UNIVERSITY OF TARTU
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THE REPRESENTATION OF A NEURODIVERSE MIND IN LITERATURE: MARK HADDON'S *THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME* (2003)

MA thesis

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“The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen.”

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

To all the beautiful and strong people who struggle with mental health difficulties, sometimes, throughout their lives, and those who live with them, understand them, and show compassion to them. May you always find peace, love, and strength to go on within you even when times are difficult, and always shine bright

ABSTRACT

This MA thesis analyses Mark Haddon's *the Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* employing Suzanne Keen's Theory of Narrative Empathy. It aims to find out to what extent fiction helps us understand and empathise with people whose minds work differently than ours, in the case of this book, neurodiverse people, with the help of tools designed to uncover how the process of understanding and empathy occurs in the mind of readers towards the characters in the book.

The thesis consists of an introduction, two core chapters and a conclusion. In the introduction, terms such as stigmatisation and neurodiversity movement are defined, Haddon's book introduced, some well-known examples of people with autism spectrum in real life and films, and some aspects of and the reason why Suzanne Keen's Theory of Narrative Empathy is chosen are discussed.

In the first core chapter, previous research and background information about autism fiction, autism in older texts and a brief discussion of Mark Haddon's view of the book is given. In the second chapter, the analysis of the book through the lens of Suzanne Keen's Theory of Narrative Empathy is provided. In the last section, the conclusion, the study is summarised and the importance and the contribution of the work to the field is highlighted.

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And I finish this with some quotes that I love very dearly:

"I wish it need not have happened in my time," said Frodo. "So do I," said Gandalf, "and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."

J.R.R. Tolkien – *The Fellowship of The Ring*

"It's like the great stories, Mr. Frodo, the ones that really mattered. Full of darkness and danger they were, and sometimes you didn't want to know the end because how could the end be happy? How could the world go back to the way it was when so much bad has happened? But in the end, it's only a passing thing this shadow, even darkness must pass. A new day will come, and when the sun shines, it'll shine out the clearer. I know now folks in those stories had lots of chances of turning back, only they didn't. They kept going because they were holding on to something. That there's some good in this world, Mr. Frodo, and it's worth fighting for."

J.R.R. Tolkien – *The Two Towers*

"Those who have a 'why' to live, can bear with almost any 'how'."

Viktor E. Frankl quoting Nietzsche – *Man's Search for Meaning*

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INTRODUCTION

People tend to fear what they do not understand, and fear tends to lead to stigmatisation. For long periods of time, mental health disorders have been feared and highly stigmatised. Refusing to rent a flat, not employing people with mental health disorders, isolating them at work or at school simply because they behave in a way that differs from the unspoken norm are some examples of public stigmatisation. As a result of this public stigma, individuals may self-stigmatise by internalising these negative beliefs which causes them to become even more isolated from the society. Eventually, people start to feel different and come to believe that they deserve to be treated differently.

Stigma has been defined differently within social, psychological, and economic research. I will use the psychological definition in this thesis. Link and Phelan (2001: 368-369) quote Crocker and colleagues (1998) who define stigma as an "/…/attribute or characteristic that conveys a social identity that is devalued in a particular context." Link and Phelan (2001: 368-369) make this process more explicit by showing that "stigma involves a label and a stereotype, with the label linking a person to a set of undesirable characteristics that form the stereotype." In other words, the person who has received the label comes to be perceived as the embodiment of the stigmatised characteristics associated with the label and stops being seen as an individual. These characteristics are applied in many contexts, for example in connection with race or class.

Mental illness also continues to be stigmatised in today's society. We see this in popular culture where villains often have mental illnesses or where people suffering from mental illness are represented as abnormal or even dangerous. These representations are not innocent. Corbett and Schmidt (2016: 92) argue that "public stigma, negative attitudes and beliefs about mental illness by the general population increases the challenges faced by people with mental illness. Additionally, if individuals internalize stigma, they may experience

diminished self-esteem and self-efficacy". Thus, it is important to pay attention to how mental illness appears in the media, fiction or popular culture.

Yet having a public conversation about this topic is also not that easy. Some people believe that starting a discussion about mental health disorders can also be in itself stigmatising, as this discussion may further cement the feeling that people who have them are not normal and that this increasing attention and labelling prevents people from honestly looking for help and from acquiring self-confidence in their interactions with other people. Thus, there is an increasingly active movement to stop labelling people with their diagnosis such as X disorder or Y disease or even using the word 'disability', as it emphasises the divergence of the people from what is defined as normal.

There is an increasing effort to use a more positive term "neurodiversity". The term was coined three decades ago by Australian autism and disabilities activist Judy Singer. (McGee 2012: 12) The main focus in this movement is to not stress what people with mental health issues lack, but what they can contribute by enriching our societies. This is parallel to our increasingly acceptance of diversity with regard to "race, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation" and "ought to apply to individuals whose neurological pre- dispositions are not typical" (McGee 2012: 12). The list of people who are covered by that label is quite extensive:

> The most vocal advocates for neurodiversity have been persons whom the medical, psychiatric, and educational domains would categorize as autistic or "on the autism spectrum." But the movement also includes those with neurological differences as varied as ADHD, Alzheimer's disease, bipolar disorder, dyslexia, dyspraxia, depression, epilepsy, Tourette's Syndrome, and any number of other psychiatric and neurological classifications. Like biodiversity, which is seen as critical to the health of ecosystems, advocates of neurodiversity assert that neurological variation is not only natural but is central to the success of the human species. (McGee 2012: 12)

As stated above, neurodiversity movement celebrates the different ways people's minds work. It also challenges the view that only rational, productive and self-sufficient individuals are valuable for our society. Although this movement initially started off to

embrace autism spectrum disorders (ASD) as a difference in nervous system rather than an abnormality, in time it included other "mental health disorders." Embracing people with a different nervous system develops empathy towards the neurodiverse and increases their social visibility. At the core of this movement lies the will to show that there is a richer array of human experience around us to force us to rethink the way in which we organise out societies. McGee (2012), as shown above, believes that accepting the richness of human experience strengthens human communities as it expands our sense of human experience.

Because neurodiversity covers a large number of people who are different from what is traditionally called normal, it is useful to narrow the focus. In this thesis I will focus on autism spectrum disorders (ASD), specifically Asperger's syndrome. Asperger's syndrome is generally known as a type of high-functioning autism: people with Asperger's still have difficulty with social skills but they do not have language delays and can in fact have good linguistic skills. However, Asperger's syndrome is no longer included in The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), issued by the American Psychiatric Association and widely used to diagnose mental health disorders. According to DSM-5 Asperger's is but one example on the broad spectrum of ASD which is characterised by neurodevelopmental issues, especially with regard to social interaction, communication and repetitive behaviours (CDC 2020). However, because the Asperger's syndrome has a long history in research and medical practice (it was first identified in 1944), as well as in popular culture, it continues to be used by parents and also in public discourse. Asperger's has also created a strong identity for some young people (Chambers et al 2020). Asperger's syndrome has got a lot of public attention, some of it because of the popularity of the novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* lying at the centre of this thesis. Thus, the term will also be both studied and used in this thesis as both part of the ASD and somewhat distinct from the broader category.

Lauffer (2004:587-588) explains ASD and its subcategories:

> The literature on autism has had an expanded scope to an ‘‘autistic spectrum of disorders’’. This includes several subtypes including low intelligence autism, high intelligence autism, and Rett’s and Asperger’s Syndromes. Essentially, Asperger’s individuals have high intelligence, no history of language delay, constricted areas of interest and problems in social interaction and interpreting social situations. /…/ the Asperger’s individual has skill in understanding inanimate objects (folk physics), but little skill in understanding the feelings and emotions of others (folk psychology). This may be seen in atypical social interactions, and a lack of understanding of other’s feelings. Additionally, there is a lack of interest in and empathy for other’s feelings.

In other words, although people suffering from Asperger’s have many features of autistic children, their speech and intelligence is relatively unimpaired, but they still have hard time with human contact and forming interpersonal relationships. This is probably why there are quite many cultural representations of people with Asperger’s syndrome, like the one in the book analysed in the present thesis where the leading character’s untypical characteristics are his good use of words, hyper attention to details, extraordinary memory and difficulty understanding social cues and emotions.

Although neurodiverse individuals tend to be described as lacking something, we can also view them, instead, as having a special skill. Thus, much depends on how neurodiverse individuals are represented: as lacking something or as having something special. Public stigma about mental health problems makes the life of people experiencing them difficult as they are often reduced to their diagnosis. People who do not have personal experiences with mental health do not have the ability to imagine the neuroatypical people’s experiences and ways of relating to the world. This is where culture and literature step in. Through empathy and understanding they offer, they enable people to put themselves in “others”s shoes thanks to the depth of the characters and narrative styles used in the book.

Yet not all representations, even well-meaning ones, are necessarily appreciative of the nature of neurodiversity. Even sympathetic representations can delimit a person’s character into too narrow lines, threatening “to reaffirm damaging stereotypes of people on

the spectrum, perpetuating the erroneous idea that all autistic people are geniuses and savants" (Loftis 2015: 49-50).

This can be seen in the different films about characters on the autism spectrum. We can see notable development over the past twenty years towards greater normalization and acceptance. For example, in *Blade Runner* (1982), the androids are portrayed as having autistic traits. This marks them as different from the human characters, but also helps to show how they are trying to find acceptance. There are also films that are explicitly about autism. For example, in the film *Rain Man* (1988) the character Raymond "Ray" Babbitt can be considered as an "autistic savant." He is on less severe end of the spectrum also known as high-functioning, he does not have a severe lack of skills such as speaking and he is also very good at mental calculation and has excellent memory skills. Thus, he appeals to people with his genius-like qualities. Even positive representations, however, create myths and films like *Rain Man* let people to assume autism consists of being a genius, a savant like Raymond. As Knights (2018) indicates:

> The idea that all autistic people are geniuses, or that they all have savant abilities such as extraordinary memory, is a myth, a myth that is largely alive and kicking today due to Rain Man. Yet the cultural stereotype of Raymond Babbitt, the autistic savant, persists.

By now we also have films about actual people living with autism. For example, the film *Temple Grandin* (2010) which portrays the real-life professor Temple Grandin is a positive example for people on the spectrum as we see a living person with a very successful career who used what people would see as an obstacle to her benefit. Differently from other examples of ASD mentioned above, as a proclaimed expert in her field, Temple Grandin also gives hope to many people who share her condition.

