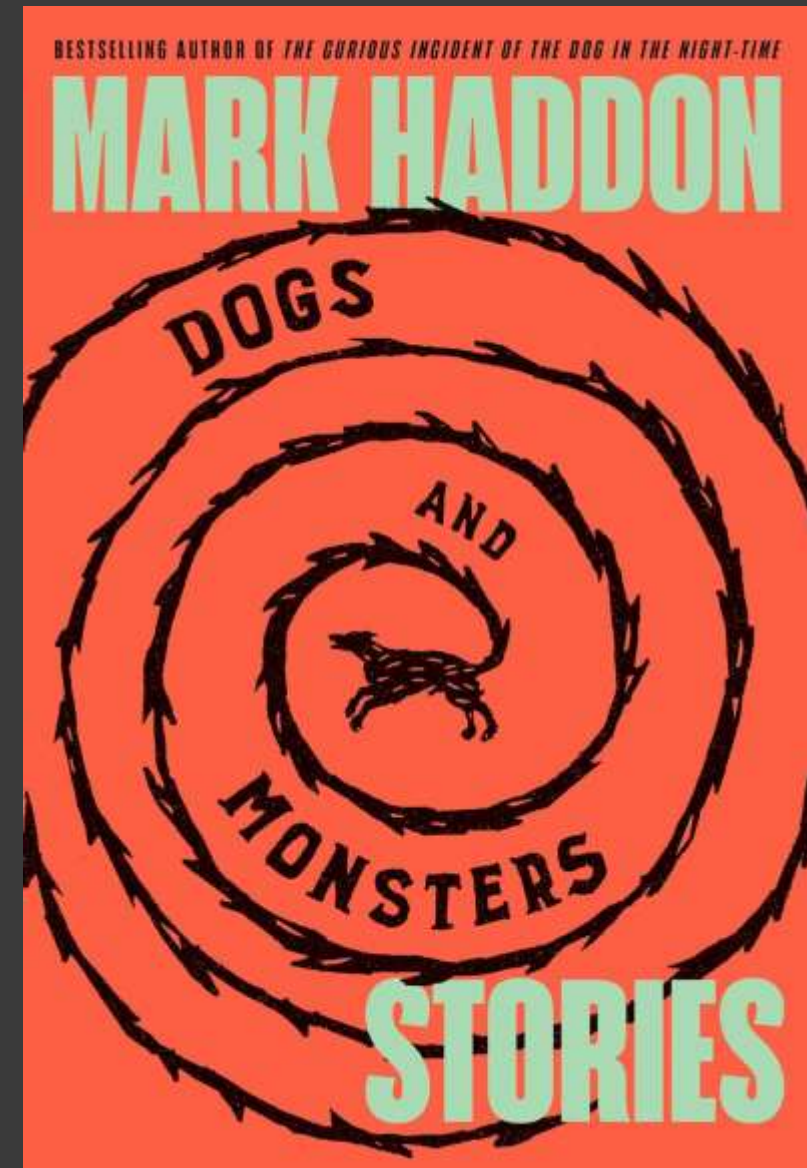
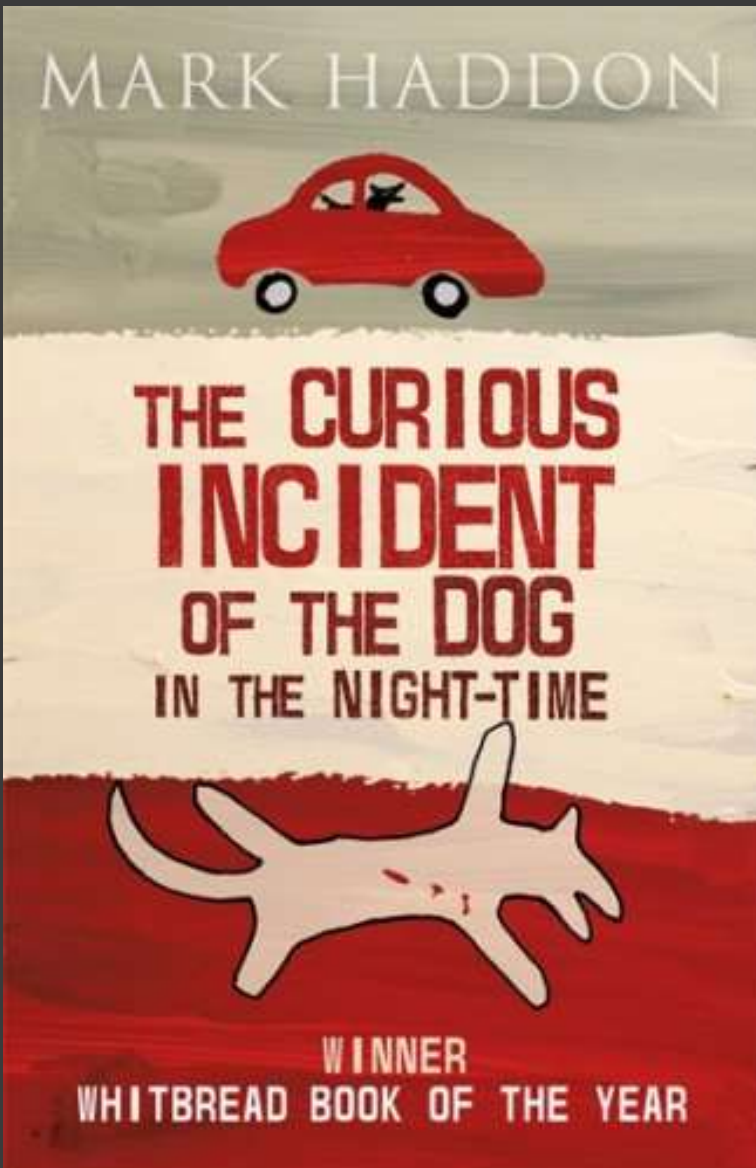
Disease