Although these portrayals may not be fully accurate, they show the movement from stigmatisation to increasing acceptance and also increase the visibility of people who are on the spectrum. This means that the increasingly improved representations help people to

recognise diversity around them, to acknowledge difference in the society and this leads to a greater level of acceptance.

Mark Haddon's novel *the Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (2003) has been widely praised as a good representation of neurodiversity awareness. It is a book about a teenager on the spectrum who tries to and solves the murder of the neighbour's dog in a world which is not designed for people who are not neurologically typical. Although the protagonist Christopher Boone has social difficulties, he excels at abstract subjects such as Maths at school and can still work and contribute to the society in his own unique way. Differently from the films listed above, the novel that is told from the first-person perspective allows the readers to assume the position of a neurodiverse adolescent and see the world from his perspective. The book has won considerable recognition: it won the Whitbread Award in 2003 and it has been widely praised in different reviews. In fact, it became a global bestseller and sold 10 million copies and was made into a play (Higgins 2019). It also won *the Guardian* Children's Fiction Prize and the *South Bank Show* Book Award and was longlisted for the Man Booker Prize. (Haddon 2004)

This thesis will analyse Haddon's novel to understand how fiction helps people understand and empathise with other people who are different from them. To understand how fiction can achieve this goal, I will utilise Suzanne Keen's Theory of Narrative Empathy which will help me uncover and analyse the novel by observing narrative devices such as the first-person narrator. This will enable us to understand how using certain narrative styles helps us see the world from another person's perspective, in this case that of the neurodiverse protagonist who is on the autism spectrum, and empathize with them. In order to apply this method, I will use close reading technique to see how the language is used in the book which would help us see some patterns in the language used by a neurodiverse individual and a

neurotypical individual. This would help us grasp the differences and become more accepting and understanding neurological diversity in the real world too with the help of fiction.

CHAPTER ONE: NEURODIVERSITY IN FICTION

In order to understand the way in which Haddon represents neurodiversity, we need to take a closer look at how the author himself positions the text and how it fits within the tradition of representing autism in fiction. *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the night-time* (2003) is a murder-mystery novel which can also be classified as an example of young-adult fiction written by the British author Mark Haddon. The story is told through the point of view of the 15-year-old protagonist Christopher Boone. It revolves around his life and the social difficulties he faces with other people at school, at home, with his neighbour, with the police due to having behavioural problems as well as how he deals with them and relates to the world in his own way.

Although many people assumed the book is about autism, the author, Mark Haddon, had something else in mind when he chose to focus on the protagonist. He states:

> Curious incident is not a book about Asperger's. It's a novel whose central character describes himself as 'a mathematician with some behavioural difficulties'. Indeed, he never uses the words 'Asperger's' or 'autism' (I slightly regret that fact that the word 'Asperger's' was used on the cover). If anything, it's a novel about difference, about being an outsider, about seeing the world in a surprising and revealing way. It's as much a novel about us as it is about Christopher. (Haddon 2009)

With this approach, Haddon shifts the reader's focus from disability to difference which has a more positive impact both on readers and people with these differences. Thus, Haddon's work is often celebrated as an excellent example of fictional portrayal of neurodiverse people without labelling or stigmatisation. His novel, however, can still be placed within the broader tradition of autism fiction to show where it follows the tradition and where it is able to include today's thinking about neurodiversity.

1.1. Autism Fiction

Hacking (2010: 632) refers to Susan Sontag's claim that "every era has its own illness, which shows as much about the age as about the disease." For Hacking, autism is the disease

of our age, and he calls it the mirror of an internet decade starting from Google's founding in 1998-1999 when the internet started to become popular and necessary in the everyday life of all people. (Hacking 2010: 653) He argues that the time when people moved away from face-to-face interaction coincided with the time when the internet gained popularity. The internet made many groups that had previously remained invisible in society visible and also gave the groups themselves a possibility to create their own communities. This period may also have helped autism to become more noticed and thus also more frequently mentioned in literature.

Hacking proceeds to discuss a wide section of examples of autism in fiction. Hacking (2010:641) claims that autism stories, regardless of whether they are fiction, autobiographies or comics, are mostly optimistic and cheery as they tend to represent the lives of autistic characters as a "triumph of the human spirit" (Hacking 2010: 641). In these books, characters succeed, despite hardship. For Hacking this type of representation is, in an inflated way, a "guiding theme of autism fiction." (Hacking 2010: 641)

Hacking gives examples of texts about autism from different genres. One of his examples is *Spoonface Steinberg* (1997), voted one of the best ten radio dramas of all time. Hacking (2010: 639) argues that the medium is a very good fit for the play, since "autism is the pathology of absence of social interaction, absence of eye contact. Hence faceless radio, like faceless (despite Facebook) Internet, must be its chosen medium." Since some people with autism may have difficulty making eye contact, producing a play about this topic to an audience through a medium which does not include seeing allows people on the spectrum exchange more information with others. Thus Hacking points out that our awareness of neurodiversity should begin from the genres in which texts are produced as they are not equally available to all social groups.

This is not just a question of genre but language more broadly. Hacking (2010:637) touches on an important point when he states that many neurotypical people from all walks of

life create their own languages to communicate and to convey their ideas or feelings. The prevalence of neurotypical language creates a significant barrier that prevents autistic voices from being heard. He states:

> But there has been no language for expressing the lives of autistic people until recently. Autistic autobiographies have been helping to create this new discourse in English, for nearly all the autobiographies are in English. But what they have developed is slowly spreading to other languages. (Hacking 2010: 637)

In relation to this, Ogburn (2016), reviewing the work of Sonya Loftis Freeman's who self-identifies as being on the spectrum, develops a similar idea:

> Loftis draws attention to the ways fictional representation affects not merely popular ideas of autism, but also the lived experiences of autistic people. For example, she shows that autistic characters, no matter their importance to the story, are often shown through the lens of the non-autistic narrator. For instance, the stories of Sherlock Holmes are narrated by the well-meaning Mr Watson, who views Holmes as a puzzle; this affirms that the reader will share his (non-autistic) view. (Ogburn 2016: 1312)

It can be said that there is a problem of voice in autism fiction. Even though the protagonist is the person on the spectrum, the reader often still cannot see the way of thinking of that person or empathise with them as what they hear/read is a description of the non-autistic narrator which leaves autistic characters either not understood or even misunderstood. Above all, such representations place the reader in the role of the neurotypical narrator and thus others the neurodiverse individuals in stories.

Even though *the Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* is narrated by a character on the autism spectrum, if we follow the argument of Loftis, it still leaves blank spaces in the minds of the readers, unless they are autistic, due to not having a common viewpoint. However, the use of the neurodiverse first-person narrator sheds light on the autistic way of thinking as it places the neurotypical people in the place usually inhabited by the neurodiverse, that is, trying to make sense of a mind that differs from our own. The main benefit, though, is awareness. As Hacking (2010:638) indicates: "There is, among other things, a scare about autism, and people do read autism novels to get a sense of what it is

about." They read to understand more, regardless of their motivations or levels or common viewpoint.

Hacking's analysis does not rush to make generalisations. Hacking (2010: 635) reminds the readers that "if you know one autistic child, you know one autistic child" to discourage generalising about people on the spectrum. He states: "It is good to emphasize, as advocacy groups often do, that each autistic person is different in his or her own ways. Autism is a complex and ill-understood manifold of differences." (Hacking 2010: 636) This is why he spends much of his analysis showing how fictional representations also create their own stereotypes. Even if the representations are positive, they make all neurodiverse individuals seem alike and ignore the fact that neurodiversity is a wide spectrum with a wide variety of behaviours.

The issue of representation is quite complex as the books and films have to find a balance between appealing to the audience and also informing them. An early example of a fact and fiction combined, Dustin Hoffman's role in *Rain Man* (1988), gives a totally misleading portrayal of an "autistic savant", as was already stated in the introduction, but was still excellent at increasing autism awareness because it made the condition more widely known (Hacking 2010: 636).

Hacking (2010:641-42) asserts that as these types of exaggerated portrayals of autism give some comfort to autistic people's families and friends and help them think "their loved ones are not just different but special", we should not rush to criticise them. However, the problem with such fiction, he indicates, is that it sustains the idea that the autistic people have special gifts that neurotypical people are deprived of which is a damaging fiction. Some people with autism do develop amazing skills, especially in the field of computers and technology. Some people with those skills even diagnose themselves as autistic. However, many others are struggling and need assistance because of their serious disabilities. It may be

consoling to consider all autistic people as being gifted or as savants, but that is an illusion. Sadly, a lot of autism fiction promotes that illusion.

Sometimes popular films and TV shows, not just popular science books or novels, can help to spread information about the life of autistic people and their families. One significant example is Keiko Tobe's manga *With the Light: Raising an Autistic Child*, which appeared in English 2007–2009. The Japanese anime version won the 41st Television Drama Academy Awards in Tokyo, 2004. (Hacking 2010: 642)

Side by side with these positive portrayals, there are also fictional works that portray individuals with autism in a misleading and negative manner. According to Hacking, this includes texts where the autistic individual is portrayed as "the fallen angel. (Hacking 2010:643) Hacking (2010:643-44) asserts that people who do not fall into a spectrum of neurodiversity have been fascinated by how weird, unfamiliar, difficult to understand, in short "alien", autistic people are. Although these representations seek to make people with autism seem special, they also increase their distance from the community that is perceived as being normal and thus deepens othering.

However, this perception has also inspired some autistic people to explain their distinctiveness themselves. To them, neurotypicals are the actual "aliens". Hacking (2010: 643-44) quotes neurologist Oliver Sacks who attributes the expression: "Much of the time I feel like an anthropologist on Mars" to Temple Grandin, the succesful scientist who is on the spectrum, to describe her interactions with neurotypicals (Sacks 1995: 295). Sacks used the phrase as the title of one of his best-known books, *An Anthropologist on Mars* (1995). This metaphor indeed sheds light on people's lack of understanding about each other. It makes us question how we see the things as the default way because a vast majority in society does it that way and little is known about or attention given to how "others" live and do things.

There is the other side of the coin. Hacking (2010:644) posits that the world of science fiction stories often uses the alien metaphor for autistic children: “there are aliens in autism fiction that play on the theme of the autist as alien other.” Although it might be difficult for neurotypical people to understand autistic people and vice versa, it is autistic people who are portrayed as the “other” as they are a minority, even though a big one. As Hacking (2010: 644) says: “Autistic people can, then, be pictured as alien for non-autistic people, and non-autistic people as alien for autistic people.” It requires a bit of thinking, imagining oneself as the “alien”, as the incomprehensible one, as we are all used to perceiving ourselves as the norm. It is a good practice for neurotypicals to understand how it feels like being the alien most of the time which leads to more compassion towards the “different” one.

Even though the theme in autism fiction seems to revolve around portraying autism as the “alien other”, this still may increase awareness in neurotypical people and this, in turn, may make them more inclusive of people who are different from them. Things can be viewed from different perspectives, and this can make us question the normative way of perceiving things. Just as how neurotypicals view neurodiverse people as hard to understand and like a puzzle, one can realise that the opposite is just as possible. Hacking (2010:644) gives a good example of this from fiction, Caroline Ann Levine’s *Jay Grows an Alien* (2007) in which “an aspergic boy happens to meet a cyborg from outer space. Together they work out who neurotypicals are.” This reverses the typical way in which autism fiction is written in which it is the neurotypicals who puzzle about the neurodiverse individuals. This type of reversal is useful not just for the neurodiverse, who get to feel like the norm in this representation, but also for the neurotypical, who can benefit from understanding what exclusion from cultural norm can feel like.

Hacking (2010:646) also rereads some classic tales “as stories about people on the autism spectrum.” He gives some examples from well-known books: “Boo Radley in *To Kill*

a Mockingbird was autistic, as was Benjy in *The Sound and the Fury*." Hacking's ideas can be expanded by a closer look at the texts that he mentions. In both novels, the neuroatypical characters are represented as different and also scary. For example, neighbours make up different superstitious stories of Boo Radley who, by the end of the novel, however, is proven to be a kind person. Benjy may have a severe developmental disorder, but Faulkner also gives him the ability to sense things that he cannot communicate to others. Despite his inability to communicate, Benjy is the character in the novel who guides the reader in understanding other characters. Perhaps even more significant choice that Faulkner makes is to let Benjy tell the story in the first person of the novel, so that readers also get access to his consciousness. Analysing these well-known novels from a new angle, as autism novels, can create awareness about the prevalence of autism. Hacking (2010:647) uses Phyliss Bottomer's concept of retroactive faction, rereading well-known novels to identify characters who are on the autism spectrum, to show that there may be more of such people than we imagine. These include characters who are not as notably different from others like the two mentioned above. According to Bottomer's analyses, for example, Mr Darcy from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is at least one of the eight characters who could be diagnosed with Asperger's or high-functioning autism.

Following Hacking's argument that autism is a condition particularly characteristic of today's world, it is not surprising that we find autistic characters in novels about the tech world. As Hacking (2010:648) argues, "there is a widespread stereotype of the computer nerd or geek as being some kind of alien, living in his own world." It is an absurdly faulty image, but it exists in the many fictions where the computer genius is portrayed as autistic. There are many fictional examples of "the autistic computer geek theme": Elizabeth Moon's *The Speed of Dark* (2002) and Claire Morrall's *The Language of Others* (2008). (Hacking 2010: 648) Coupland's *Microserfs* (1995) also reinforces the idea of IT people being slightly autistic.

Hacking (2010: 649) quotes him saying "Every era tends to reward a specific pathology". Although the savant image harms the neurodiverse community more than it helps by reducing people to single category, it also shows the community as being employed, successful and contributing to society, thereby normalising the presence of people on the spectrum and, through that, potentially making way for a possible change to a truer representation.

The main theme that Hacking has been developing throughout his article is that autism is a mirror of the internet decade. Hacking (2010:650) explicitly states that "because of the difficulty in face-to-face relationships, autism is a pathology made for the Internet." He continues: "the keyboard and the Internet thus become a sort of cure for self-absorption, because there is a new way to relate to people in the modalities opened by the Internet, email, blogging, chat rooms, and so forth." (Hacking 2010: 651)

> This is the first internet decade. /…/ Why think that the fiction mirrors the great change of the decade? The mirror relies on the fact that both are involved, in inverse ways – inverse as befits a mirror – with human communication itself. The fictions concern people who do not, and cannot, interact with other people in the ways that have been traditional for the neurotypical for centuries, nay for millennia. The neurotypical relate primarily face-to-face, seeing. The Internet makes neurotypicals behave much more like autistic people than could have been imagined even a decade ago. But I am speaking of something reciprocal. It is striking that now an autistic person can, like Alice, walk through the looking glass, which is the Internet, and with practice or even with an aide, be able to communicate, just like neurotypicals, on keyboard and screen. (Hacking 2010: 653)

It is surprising to look at things from another perspective and to see how similar different people can, in fact, be. Since most people today spend time in isolation and online, they can better imagine neuroatypicals and perhaps even become closer to them. One can see the connection between our time and autism when one looks at "the information overload of our times, repetitive actions, and Google, that autism has been extraordinarily rewarded in our decade, both by attention and sheer money." At the same time, neuroatypicals are empowered by the internet, as it allows them to reach out to others and also to create their own communities.

1.2. Autism in Older Texts

Although Hacking argues that autism is a problem that is particularly characteristic of our times, he also sees examples from earlier literary texts, from before the official diagnosis of Asperger's or autism spectrum disorders. Other authors have also gone back to the literary canon to look for representations of ASD. One much discussed example in literature is the renowned detective stories of *Sherlock Holmes* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Altschuler (2013: 2238) shows that both Holmes and his brother have characteristics that we today associate with autism:

> In ''The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans'' (Doyle 1917) Sherlock Holmes describes his older brother Mycroft thus: ''There has never been anything like it before, nor will be again. He has the tidiest and most orderly brain, with the greatest capacity for storing facts, of any man living. The same great powers which I have turned to the detection of crime he has used for this particular business.

Other elements that Altschuler (2013: 2238) finds are the preference of the character for a fixed daily schedule and his love of routine. For Altschuler (2013: 2239) further proof that Sherlock might have symptoms of Asperger's include "his typically (but not always) solitary and impersonal ways, yet intense single-minded powers of concentration and exhaustive study of seeming minutia such as soils and shoe tracks."

The author further touches upon autism being hereditary and its signs in Conan Doyle's book, which is in some ways ahead of its time and medicine.

> S. Holmes (and Doyle) appreciated the centrality of genetics in the makeup of humans: The Hound of the Baskervilles turns on the resemblance of a character to the portrait of an unappreciated ancestor. Further, indeed, in the Greek Interpreter Sherlock Holmes notes that both his and Mycroft's deductive powers are hereditary and "in the blood." (Altschuler 2013: 2238-2239)

Altschuler (2013: 2239) claims that long before the formal diagnosis was made by Hans Asperger, the traces of the syndrome could be seen in both Holmes brothers. He also claims that we can find even earlier examples, like the British physicist William Cavendish (Sacks 2001). Therefore Altschuler (*ibid.*, 2239*)* believes that reviewing old literary texts may shed light on autism's commonness in the past as literature records experiences before medicine reaches a formal diagnosis. This is also important, as it helps us understand that autism spectrum disorder has always existed and this further destigmatises people on the

spectrum and helps us appreciate the different modes in which they have been understood and integrated into society.

Many literary representations of people with autism concern their mental agility and the ways in which their perceptions differ from those of people defined as neurotypical. Barber-Stetson (2014: 147) argues that society considers a certain level of speed as normal and those who are slower are called "retarded" which could also mean "delay". This perception needs revision, as there is no fixed point which would allow us to measure the speed of people's mental agility. Instead, people have different cognitive styles and speeds. For example, Barber-Stetson (2014: 148) mentions a cognitive style called "Slow Processing" and people who employ it take more time than others to meet "normatively valued goals." The people who may be called slow processors do not fit in, but this does not mean that they are retarded but only that they have different ways of seeing things that people who use normative ways of processing do not have. As a result of their processing style, they are able to create distinctly different literature. She calls the texts of the authors who use this slow processing style as a new minor literature, using the term developed by Deleuze and Guattari (1986). Barber-Stetson (2014: 149) argues that these authors who can be characterized as "stranger[s] within [their] own language."

The perception of strangeness goes further. Barber-Stetson (2014: 149) indicates that autistic people are treated as strangers because they have different developmental rate and neural paths than neurotypical people. As a result, depending on their surroundings, they use the language differently than the neurotypicals which creates a gap between them and linguistic traditions.

> Though a minor literature focuses more on aesthetics than the conditions of a text's production, it may still seem ahistorical to read autists writing in the last twenty years with modernists publishing one hundred years ago. Yet, the histories of these two literary genres are intertwined. The development of autism as a diagnosis—from 1908 through 1943—overlaps significantly with the period most associated with modernism. (Barber-Stetson 2014: 149-150)

Barber-Stetson (2014: 150) touches on an important point indicating that even though some professionals have pathologized an intellectual style called autism, some experimental artists like James Joyce, Hugh MacDiarmid, and Virginia Woolf were using the same mode of sorting information in literature and creating experimental works that are now considered literary classics. Temple Grandin, who is also autistic, writes in a way that perplexes neurotypicals. Therefore, the minor literature embraces a cognitive style which is deemed abnormal by today's medical and scientific community who associate it with autism but which has the ability to provide literary insights through its use of estrangement.

Barber-Stetson (2014: 150) asserts that there is more balance between how the language functions as a medium for communication and how it is used. She posits that authors like T. S. Eliot used the style that has many similarities to Slow Processing to offer "a more radical aesthetic place and poetic place by more openly disregarding literary conventions assumed to facilitate communication and comprehension." She continues:

> I argue that experimental modernist literature like Eliot's The Waste Land (1922) can serve as a historical precursor to texts written by autists, one with already-recognized literary value. Whether they are on or off the spectrum, authors who encourage Slow Processing employ an unconventional form of literary organization with the following shared properties: they juxtapose different literary elements without reconciling them, use unconventional figurative language, and draw attention to unusual sensory stimuli with techniques like onomatopoeia and hyperbole. All of these characteristics require readers to expend more cognitive effort locating the meaning of particular language or the text overall. On a cultural level, this methodology supports the neurodiversity movement by recognizing autists' literary and cognitive potential rather than treating their cognitive style as a deficit. (Barber-Stetson 2014: 151)

This is a very significant and positive approach to destigmatise and depathologise autistic people which also potentially leads to greater acceptance of the cognitive style associated with autism, as well as authors who are themselves either on the autism spectrum.

Barber-Stetson (2014: 151) argues that the cognitive style prevalent among autists creates images and text which might lack central coherence when viewed from a point predisposed to neurotypicality.