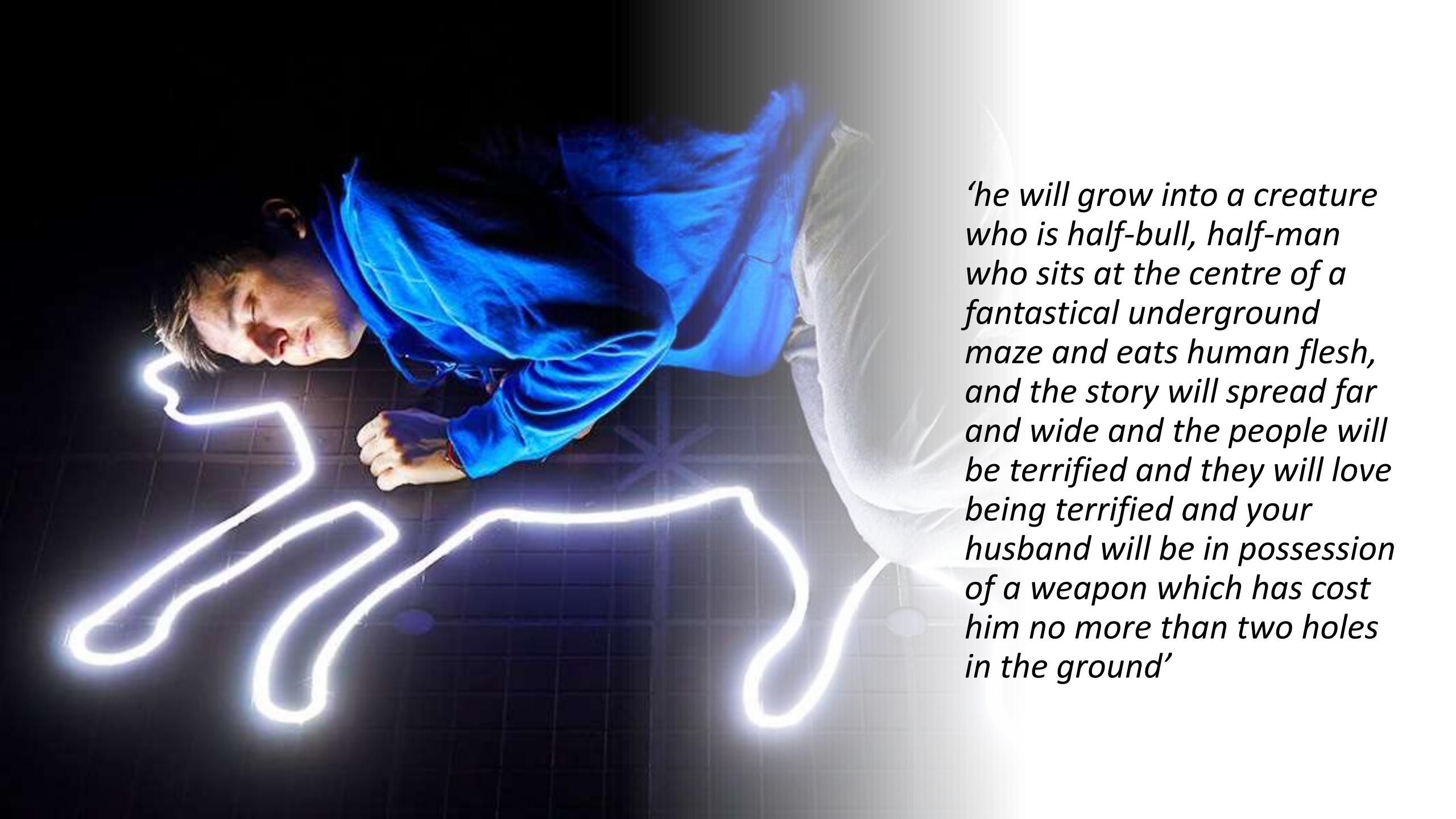
Disorder

**High/low
functioning**



NARRATIVE





'he will grow into a creature who is half-bull, half-man who sits at the centre of a fantastical underground maze and eats human flesh, and the story will spread far and wide and the people will be terrified and they will love being terrified and your husband will be in possession of a weapon which has cost him no more than two holes in the ground'



NARRATIVE AND VOICELESSNESS

THE VOICE OF THE MINOTAUR

The defendant has the floor.

Silence.

Does the defendant have anything to say in his own defense, or does he prefer to remain silent?

The Minotaur's voice has not been preserved anywhere in all of recorded antiquity. He doesn't speak, others speak for him. There where everything animate and inanimate refuses to shut up, where the voices of gods and mere mortals, of wood nymphs and heroes, of crafty Odysseuses and naïve Cyclops are constantly swarming, where even the despised Centaurs have the right to speak, only one remains silent. The Minotaur. No voice, no sound, no whimper or threat, nothing anywhere.