> The flaming effrontery of a bunch of cheap roses, brutally red! The hot offensive dampness of an afternoon edition! . . . A line between two flagstones on the pavement, suddenly a yawning chasm! A cough behind him which gave him the feeling of having been buried under an avalanche! . . . A tall man

> instantly precipitous! A woman's waist expanding equatorially! Hands like starfish or stars! Noses like fallen towers! (Barber-Stetson 2014: 153)

In this excerpt taken from an autistic writer Craig Romkema, one can see how the descriptions, the choice of words, the experience of an autistic person creates images before a person's eyes. It is as if they see and speak in images. It makes one pause and view the everyday activities, colours that go unnoticed from a different eye. Connecting this with the Slow Processing cognitive style makes us appreciate this type of writing.

Barber-Stetson (2014: 154) posits that authors like T. S. Eliot often use onomatopoeia to challenge readers with unexpected stimuli in the textual atmosphere. For instance, water is replaced by other sounds such as thunder and the cricket's song which discomforts the reader.

> Why, if one wants to compare life to anything, one must liken it to being blown through the Tube at fifty miles an hour—landing at the other end without a single hairpin in one's hair! Shot out at the feet of God entirely naked! Tumbling head over heels in the asphodel meadows like brown paper parcels pitched down a shoot in the post office! (Barber-Stetson 2014: 154)

This excerpt from Virginia Woolf's "The Mark on the Wall" shows everyday actions of life as something happening very swiftly to create a feeling of emotional and cognitive overload and a sense of estrangement, thus allowing the readers to enter a different mode of perceiving the world. Barber-Stetson (2014: 157) argues that authors like Romkema and Woolf create links between objects that do not look so connected "like a cough and an avalanche", which can change a reader's connection to his/her environment.

Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1920) and James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) employ different narrative techniques for each episode. By constantly changing their styles, the authors challenge traditional expectations that they will utilise one form of language and will not explore further. Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* (1938) can be viewed as another example of the Slow Processing style. As Barber-Stetson (2014: 160) argues:

> These authors all disturb our expectations of reality, of the way in which a given environment should look. This minor literature makes new cognitive spaces accessible to the reader by making certain literary spaces less accessible. Readers are therefore unable to consume these texts without conscious

> effort; they are encouraged to use Slow Processing. By using aesthetics and poetics to thwart readers' cognitive tendencies, this literature makes readers aware of their cognitive capacities. In the process, it fosters a literary community that is more inclusive of people with processing biases that lead them to experience sensations in non-normative ways. (Barber-Stetson 2014: 161)

Viewing this cognitive style as a Slow movement rather than a deficit "promotes the embrace of non-normative behaviours that produce non-normative pleasure, such as those represented by Romkema", adds Barber-Stetson (2014: 158)

While Barber-Stetson is interested in broader use of alternative cognitive styles, other authors have looked for examples of characters who appear to have the Asperger's syndrome. Weintraub (2006: 388) argues that G. B Shaw's play *Pygmalion* (1912) portrays Asperger's before its diagnosis in medicine by Hans Asperger in 1944: "His Higgins is /…/ a middle-aged adolescent who displays bad manners, lurches about the stage, jingles coins in his pockets, has temper tantrums, and has a childlike attachment to his mother and his housekeeper." (Weintraub 2006: 388) Even though it would not be an exact diagnosis, some autism-like qualities can be observed in the character Henry Higgins.

As Asperger's differs from ASD in that individuals having it possess strong language and cognitive skills, it may not have hindered them from progressing in their careers. In this particular play, Higgins is portrayed as a successful person:

> Obsessed by his interest in changing her through language, he has no idea that his behaviour might be unusual. His manners are boorish. Although his pronunciation and grammar are perfect, his rough language is inappropriate to the task. With the help of Colonel Pickering, Higgins's phonetics colleague, who teaches her the manners of a lady, Eliza is able to pull off this feat. After she has been "exposed" as a Hungarian princess, Higgins is asked what he thinks she is. An Aspergen is unable to tell a lie and Higgins answers: "I say an ordinary London girl out of the gutter and taught to speak by an expert. I place her in Drury Lane." No one believes him. (Weintraub 2006: 390-391)

It is possible to see a portrayal of someone having Asperger's by looking at their limited social but generous language skills.

> Comedies that show iconoclasts applauded for behaviour that defies clearly established social norms, a belief in creative evolution that hailed the man who does not adapt to his environment as a prophet, and a penchant for plays that value logic and morality over emotion and aesthetics—all have played a role in Shaw's adoption as one of the historical heroes of the neurodiversity movement, and all point paradoxically to cultural stereotypes about autism at the same time that they indicate the autistic community's growing sense of unique identity. (Freeman 2015: 49)

Even though, the portrayals of people on the spectrum might be stereotypical, they add to visibility and help to give autistic people a community feeling among themselves. Shaw's Joan from *Saint Joan* (1923) adheres to a long list of Asperger's stereotypes: as an example of the stereotypical eccentric genius, she is also the ultimate social outsider and seems completely oblivious to social hierarchy and the nuanced consequences of opposing it. (Freeman 2015: 51)

However, Freeman posits that viewing Bernard Shaw's characters such as Saint Joan and Henry Higgins as autistic perpetuates the savant-like ideal of autism. "Unfortunately, the interpretation of characters like Joan and Higgins as autistic also forwards the stereotype of all people on the spectrum as savants." (Freeman 2015: 51) They are characters who have skills which make them unattainable by success measures of typical people and thus also may make actual people on the spectrum feel inferior and other them further.

As Joan is portrayed as a genius, this differentiates her from most of the people in the society, as an "alien other", as discussed before. It can be argued that even though autistic people gain visibility and have a place in literature long before they have in medical circles, portrayals only as savants may harm them more than it does good to them. Despite possessing greater skills than most people in the society, being classified as a savant still alienates people on the spectrum.

1.3 Mark Haddon

Haddon's novel is also written in the internet age, the period that has made autism more socially visible and also socially accepted. Hacking (2010:638) believes that Haddon's novel is a very successful example of its genre. Hacking (2010:645) acknowledges that Haddon never really tells what troubles his main character and that it is the sign of the book's success as the use of word autism never appears. Several authors have commented on this. Ian McEwan wrote before publication that the book is a "portrayal of an emotionally dissociated

mind", while Oliver Sacks' review, in Hacking's words (*ibid*) "made plain that it was the first good novel about an autistic person, so now all readers know." Hacking (*ibid)* informs the reader that the protagonist of the book has many problems, but he is "an atypical high-achiever, getting through advanced mathematics examinations at the age of thirteen."

The novel has received a lot of critical attention but it has not been studied extensively by literary scholars. There have been studies from the perspective of disability studies (e.g. Ray 2013, Fraser 2018) or as an example of children's fiction (e.g. Tandoi 2017, Greenwell 2004). To my knowledge, there has been no research on the novel from the perspective of narrative empathy.

CHAPTER TWO: NARRATIVE EMPATHY IN *THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME* (2003)

This chapter will first outline the methodology used in the analysis, Suzanne Keen's theory of narrative empathy. It will then proceed to the analysis of Haddon's novel to show how the devices described by Keen are applied in the novel to create sympathy with the neurodiverse character in the reader.

2.1.Suzanne Keen's Theory of Narrative Empathy

Before explaining what Narrative Empathy is, it is important to understand what empathy is. Keen (2006) posits:

> *Empathy*, a vicarious, spontaneous sharing of affect, can be provoked by witnessing another's emotional state, by hearing about another's condition, or even by reading. Mirroring what a person might be expected to feel in that condition or context, empathy is thought to be a precursor to its semantic close relative, *sympathy*.

Keen uses the concept to develop her theory of narrative empathy in which she explains how certain techniques such as employing first person narrative, character identification etc. used in creating fiction evokes feelings of empathy in the reader towards the fictional characters in the book. Keen (2006: 216) indicates that "the most commonly nominated feature of narrative fiction to be associated with empathy is *character identification*." Certain aspects of characterization such as "naming, description, indirect implication of traits, reliance on types, relative flatness or roundness, depicted actions, /…/, quality of attributed speech, and mode of representation of consciousness" (Keen 2006) may contribute to the *character identification* and consequently to empathy.

Fiction or reading help people have a greater capacity to understand and empathise with a mind completely different from theirs. The descriptions of the characters' feelings and details about certain situations would allow people to imagine the written scene and place

themselves in the characters' position who go through the act or situation in question even if they are quite different from the character.

> Character identification often invites empathy, even when the fictional character and reader differ from one another in all sorts of practical and obvious ways, but empathy for fictional characters appears to require only minimal elements of identity, situation, and feeling, not necessarily complex or realistic characterization. (Keen 2006:214)

What Keen (2006) proposes in the quote above is that a reader may not always identify fully with a character or their feelings, or the given situation but this is not an obstacle to empathise with them. The representations need not be completely realistic or close to the reader for such identification to occur. She argues that "spontaneous empathy for a fictional character's feelings sometimes opens the way for character identification". When people can identify with characters, they can also recognise commonalities with people unlike themselves. This is also very important in the present thesis.

Keen (2006: 215) argues that "novelists themselves often vouch for the centrality of empathy to novel reading and writing and express belief in narrative empathy's power to change the minds and lives of readers." When people build empathy towards a character in a certain book, they may be able to transfer this understanding to their daily life too, even though we may not see that effect directly.

For Keen character identification is not a narrative technique "but a consequence of reading that may be precipitated by the use of particular techniques of characterization." (Keen 2006: 216) Keen lists a number of techniques that may help in creating character identification:

> Specific aspects of characterization, such as naming, description, indirect implication of traits, reliance on types, relative flatness or roundness, depicted actions, roles in plot trajectories, quality of attributed speech, and mode of representation of consciousness may be assumed to contribute to the potential for character identification and thus for empathy. (Keen 2006: 216)

For instance, if we take "roundness of character and description" we see the best example of this in Christopher in Haddon's novel who changes a lot and copes with

increasing difficulties, undergoing considerable development. At the beginning of the book, the furthest distance he had been from home was the shop at the end of the street, but towards the end of the book, we learn that he travels some distance by train to see his mother even though he still has a lot of fears to be outside alone, he manages to go after what matters to him and shows us his growth. This example fills several of the criteria mentioned by Keen: we see naming, description, the depiction of actions as well as character development that all create a potential for character identification and empathy.

For Keen the second important technique which contributes to creating empathy in the reader towards the character in a novel is narrative situation which for her includes

> the nature of the mediation between author and reader, including the person of the narration, the implicit location of the narrator, the relation of the narrator to the characters, and the internal or external perspective on characters, including in some cases the style of representation of characters' consciousness. (Keen 2006: 216)

If we take the person of narration and the relation of the narrator to the characters into consideration, we see how they operate in Haddon's book to create empathy. For instance, as Christopher is our primary narrator, we get to see things from his perspective the most as we have the privilege to be invited into his mind. As he describes some people's behaviours or reactions in certain situations, e.g., his father's, even if not directly, we follow a certain reasoning, Christopher's and our own. This provides us with both internal and external perspective on Christopher, to an extent. With the help of these tools, the more we understand why the characters do the things they do, we start developing empathy for them.