The Physics of Sorrow, Georgi Gospodinov





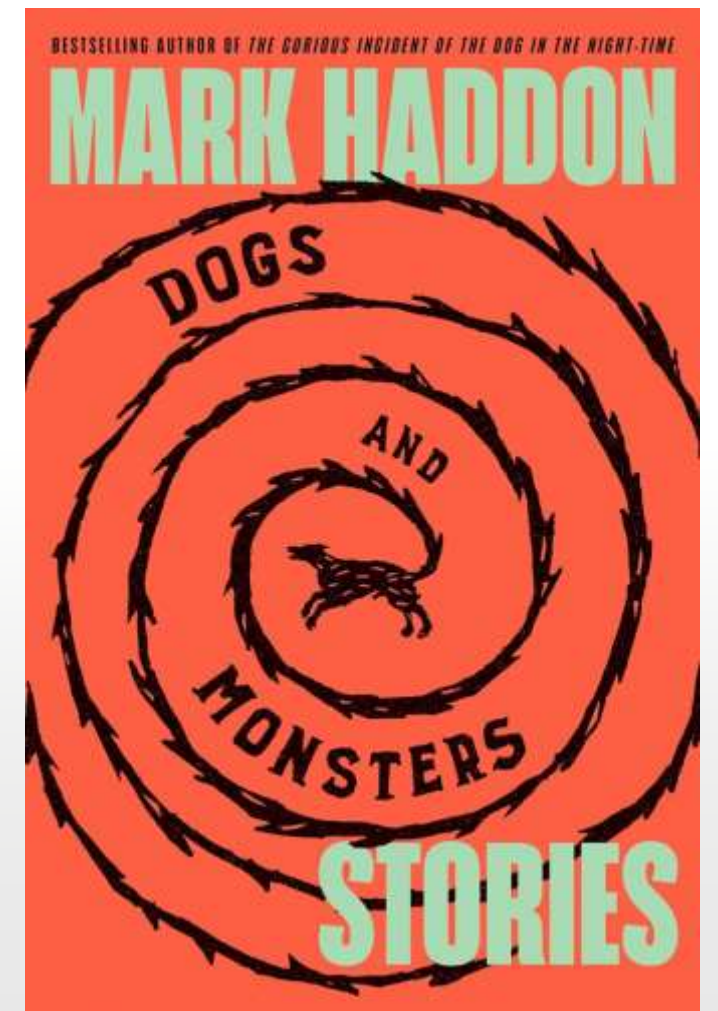
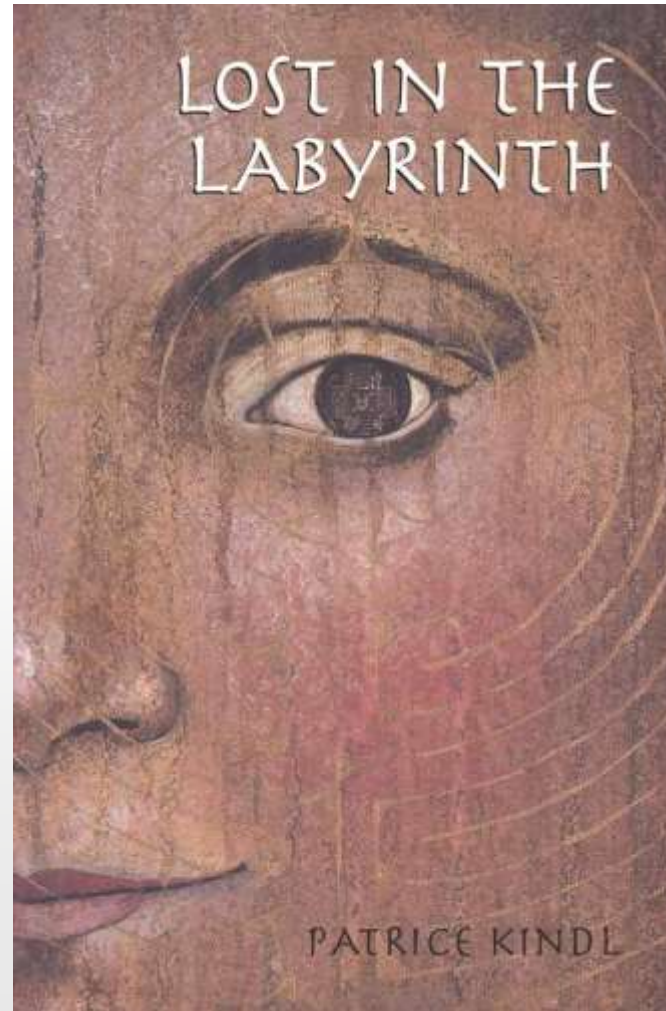
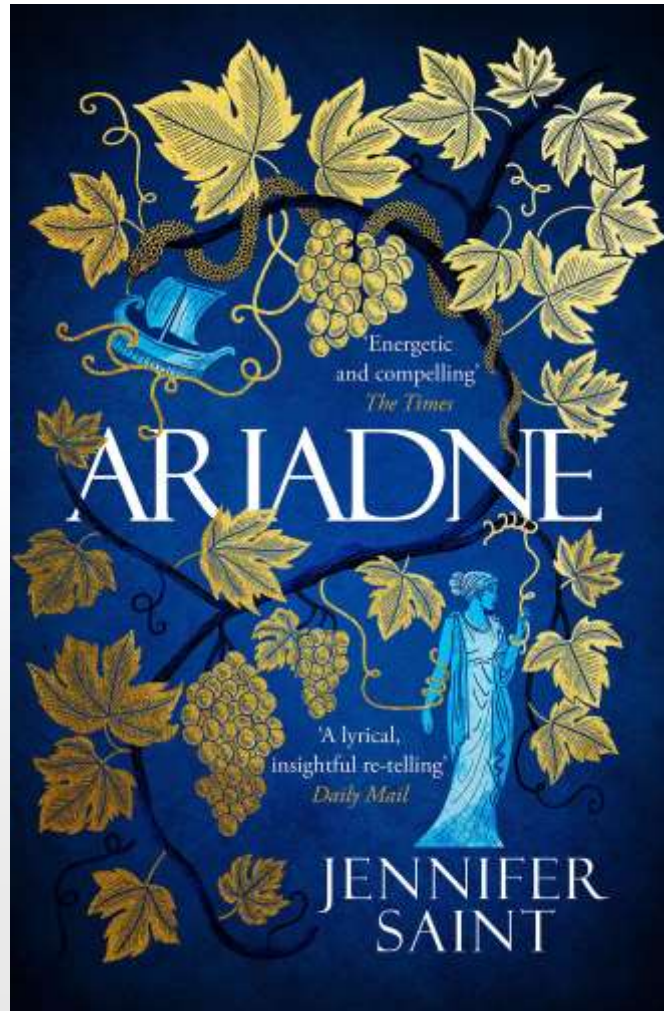
MISUNDERSTOOD MONSTERS