One of the most prominent tools analysed by Keen is the use of the first-person perspective. Keen (2006: 219) uses the ideas of Wayne Booth (1983) to show how viewing things from the first person's perspective makes us an ally to them. Booth (1983: 245), in discussing Gustave Flaubert's character of Emma Bovary, argues that "By showing most of the story through Emma's eyes, the author insures that we will travel with Emma rather than

stand against her". The same happens also in Haddon's novel where we follow the narrative from Christopher's perspective and thus ally ourselves with him and root for him in the challenges that he faces.

Keen indicates that the role of quoted monologue is as important as narrated monologue in creating empathy between the reader and the text. "Despite the frequent mention of narrated monologue as the most likely to produce empathy, quoted monologue and psycho-narration (the narrator's generalizations about the mental states or thoughts of a character) also give a reader access to the inner life of characters." (Keen 2006: 219-220) This tool is also used by Haddon.

In the following analysis, I will specifically dwell on Keen's (2006) most important tools designed to create empathy in the reader, such as narrative situation and character identification. The latter, to recall what has already been said above, according to Keen, (2006: 216) "is not a narrative technique (it occurs in the reader, not in the text), but a consequence of reading that may be precipitated by the use of particular techniques of characterization." She discusses these techniques further:

> It has been a commonplace of narrative theory that an internal perspective, achieved either through first person self-narration, through figural narration (in which the 3rd person narrator stays covert and reports only on a single, focal centre of consciousness located in a main character) or through authorial (omniscient) narration that moves inside characters' minds, best promotes character identification and readers' empathy. (Keen 2006: 219)

Since first-person narrative is employed in the novel analysed more closely in the following sub-chapter to develop an internal perspective, it will be discussed below to gain more insight and information directly from the teller which will contribute to creating empathy.

2.2. The analysis of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (2003)

In this part of the thesis, I will analyse the book *the Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (referred to as *The Dog* below) by Mark Haddon. I will utilise the close reading method using concepts borrowed from Suzanne Keen's theory of Narrative Empathy, Clare Barber-Stetson's Slow Processing and Ian Hacking's concept of "alien other" to see how and to what extent these tools help us represent a neurodiverse mind and to empathise with it. I chose the quotes that show how a neurodiverse mind works differently from a neurotypical one. The reader meets these representations starting from the very first page of the novel:

> It was 7 minutes after midnight. The dog was lying on the grass in the middle of the lawn in front of Mrs. Shears' house. Its eyes were closed. It looked as if it was running on its side, the way dogs run when they think they are chasing a cat in a dream. But the dog was not running or asleep. The dog was dead. There was a garden fork sticking out of the dog. The points of the fork must have gone all the way through the dog and into the ground because the fork had not fallen over. I decided that the dog was probably killed with the fork because I could not see any other wounds in the dog and I do not think you would stick a garden fork into a dog after it had died for some other reason, like cancer, for example, or a road accident. But I could not be certain about this. (Haddon 2003:1)

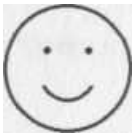
In the excerpt above which is the opening paragraph in the book, we see how Christopher, the protagonist, uses a very descriptive and detailed language like the one Barber-Stetson (2014) mentions in her article on Slow Processing. Slow processing is about different ways of seeing things. When looking at the text, a neurotypical reader understands that the dog is dead from the first few sentences, but since Christopher has a different way of perceiving things, with greater attention to reasoning, he keeps giving more specific details even after the average reader grasps the situation. By giving us in-depth information, Haddon lets us see things from the protagonist's perspective which leads to more understanding, and this eventually creates empathy. The difference of the character's mind can be seen in how he introduces himself and what details he chooses to present about himself:

My name is Christopher John Francis Boone. I know all the countries of the world and
their capital cities and every prime number up to 7,057. (Haddon 2003:2)

Eight years ago, when I first met Siobhan, she showed me this Picture

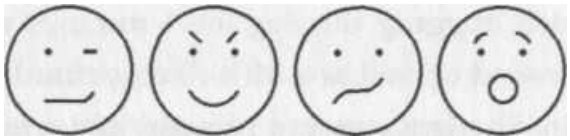
and I knew that it meant “sad,” which is what I felt when I found the dead dog.

Then she showed me this picture



and I knew that it meant “happy,” like when I’m reading about the Apollo space missions, or when I am still awake at 3 a.m. or 4 a.m. in the morning and I can walk up and down the street and pretend that I am the only person in the whole world.

Then she drew some other pictures



but I was unable to say what these meant. (Haddon 2003: 2)

In this excerpt, we can see how Christopher has an exceptional skill of remembering all the countries and their capitals in the world and the prime numbers up to a certain number which can be deemed difficult for typical person who is not exceptionally good at Maths. However, this is not something that a neurotypical person would use to present himself or herself to a stranger. The other notable detail is how Haddon has chosen to convey Christopher’s has difficulties with recognizing human emotions. His difference from the neurotypicals is given through his learning to use to express emotions with the help of emotion symbols, but he also admits that he cannot distinguish more than the two extremes of happiness and unhappiness. Instead of presenting this as a disability, Haddon allows us to see the challenge from Christopher’s perspective. This helps to create empathy, although his maths and memory skills might contribute to the “autistic savant” stereotype that Hacking (2010) repeatedly showed in his article. The novel thus uses both stereotypes of about people

on autism spectrum and devices that allow us to see how their minds might operate. We can see this with regard to emotions again in the following quotation:

> I got Siobhan to draw lots of these faces and then write down next to them exactly what they meant. I kept the piece of paper in my pocket and took it out when I didn't understand what someone was saying. But it was very difficult to decide which of the diagrams was most like the face they were making because people's faces move very quickly. (Haddon 2003: 3)

Here we can see the possible example of Slow Processing (Barber-Stetson 2014) as it takes more time to identify human emotions but they change faster by the time Christopher checks and processes to understand the first emotion by looking at his little manual.

We get insights into Christopher's thinking also by his comments about other things in the world around him many elements of which are more understandable to him than human beings. For example, he states that "I like dogs. You always know what a dog is thinking. It has four moods. Happy, sad, cross and concentrating. Also, dogs are faithful and they do not tell lies because they cannot talk." (Haddon 2003: 4) We get the chance of getting into Christopher's mind here as he talks about his thoughts and inner feelings about dogs by using the first-person narrative. The complex point about how people on the autism spectrum have a hard time distinguishing truth from lies is presented through an easily-understandable childlike example about dogs and their inability to lie that helps readers grasp the situation faster than an academic argument.

In contrast, he states that "I do not like people shouting at me. It makes me scared that they are going to hit me or touch me and I do not know what is going to happen." (Haddon 2003: 4) Haddon gives us additional insight into Christopher's inner world by showing us how challenging it is for him to guess what certain human behaviours mean. Tellingly, he is particularly concerned about being touched and facing uncertainty, two features that were also mentioned by different scholars who wrote about people on the autism spectrum in the

previous section. The difference in perception, where Christopher prefers encounters with the predictable natural environment, instead of hard-to read human interactions can be seen in the following quotation: “I put my hands over my ears and closed my eyes and rolled forward till I was hunched up with my forehead pressed onto the grass. The grass was wet and cold. It was nice.” (Haddon 2003: 4)

As Christopher documents what is going around him, it gives us the chance to see his ideas as if they were pictures floating before our eyes. How Christopher describes each thing in detail is a great example of Slow Processing. These details about Christopher’s inner self as part of character identification (Keen 2006) show the reader the differences in him which also helps build empathy. We can see this in the ways in which Haddon shows Christopher processing ideas, like in the following quotation: “This is a murder mystery novel. But I do like murder mystery novels. So I am writing a murder mystery novel.” (Haddon 2003: 5)

The fact that Christopher tells that this is a murder-mystery novel reflects his way of thinking in details and maybe his assumption that the reader would not guess it already when they read this far. Here we can see what Hacking (2010) was mentioning frequently in his article when describing the autistic person “the alien other.” As we read, we get the sense of something in the flow of the story runs differently than how it “typically” would. This causes the reader to see the neurodiverse narrator as an “alien other”, different in their way of grasping things, in particular how the narrative gives us details where a neurotypical mind would state a fact and assume that the reader can add in all the details himself or herself. We can see this in the following quotation where Christopher tells about his plan to tell the story that we are reading:

> Siobhan said that the book should begin with something to grab people’s attention. That is why I started with the dog. I also started with the dog because it happened to me and I find it hard to imagine things which did not happen to me. (Haddon 2003: 5)

As we get more information about Christopher from himself, we get more ideas about who he is as a person. It helps us to identify with him as a character. He is a person who asks guidance from others and follows through, quite realistic about the things he can and cannot do. This shows us that he has a vulnerable side which may be abused in the outer world. One of the quotations above also already showed that he has experienced mental violence from others. This creates feelings of pity in the reader but also gains their sympathy which leads to empathy.

> I said that I wanted to write about something real and I knew people who had died but I did not know any people who had been killed, except Mr. Paulson, Edward's father from school, and that was a gliding accident, not murder, and I didn't really know him. I also said that I cared about dogs because they were faithful and honest, and some dogs were cleverer and more interesting than some people. Steve, for example, who comes to the school on Thursdays, needs help to eat his food and could not even fetch a stick. Siobhan asked me not to say this to Steve's mother. (Haddon 2003: 6)

We get to see how Christopher's mind works through the use of inner monologue. One of the unique aspects of his mind is his focusing on facts and not relying on imagination. He knows that others can tell about things that are not real, as could be seen above in the quotation where he expresses his puzzlement about lies. However, he himself cannot imagine things that had not happened even for writing his book. We get to see and hear this difference in his own childlike words which helps us understand him better. Even though he is not able to make sense of common social rules/norms, he is also to follow the advice given by his teacher. We thus see both how his mind works and how he is able to cope in the neurotypical world. All of this contributes to character identification and thus to empathy.

Haddon draws our attention to the Slow Processing techniques Christopher uses to make sense of the world around him, for example, like in the following quotation where we follow Christopher's reasoning step by step:

> Then the police arrived. I like the police. They have uniforms and numbers and you know what they are meant to be doing. There was a policewoman and a policeman. The policewoman had a little hole in her tights on her left ankle and a red scratch in the middle of the hole. The policeman had a big orange leaf stuck to the bottom of his shoe which was poking out from one side. (Haddon 2003: 7)

This is a good example of Slow Processing, describing people and things around Christopher as much in detail as possible which makes the scene more vivid and visible in our minds but also shows how his mind is different from the typical one.