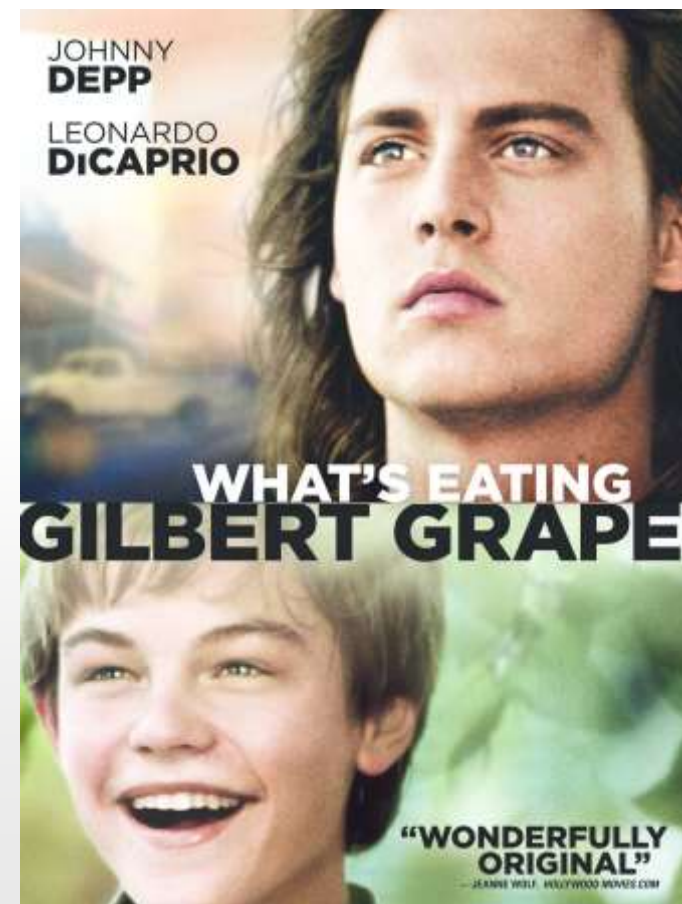


A Children's Story



FAMILY BURDEN STORIES







DEFINING
WHAT IS
HUMAN

Danny Dunn (2022),
'Accepting the
Monsters', *Autism in
Adulthood* 4.2

As a graduate student, I have completed 31 psychology courses thus far. I sit in a classroom, and I learn about human psychology. I learn that this practice of delineating humanity in exclusion is a foundational feature of how human minds heuristically process information. I also learn evermore lines that stand between myself and humanity.

"We can all recognize these six basic facial expressions."

"Adult humans cannot differentiate phonemes that do not exist in their native language."

"Human beings are constantly processing huge amounts of information about the social world around them, and incorporating that into their behavior."

I sit in the classroom, a monster learning about human psychology. In the moments after another line is drawn, I wonder what put me on the side of monsters this time. Sometimes the cause is obvious. I do not recognize those facial expressions because I am autistic. Sometimes I wonder without resolution, as I cannot figure out why my ears can differentiate non-native phonemes. Regardless of the source, the result is the same. I am once more reminded that I am not a human being.

Charlotte Amelia Poe
(2024), *Conversations
with Monsters: On
mortality, creativity,
and neurodivergent
survival*, Jessica
Kingsley Publishers.

I think a lot about monsters, about how they are shaped, how they growl with sharp tooth and claw, and how they are feared rather than afraid. It is difficult to love a monster, and as I look in the mirror, my faceblindness offering me newness at every glance, I see a certain kind of monster, and I wonder who first applied the label, and when it started to fit so well. Was it the children who yelled slurs across the playground, was it the adults who misconstrued and misunderstood until I started to twist and change and my eyes flashed and became slightly more inhuman? Does the inhumane make the inhuman? Did my trauma make me into something new, and if so, does that make me evil, or does it make me a survivor? Are all monsters just trying to survive, in their way...?