Another device used by Haddon is the use of direct speech:

> "And what, precisely, were you doing in the garden?" he asked. "I was holding the dog," I replied. "And why were you holding the dog?" he asked. This was a difficult question. It was something I wanted to do. I like dogs. It made me sad to see that the dog was dead. I like policemen, too, and I wanted to answer the question properly, but the policeman did not give me enough time to work out the correct answer. (Haddon 2003: 7)

So far, the reader can identify that Christopher is not a typical thinker which, in a way, leads the reader to see him as the alien other. However, Christopher also gains the reader's sympathy by showing how child-like and naïve he is as he cares more about the dog and telling the truth than tricking the police or coming up with a cunning plan. This creates the space in which we can put ourselves in Christopher's position. As Suzanne Keen (2006: 208) indicates: "Mirroring what a person might be expected to feel in that condition or context, empathy is thought to be a precursor to its semantic close relative, sympathy." The same kind of a mirroring can be seen in the following example:

> He was asking too many questions and he was asking them too quickly. They were stacking up in my head like loaves in the factory where Uncle Terry works. The factory is a bakery and he operates the slicing machines. And sometimes the slicer is not working fast enough but the bread keeps coming and there is a blockage. I sometimes think of my mind as a machine, but not always as a bread-slicing machine. It makes it easier to explain to other people what is going on inside it. (Haddon 2003: 8)

This is another good example of Slow Processing which can depict "unusual sensory stimuli with techniques like onomatopoeia and hyperbole." (Barber-Stetson 2014: 151) Here, it is possible to see how Christopher is overwhelmed with how fast questions are asked from him as if his mind was a slicing machine but was unable to cut and got stuck with loaves of bread. This example of hyperbole and detailed description of what is going on in his mind in such situations helps the reader understand him and how he functions as a person more and perhaps feel for him, which creates sympathy when the reader sees how such a typical

encounter for neurotypical people can be such a hurdle for him. In many of the encounters with others, Haddon allows us to look into Christopher's mind and to follow his mind, especially as it struggles to process fast-paced communication:

> I rolled back onto the lawn and pressed my forehead to the ground again and made the noise that Father calls groaning. I make this voice when there is too much information coming into my head from the outside world. It is like when you are upset and you hold the radio stations against your ear and you tune it halfway between two stations so that all you get is white noise and then you turn the volume right up so that this is all you can hear and then you know you are safe because you cannot hear anything else. (Haddon 2003: 8)

This example again shows Slow Processing. Barber-Stetson (2014: 148) argues that people who employ it take more time than others to meet "normatively valued goals." When Christopher is disturbed by sensory stimuli, it takes more time for him to calm down and to go on with his life. Examples like this can show neurotypical people how they take things like these for granted while also making them literally feel the difficulties some neuroatypical people go through in their daily lives. The quotation above uses a lot of sensory detail that allow us to literally feel with the narrator. This leads to compassion and feelings of pity and through them creates more understanding and empathy.

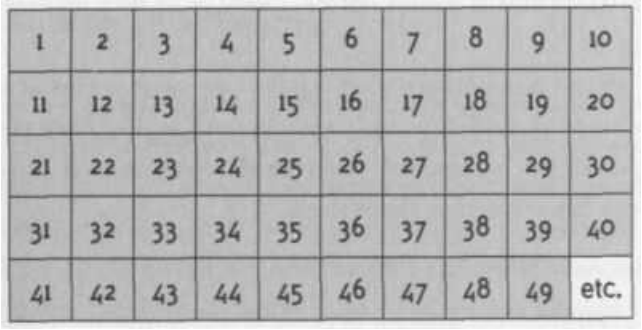
Many of Christopher's difficulties derive from communication that neurotypical people take for granted:

> If I try to say the joke to myself, making the word mean the three different things at the same time, it is like hearing three different pieces of music at the same time, which is uncomfortable and confusing and not nice like white noise. It is like three people trying to talk to you at the same time about different things. And that is why there are no jokes in this book. (Haddon 2003: 10)

Christopher tells about his difficulty with understanding jokes and how trying to identify the meaning behind it maybe leads to sensory overload. The description shows what creates confusion: the fact that words can mean different things and that it is impossible to separate the meanings for clear interpretation. It is also telling that Christopher likes clarity and is confused by noise. Haddon's description helps the reader feel more empathy because of being able to see the situation from within his mind.

Christopher prefers clarity to the confusing aspects of communication and thus the narrative often talks about numbers:

> This is how you work out what prime numbers are. First you write down all the positive whole numbers in the world.



1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	etc.

> Then you take away all the numbers that are multiples of 2. Then you take away all the numbers that are multiples of 3. Then you take away all the numbers that are multiples of 4 and 5 and 6 and 7 and so on. The numbers that are left are the prime numbers. (Haddon 2003: 14)

This example is more ambiguous than the ones before as it, on the one hand, contributes more to Christopher's depiction as autistic savant as he is engaged with maths easily and with pleasure whereas, as we saw earlier, it was very difficult for Christopher to figure out how to answer the police officer during a talk. On the other hand, his love of numbers is also shown to us with the same sympathy with which Haddon writes about Christopher's mind in general. This is well shown in this example:

> Prime numbers are what is left when you have taken all the patterns away. I think prime numbers are like life. They are very logical but you could never work out the rules, even if you spent all your time thinking about them. (Haddon 2003: 15)

For Christopher, life is very hard to understand or solve, almost like a riddle. For him, it is even easier to solve a problem in maths than figure out the life outside. This can be considered as being depicted as an alien other, but we still in the process get to appreciate how his mind processes problems:

> I find people confusing. This is for two main reasons. The first main reason is that people do a lot of talking without using any words. Siobhan says that if you raise one eyebrow it can mean lots of

> different things. It can mean "I want to do sex with you" and it can also mean "I think that what you just said was very stupid." Siobhan also says that if you close your mouth and breathe out loudly through your nose, it can mean that you are relaxed, or that you are bored, or that you are angry, and it all depends on how much air comes out of your nose and how fast and what shape your mouth is when you do it and how you are sitting and what you said just before and hundreds of other things which are too complicated to work out in a few seconds. (Haddon 2003: 19)

Christopher talks about his inner thoughts and opinions of his teacher Siobhan using narrated monologue. Through it the reader gets to understand that he has hardships in social situations so much so that he tries to break down each communication act into every single facial mimic to analyse each one of them separately and gets overwhelmed as they can change so fast by the time he gets to understand. This takes us back to Slow Processing (Barber-Stetson 2014) and the sensory overload it creates. Christopher is represented as having these difficulties even in his interactions with his father.

> I stepped outside. Father was standing in the corridor. He held up his right hand and spread his fingers out in a fan. I held up my left hand and spread my fingers out in a fan and we made our fingers and thumbs touch each other. We do this because sometimes Father wants to give me a hug, but I do not like hugging people so we do this instead, and it means that he loves me. (Haddon 2003: 21)

We know that it is hard for Christopher to make sense or talk about human emotions, but by describing things in detail and giving out information vivid examples, we learn that he manages to figure out and experience and identify human emotions in his own way. For neurotypical people it might be especially emotionally moving to read about how Christopher is able to make sense of the love that other people feel for him, even is he is unable to respond in the expected manner. If we go back to Keen's (2006) terms of *identity* which is a part of *character identification,* we can say even though we may find it hard to identify with what he is feeling, we still get a chance to see things from his perspective which leads to empathy. Haddon creates these possibilities in different places in the novel:

> For example, this morning for breakfast I had Ready Brek and some hot raspberry milk shake. But if I say that I actually had Shreddies and a mug of tea I start thinking about Coco Pops and lemonade and porridge and Dr Pepper and how I wasn't eating my breakfast in Egypt and there wasn't a rhinoceros in the room and Father wasn't wearing a diving suit and so on and even writing this makes me feel shaky and scared, like I do when I'm standing on the top of a very tall building and there are thousands of houses and cars and people below me and my head is so full of all these things that I'm afraid that I'm going to forget to stand up straight and hang on to the rail and I'm going to fall over and be killed. (Haddon 2003: 24)

Here Christopher uses a bit exaggerated language, specifically hyperbole that Barber-Stetson (2014) mentions in her article. He is represented as a person who feels and perceives things in more depth which leads to pain in some situations, like here. He is not able to tell lies and when he does, he feels tremendous pain and fear for that. Knowing about these inner feelings evokes feelings of sadness and sympathy for him and thus builds empathy:

> He didn't look at me when he said this. He kept on looking through the window. Usually people look at you when they're talking to you. I know that they're working out what I'm thinking, but I can't tell what they're thinking. It is like being in a room with a one-way mirror in a spy film. But this was nice, having Father speak to me but not look at me. (Haddon 2003: 28-29)

Since Christopher uses very descriptive language and gives in-depth information about the events happening around him (Keen's narrative situation) and what pleases him or what disturbs him, we understand that he loves his father but he just has a different way of living and showing or not showing them. In this way, we get a clear picture of what is going on around him and it is his reactions to the world that also help us grasp him better. Instead of judging, the reader connects to Christopher from a place of understanding:

> I said, "What kind of heart attack?" because I was surprised. Mother was only 38 years old and heart attacks usually happen to older people, and Mother was very active and rode a bicycle and ate food which was healthy and high in fiber and low in saturated fat like chicken and vegetables and muesli. (Haddon 2003: 36)

Christopher's first reaction to learning about his mother's death is arguably not typical. Instead of expressing or feeling a range of emotions or shock or silence, he tries find out the reason why it happened. We see Christopher's neurodiversity in his reactions, his way of thinking, perceiving and approaching things. This is important because when we know more about how someone's inner world works, empathy follows naturally. Usually, lack of emotion about one's mother's death might make us dislike a character, but here Haddon achieves an opposite effect:

> I used to think that Mother and Father might get divorced. That was because they had lots of arguments and sometimes they hated each other. This was because of the stress of looking after someone who has Behavioral Problems like I have. I used to have lots of Behavioral Problems, but I don't have so many now because I'm more grown up and I can take decisions for myself and do things on my own like