RECLAIMING THE MINOTAUR

THE
MINOTAUR
TAKES A
CIGARETTE
BREAK
STEVEN
SHERRILL

'Wry, melancholy,
beautiful . . . Genius'
Guardian

'Ugly, tender
and hopeful'
Independent

C

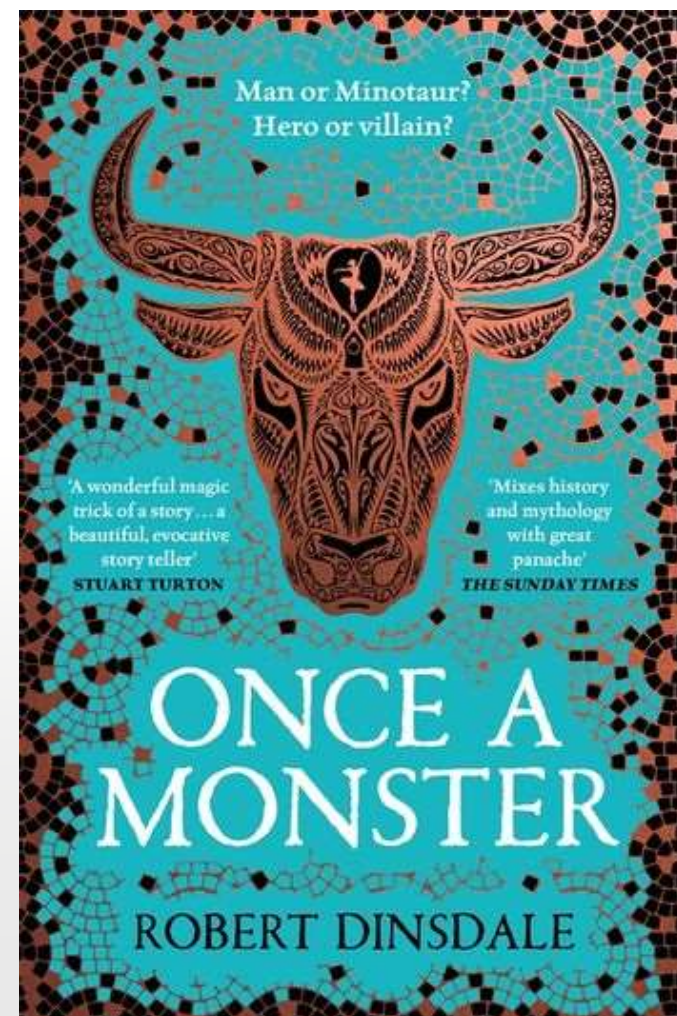
• THE CANONS •



EVERY OUTSIDER HAS STRENGTH

I AM THE
MINOTAUR
ANTHONY
McGOWAN

CARNEGIE MEDAL
WINNING AUTHOR



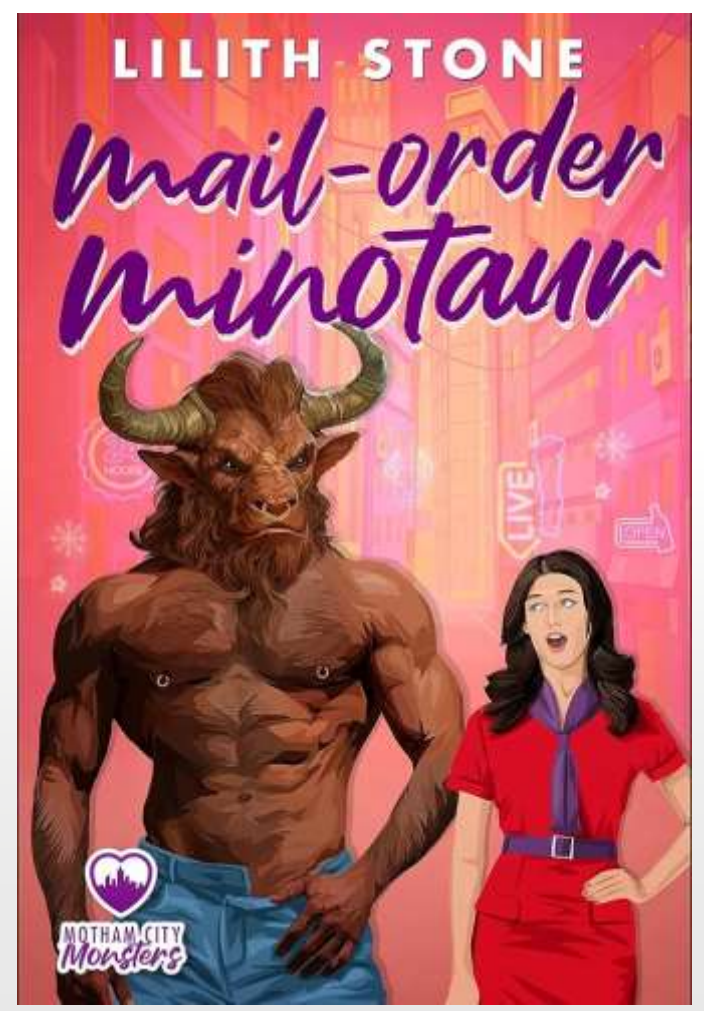
Man or Minotaur?
Hero or villain?