> going out of the house and buying things at the shop at the end of the road. These are some of my Behavioral Problems:
> **A)** Not talking to people for a long time
> **B)** Not eating or drinking anything for a long time
> **C)** Not liking being touched
> **D)** Screaming when I am angry or confused
> **E)** Not liking being in really small places with other people
> **F)** Smashing things when I am angry or confused
> **G)** Groaning
> **F)** Not liking yellow things or brown things and refusing to touch yellow things or brown things
> **G)** Refusing to use my toothbrush if anyone else has touched it
> **H)** Not eating food if different sorts of food are touching each other
> **I)** Not noticing that people are angry with me
> **J)** Not smiling
> **L)** Saying things that other people think are rude
> **M)** Doing stupid things
> **O)** Hitting other people
> **P)** Hating France
> **Q)** Driving Mother's car
> **R)** Getting cross when someone has moved the furniture (Haddon 2003: 59-60)

The matter of *identifying* (Keen 2006) with the character comes into play here once more. Even though the reader may not identify with things that the narrator lists, seeing how life outside with other people is difficult for Christopher and how some of these "problems" are not necessarily his fault, but he views them so and this brings out sympathy and sadness in the reader. The other people also help Christopher to process his own feelings:

> Mr. Jeavons said that I liked maths because it was safe. He said I liked maths because it meant solving problems, and these problems were difficult and interesting but there was always a straightforward answer at the end. And what he meant was that maths wasn't like life because in life there are no straightforward answers at the end. I know he meant this because this is what he said. This is because Mr. Jeavons doesn't understand numbers. (Haddon 2003: 78)

We hear a different voice other than Christopher's, an *external perspective* as Keen (2006) posits, which is a part of the narrative situation technique for creating empathy in the reader towards the character in a novel. This time, we get to hear that Christopher feels safe in the world of numbers as social situations are uncertain and difficult to handle for him from one of his teachers. Even though our primary narrator Christopher does not agree with this alternative way of thinking, it still gives a new perspective to the reader about him and helps them empathise with him.

When we follow Christopher's thinking, Haddon often uses examples of Slow Processing, like here, when he draws attention to the mental processes and sensory perceptions:

> My memory is like a film. That is why I am really good at remembering things, like the conversations I have written down in this book, and what people were wearing, and what they smelled like, because my memory has a smelltrack which is like a soundtrack. (Haddon 2003: 96)

This is also an example of hyperbole, which takes us back to Barber-Stetson's Slow Processing (2014). Once again, Christopher's different way of thinking stands out and gives us more information about him in his own words, so that we can experience the world as he does:

> Then I stopped reading the letter because I felt sick. Mother had not had a heart attack. Mother had not died. Mother had been alive all the time. And Father had lied about this. I tried really hard to think if there was any other explanation but I couldn't think of one. And then I couldn't think of anything at all because my brain wasn't working properly. I felt giddy. It was like the room was swinging from side to side, as if it was at the top of a really tall building and the building was swinging backward and forward in a strong wind (this is a simile, too). But I knew that the room couldn't be swinging backward and forward, so it must have been something which was happening inside my head. (Haddon 2003: 141)

Even though Christopher does not use a straightforward language to describe his emotional pain, with the help of some figurative speech that he has learnt, he manages to transfer the pain of being deceived to the reader very effectively, which invites the reader to feel his pain or sympathise with him and make space for understanding. This can also be seen below where Haddon has used direct speech to place us in Christopher's shoes:

> Then she said, "If your mummy came in now and we asked her what was inside the Smarties tube, what do you think she would say?" because I used to call Mother *Mummy* then, not *Mother*.
> And I said, "A pencil." That was because when I was little I didn't understand about other people having minds. And Julie said to Mother and Father that I would always find this very difficult. But I don't find this difficult now. Because I decided that it was a kind of puzzle, and if something is a puzzle there is always a way of solving it. (Haddon 2003: 145)

Christopher's determination and efforts to always try to make sense of the difficulties in this world impresses the reader, especially as the novel progresses and we know the character better, for instance, how his behavioural problems declined and how he has

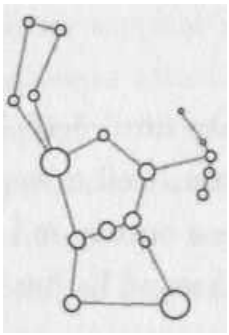
developed and grown over years and from the beginning towards the end of the novel, too. This shows us that he is a round character, contributing to character identification. When the reader travels with Christopher in his journey through difficulties throughout the book, and sees the change in him, it creates a connection between the reader and the narrator. The reader feels sad with him when something hurts him or becomes happy when there is a silver lining. The way in which Haddon represents how Christopher deals with pain grows more effective as we understand that he uses numbers to process pain, like in the following example: "I doubled 2's in my head because it made me feel calmer. I got to 33554432, which is 225, which was not very much because I've got to 243 before, but my brain wasn't working very well." (Haddon 2003: 149)

When the reader combines a previous external perspective with an internal one (both are features of a narrative situation), and finds out that they actually complement each other, it gives more credibility to the voice of the narrator and adds to the reader's understanding. We see that in what Mr Jeavons said about maths and safety to Christopher, that Christopher indeed finds peace and shelter in the world of numbers to calm himself down.

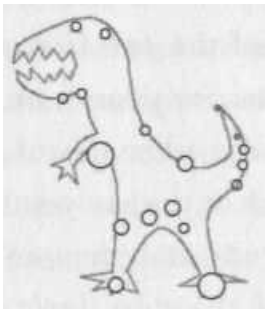
Haddon also shows Christopher's care for his pet Toby and animals in general throughout the novel: "I decided to leave my other coat over Toby's cage because I didn't want him to get cold and die." (Haddon 2003: 155) I argue that although we see his behavioural problems that make him seem rude, this recurrent narrative about Christopher reminds the reader that there are things he cares about deeply which leads the reader to feel compassion for him and become more empathetic.

In other places, Haddon draws attention to the uniqueness of Christopher's perspective, like when he observes that

> people say that Orion is called Orion because Orion was a hunter and the constellation looks like a hunter with a club and a bow and arrow, like this



> But this is really silly because it is just stars, and you could join up the dots in any way you wanted, and you could make it look like a lady with an umbrella who is waving, or the coffeemaker which Mrs. Shears has, which is from Italy, with a handle and steam coming out, or like a dinosaur (Haddon 2003: 156)



I posit that this is a very good example for twisting things a little and looking at things from another perspective. Hacking (2010) used the term "alien other" in his article to show how neurodiverse people were excluded or othered because of the unusual way in which they did things. However, this is not the only perspective. Haddon paints a playful and charming picture of the neurodiverse mind. It helps people grasp both the difference and the uniqueness of the perspective—and perhaps also give the readers the experience of being an outsider or the "different one". This, without doubt, expands understanding different minds and create space for empathy.

This following passage shows how Christopher has evolved throughout the book:

> Which meant that I had to go to London to live with Mother. And I could do it by going on a train because I knew all about trains from the train set, how you looked at the timetable and went to the station and bought a ticket and looked at the departure board to see if your train was on time and then you went to the right platform and got on board. And I would go from Swindon station, where Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson stop for lunch when they are on their way to Ross from Paddington in ***The Boscombe Valley Mystery.*** (Haddon 2003: 163)

Despite his fears, he went on a train journey to achieve his goal and meet his mother. Seeing the growth into a round character, the reader becomes happy for Christopher which shows their appreciation and understanding of him. They have already got used to following Christopher's personal voice throughout the novel:

> And then I thought how I could never be an astronaut because being an astronaut meant being hundreds of thousands of miles away from home, and my home was in London now and that was about 100 miles away, which was more than 1,000 times nearer than my home would be if I was in space, and thinking about this made me hurt. Like when I fell over in the grass at the edge of a playground once and I cut my knee on a piece of broken bottle that someone had thrown over the wall and I sliced a flap of skin off and Mr. Davis had to clean the flesh under the flap with disinfectant to get the germs and the dirt out and it hurt so much I cried. But this hurt was inside my head. And it made me sad to think that I could never become an astronaut. (Haddon 2003: 163-164)

Witnessing Christopher's sadness and pain along with him deepens the feelings the reader has for him and consequently, this creates empathy which comes with understanding. We come better at understanding Christopher but he also becomes better at showing his care for those around him, like his dog, whom he does not want to take to London, not to lose him (Haddon 2003: 165). Christopher's love for animals makes the reader see his caring nature and shows that neurodiverse characters who are usually seen as number-oriented and lacking in emotional expression have the same capacity for compassion as everybody else. Haddon expands the understanding of the savant by giving him increasing emotional intelligence:

> And when I saw the van I was sick again. But I knew I was going to be sick this time so I didn't sick all over myself and I was just sick onto the wall and the pavement, and there wasn't very much sick because I hadn't eaten much. And when I had been sick I wanted to curl up on the ground and do groaning. But I knew that if I curled up on the ground and did groaning, then Father would come out of the school and he would see me and he would catch me and take me home. So I took lots of deep breaths like Siobhan says I have to do if someone hits me at school, and I counted 50 breaths and I concentrated very hard on the numbers and did their cubes as I said them. And that made the hurt less painful. (Haddon 2003: 169)

Towards the end of the book, we see a much more independent representation of Christopher. He is able to manage difficult situations and also himself more, to do the right things which would allow him to achieve his goals. Like seeing a child's growth, this positive

interior monologue from Christopher about himself creates a deeper, empathetic connection between him and the reader.