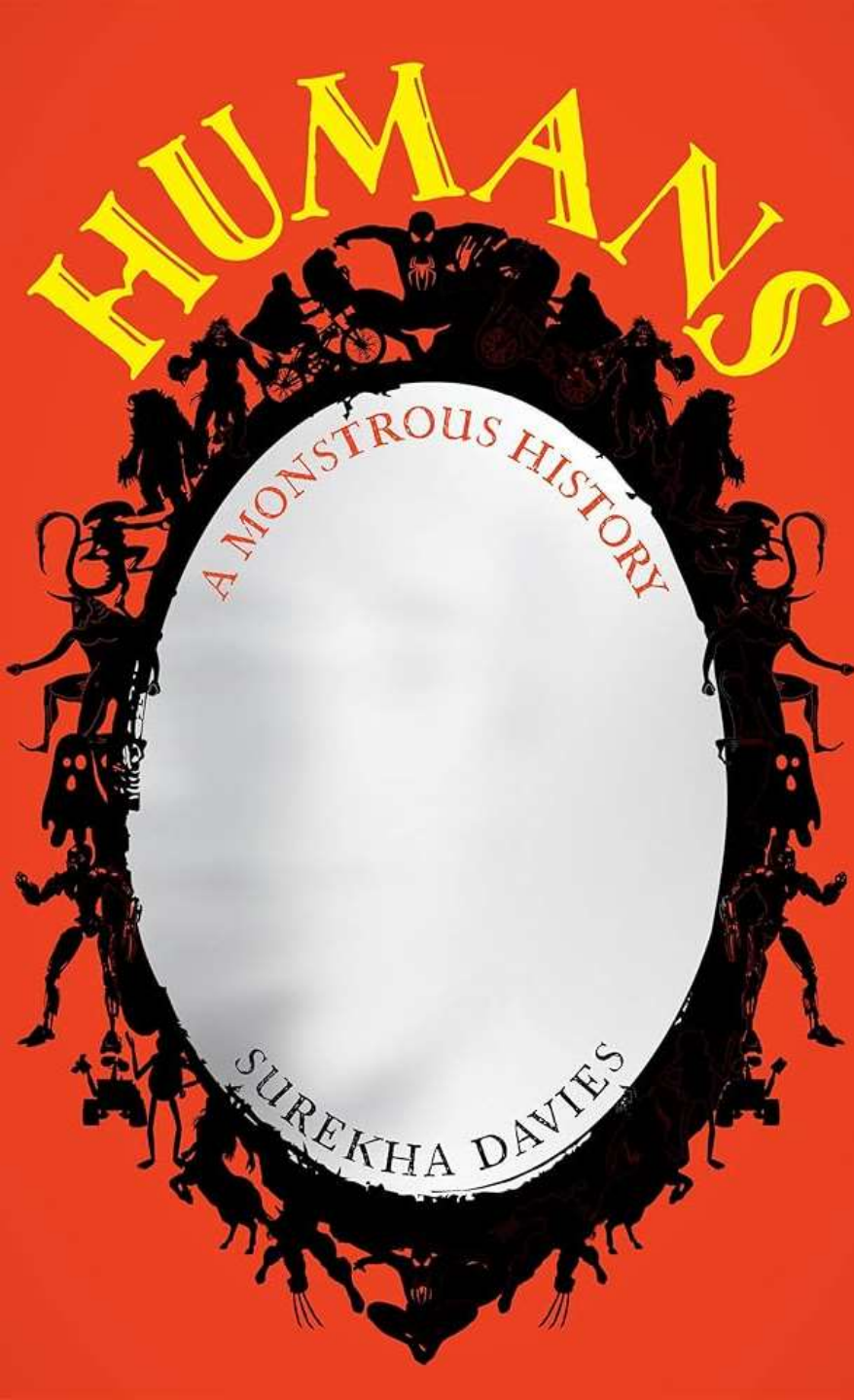
'A wonderful magic
trick of a story . . . a
beautiful, evocative
story teller'
STUART TURTON

'Mixes history
and mythology
with great
panache'
THE SUNDAY TIMES

ONCE A
MONSTER

ROBERT DINSDALE





The limits of normal

“Monster” itself can be a term of classification – a brusque, dismissive shorthand for “something I don’t know what to do with”. But monster-making is also the act of making a value judgment, a form of name-calling with great power. Communities identify groups and individuals as monstrous, as transgressing the limits of normal bodies, beliefs, or behavior, to give their abstract fears and ideas a physical form and a potential solution. Assumptions about norms and monsters lie at the heart of how societies define and classify people.



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<https://classicalstudies.support/>

<https://asterion.uk/>

DO GET IN
TOUCH!