There is a section that I would like to quote at length to show how Haddon represents Christopher's mind:

> But most people are lazy. They never look at everything. They do what is called glancing, which is the same word for bumping off something and carrying on in almost the same direction, e.g., when a snooker ball glances off another snooker ball. And the information in their head is really simple. For example, if they are in the countryside, it might be
> **1.** I am standing in a field that is full of grass.
> **2.** There are some cows in the fields.
> **3.** It is sunny with a few clouds.
> **4.** There are some flowers in the grass.
> **5.** There is a village in the distance.
> **6.** There is a fence at the edge of the field and it has a gate in it. (Haddon 2003: 174)

> And then they would stop noticing anything because they would be thinking something else like, "Oh, it is very beautiful here," or "I'm worried that I might have left the gas cooker on," or "I wonder if Julie has given birth yet." But if I am standing in a field in the countryside I notice everything. /…/
> /…/ I stopped and looked at the field and I noticed these things
> **1.**There are 19 cows in the field, 15 of which are black and white and 4 of which are brown and white.
> **2.** There is a village in the distance which has 31 visible houses and a church with a square tower and not a spire.
> **3.** There are ridges in the field, which means that in medieval times it was what is called a *ridge and furrow* field and people who lived in the village would have a ridge each to do farming on.
> **4.** There is an old plastic bag from Asda in the hedge, and a squashed Coca-Cola can with a snail on it, and a long piece of orange string.
> **5.** The northeast corner of the field is highest and the southwest corner is lowest (I had a compass because we were going on holiday and I wanted to know where Swindon was when we were in France) and the field is folded downward slightly along the line between these two corners so that the northwest and southeast corners are slightly lower than they would be if the field was an inclined plane.
> **6.** I can see three different types of grass and two colours of flowers in the grass.
> **7.** The cows are mostly facing uphill.
> And when I am in a new place, because I see everything, it is like when a computer is doing too many things at the same time and the central processor unit is blocked up and there isn't any space left to think about other things. And when I am in a new place and there are lots of people there it is even harder because people are not like cows and flowers and grass and they can talk to you and do things that you don't expect, so you have to notice everything that is in the place, and also you have to notice things that might happen as well. And sometimes when I am in a new place and there are lots of people there it is like a computer crashing and I have to close my eyes and put my hands over my ears and groan, which is like pressing **CTRL + ALT + DEL** and shutting down programs and turning the computer off and rebooting so that I can remember what I am doing and where I am meant to be going. (Haddon 2003: 177-178)

This vivid and in-depth description of how Christopher sees the world and gets overwhelmed with sensory stimuli from things that would not necessarily affect typical people much takes us back to a difference in cognitive style, Barber-Stetson's (2014) Slow Processing. This detailed description of Christopher's pain and feelings of being overwhelmed creates more

empathy in the reader after seeing and comparing how they feel more tired in less time when faced with the same everyday situation with everyone which makes one think how unfair it might be that the world is designed for typical people and excludes others. The unusual perceptions extend to things like the train ticket, the colour of which Christopher does not like but accepts nevertheless (Haddon 2003: 189-190). This increasing coping with the normal way of doing things might alert us to not take the shared reality too granted ourselves:

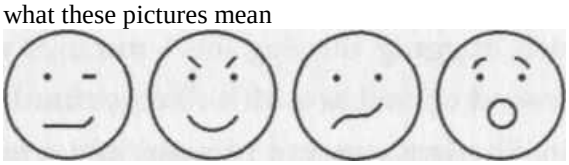
> And I thought *I can do this* because I was doing really well and I was in London and I would find my mother. And I had to think to myself *the people are like cows in a field*, and I just had to look in front of me all the time and make a red line along the floor in the picture of the big room in my head and follow it. (Haddon 2003: 212)

Christopher's inner voice and his confidence in himself has grown, especially when compared to his previous self in the book who avoided places and things that gave him anxiety and overwhelmed him, how he even refused to touch things in colours brown and yellow. Being able to handle the yellow train ticket is thus for him a major development and we, the witnessing community of readers have accompanied him on this self-development journey. He still has the experiences that set him apart from us, because of his Slow Processing perception, when he reacts to the noise in the following quote but we as readers can now read this as his unique perception, not disability:

> And then I heard the sound like sword fighting and the roaring of a train coming into the station and I worked out that there was a big computer somewhere and it knew where all the trains were and it sent messages to the black boxes in the little stations to say when the trains were coming, and that made me feel better because everything had an order and a plan. (Haddon 2003: 222)

Using devices like hyperbole and onomatopoeia also helps the reader visualise the scene and experience everyday life from Christopher's perspective. This also applies to his dreams:

> And in the dream nearly everyone on the earth is dead, because they have caught a virus. But it's not like a normal virus. It's like a computer virus. And people catch it because of the meaning of something an infected person says and the meaning of what they do with their faces when they say it, which means that people can also get it from watching an infected person on television, which means that it spreads around the world really quickly.
> And when people get the virus they just sit on the sofa and do nothing and they don't eat or drink and so they die. But sometimes I have different versions of the dream, like when you can see two versions of a film, the ordinary one and the *Director's cut*, like ***Blade Runner***. And in some versions of the dream the virus makes them crash their cars or walk into the sea and drown, or jump into rivers, and I think that this version is better because then there aren't bodies of dead people everywhere. And eventually there

> is no one left in the world except people who don't look at other people's faces and who don't know what these pictures mean
>
> 
>
> (Haddon 2003: 242)

Haddon continues with Christopher making the observation that "these people are all special people like me. And they like being on their own and I hardly ever see them because they are like okapi in the jungle in the Congo, which are a kind of antelope and very shy and rare." (Haddon 2003: 243) On the one hand, Christopher narrates his pain of being alone in a world full of people who do not understand him by comparing himself to a rare animal. The sadness comes also when Christopher fears not being able to do his exams:

> Then she asked if I wanted to watch one of my Blue Planet videos, about life under the Arctic ice or the migration of humpback whales, but I didn't say anything because I knew I wasn't going to be able to do my maths A level and it was like pressing your thumbnail against a radiator when it's really hot and the pain starts and it makes you want to cry and the pain keeps hurting even when you take your thumb away from the radiator. (Haddon 2003: 255)

Haddon uses these paragraphs to vividly evoke the feelings of isolation and pain. As could be seen in the above analysis, Haddon is able to take the reader within Christopher's mind and show its uniqueness, with its Slow Processing style, without making him into an othered alien but creating both caring and sadness in the reader, which leads to understanding and empathy.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis is to show to what extent fiction helps people understand and empathise especially with minds that work differently from their own. To achieve this goal, I analysed Mark Haddon's *the Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (2003) employing Suzanne Keen's Theory of Narrative Empathy (2006).

The thesis consists of four sections; an introduction, two core chapters and a conclusion. In the introduction, I touched on the stigmatisation of mental health difficulties and how this also leads to self-stigmatisation and a negative self-perception. I also discussed the more positive term neurodiversity which celebrates diversity as opposed to its negative counterpart "disorder" which reduces people to a single category. I also mentioned stereotypes of neurodiversity in films that create unrealistic portrayals of successful people. And I also touched on how the definition of ASD has changed over time.

In the first of the two core chapters, I presented previous research on autism in fiction to show that there are many examples of neurodiversity in fiction from the past as well as the present. The texts attempt to show neurodiversity but there is also the danger that they create stereotypes or make neurodiverse individuals into aliens. Hacking's (2010), for example, uses the concept of "alien other" and "autistic savant/ genius" as two examples of modes of representation that provide misleading impressions of people on the spectrum. Mark Haddon's book is not a portrayal of someone on the spectrum but of someone who has behavioural problems. Haddon does not use the words ASD or autism spectrum even once in his book. In addition, I touched on Barber-Stetson's (2014) concept of "Slow Processing" which shows how neurodiverse people perceive things in much greater detail, more vividly and more slowly. This type of perception can be used to a great effect in fiction, which has been shown by authors like Virginia Woolf or T. S. Eliot.

In the second of the two core chapters, I introduced Suzanne Keen's Theory of Narrative Empathy and analysed Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (2003) with its help. This theory is employed by using devices such as *first person narrative* which gives more space to the character's inner thoughts and feelings, *narrated monologue*, psycho-narration which is about talking about the mental situations of other characters, *characterisation* which also includes *identity*, *feeling* and *situation.* Even when readers might not identify with the feelings of the characters, empathy towards the character can still occur as a result of these devices being used. Other devices mentioned by keen include roundness of character and complex series of events. *Narrative situation* creates empathy in the reader towards the character in the novel by using *internal* or *external perspectives on characters* and *the style of representation of characters' consciousness.*

I used these devices to discuss the representation of a neurodiverse mind in Haddon's novel. I found out that through particular narrative devices, especially in the case of a first-person narrative, we get the chance of entering the mind of the main character, start to see things from his perspective, sometimes identify with him or his feelings, grasp the reasons behind his way of doing things. When we travel with the round character throughout the book, we see the character's growth. Having experienced his pain, we feel sympathy, pity and sometimes become happy for him when he achieves something. All of this leads to the ultimate goal of empathy. The deeper we get into his world and, more importantly, his mind, the more we understand him and become an ally. If we judged him in the earlier stages of the book, in the later stages of the book, we become his guardians and get angry at people who treat him badly as we possess more insight into Christopher's inner world which they lacked. It can be argued that if we lacked this in-depth perspective, and if we did not hear Christopher's inner world from himself, we may have remained on the judgmental side.

Narrative Empathy was proved to be a useful tool for analysing neurodiversity in fiction. The close reading of the novel showed that the devices listed by Keen indeed help the reader to understand neurodiverse characters without stigmatising them. I believe this thesis contributes to interdisciplinary research and, I hope, also serves a social aim, leading more people to read fiction and try to look at the world, differences in people, neurodiverse people and life itself with more kindness, empathy and understanding. I hope that this study will give some insights and inspiration to future researches.

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RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Ecem Başlak

THE REPRESENTATION OF A NEURODIVERSE MIND IN LITERATURE: MARK HADDON'S *THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME* (2003)
Neuromitmekesisuse kujutamine kirjanduses: Mark Haddoni romaanis *Kentsakas juhtum koeraga öisel ajal* (2003)

Magistritöö
2022
Lehekülgede arv: 58

Annotatsioon:

Käesolev magistritöö analüüsib Mark Haddoni romaani *Kentsakas juhtum koeraga öisel ajal* (2003) kasutades Suzanne Keeni narratiivse empaatia teooriat. Eesmärgiks on teada saada, mil määral kirjandus aitab mõista neuromitmekesisust ja kuidas kirjandusteoses kasutatavad võtted aitavad luua lugejates empaatiat romaani tegelaste suhtes.

Magistritöö koosneb sissejuhatusest, kahest sisupeatükist ja kokkuvõttest. Sissejuhatuses defineeritakse töös kasutatavad mõisted nagu stigmatiseerimine ja neuromitmekesisus, tutvustatakse Haddoni romaani ning varasemaid näiteid autismi kujutamisest filmis ja kirjanduses. Esimene peatükk tutvustab varasemat teadustööd, mis käsitleb autismi kujutamist kirjanduses, sh vanemas kirjanduses ning samuti Haddoni enda arusaama käsitletavast romaanist. Teisest peatükis tutvustatakse Suzanne Keeni narratiivse empaatia teooriat ning tema pakutud võtteid rakendatakse Haddoni romaani analüüsis.

Analüüs tõestas, et Keeni võtted sobivad neuromitmekesisuse uurimiseks kirjandusteostes ning aitavad mõista kuidas kirjandustekst suudab tekitada lugejatest mõistmist ja empaatiat. See omakorda aitab kaasa neuromitmekesisuse aktsepteerimisele ühiskonnas.

Märksõnad: inglise kirjandus, empaatia, neoromitmekesisus, autism kujutamine kirjanduses.

Lihtlitsents lõputöö reprodutseerimiseks ja lõputöö üldsusele kättesaadavaks tegemiseks

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