

Little Detectives: An introspection into Young Adult Detective & Autistic Spectrum

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ABSTRACT

From its inception Detective genre has placed marginalised groups in periphery. Two of the greatest and archetypal mystery narratives involving Auguste Dupin and Sherlock Holmes feature white men as their protagonists with no role attributed to women in the narrative. The Golden Age of Deduction broke these stereotypes by creating Women detectives, Children detectives and most importantly, by incorporating racially, culturally and traditionally diversified narratives into their storyline. In the Twenty First Century, Detective fiction is one of the most experimental genres and it has situated itself as one of the pioneer genres of literature with wide reading population.

Inclusion and Diversity are keywords that dominate this genre today and creating stories with autistic representation and rewriting already existing narratives with autistic characters has become a common feature in mystery genre. This research paper will explore the representation of autistic children in detective stories and in terms of their relevance and authenticity.

Keyword: Detective Fiction, Mystery, Medical Literature, Autism

INTRODUCTION

Detective fiction in recent times has incorporated a lot of diversity and inclusion within its narrative. It has become one of the most experimental genres of the twenty-first century with assimilation of genres like horror, young adult, chick-lit, science fiction in its scope thus creating a genre-bending narrative. The writers of the genre have moved on from creating stereotypical detectives and plot line with no women presence.

This borderline rejection of women from the sphere of storytelling to creating women detectives not just for women readers but for the universal reader begins during the Golden Age of Deduction, with the advent of Miss Marple. Miss Marple an old lady, a villager at that, not merely solved mysteries, but worked her way around plenty of gruesome settings and blood cuddling sequences, thus completely breaking the stereotype of detection being a world that is bothersome for women. Enid Blyton through her *Famous Five Series* and *Find Outers* ushered in a new wave of creation, by incorporating Children characters into the mystery tales. Similarly, *Nancy Drew Mystery Series* with 175 novels created a huge wave by creating a girl detective as the protagonist. Nancy Drew is popular worldwide today.

As the detective genre developed from The Golden age to the twenty first century, experimentation became the foremost priority of the genre. Detective Fiction of contemporary times is a combination of different genres.

This research is placed at the predominant juncture of excluding detective/ mystery genre as a genre of the masses; thus, classified into not a serious form of literature and in expressing the opinions, situations, problems

faced by minority groups. Detective genre has always strived towards the same, a balance between being a serious literature and reaching out by having the problems of the masses in its core element. A quick look into the canonical literature of detective fiction will establish the same.

For Illustration, Agatha Christie through her mystery series created two great detectives, Miss Marple - an old aged woman and Hercule Poirot - A Belgian Refugee. Both Poirot and Marple do not fit into the usual framework of heroes. The thought process, cultural background, physical fitness, mental capability everything is different, but they incorporate all of these differences into their advantage. They are able to easily blend and work their way out by their talk. In simpler terms they appear harmless and they use it to their advantage.

One can find the same advantage in children's detective stories as well. Many a times in Nancy Drew series and Find Outers, the anti-hero, the villain or the antagonist miscalculates their potential and dismisses their ability. These kids use it to their advantage. Their size, thinking and age everything gives them dominance over the villain. They are able to blend and easily move from one space to another. Similarly, they are considered harmless and the public always takes their side. In representing a characteristic within Autistic Spectrum, the same advantage can be perceived in two different ways. Autism becoming an advantage because of the non-normative person's ability to think better, faster and in a more logical fashion. *The Curious Incident of Dog at the Night Time* by Mark Haddon and *Rain Reign* by Ann Martin fall under this category. While in the second category, Autism is misconstrued because of the societal stigma attached to it. Many lack awareness about autism and do not deal with autistic kids. While it is society's inability and incapability to have not understood the differences in children, kids with autism are demonized easily.

For example, the parents of other children react against children with autism. The neighbours complain about the quirks. School and educational institutions are not supportive. All of these are dealt with in books like *Colin Fischer* written by Ashley Edward Miller and Zack Stentz and *House Rules* by Jodi Picoult. Through this research paper the researcher will try to explore the characters with autism.

Theoretical Framework

This paper aims to understand the relevance of detective genre featuring Children/ Young adults as protagonists. Through this research paper, the researcher tries to specifically identify the portrayal of characters with autism in detective genre.

DISCUSSION

For the sake of ease and contextualization, the researcher has considered the materials published in the 21st century on Autism and its creation in media and literature as precursor sources. There have been considerable amount of investigations conducted on autistic literature in the past two decades. *Imagining Autism: Fiction and Stereotypes on the spectrum* (2006) by Sonya Freeman Loftis is one of its kind as it exposes various stereotypes associated with autism, particularly in media.

This book examines the interrelationship of literary representations of autism, cultural stereotypes, autistic culture, and disability identity politics. Deconstructing cultural stereotypes of people on the spectrum and exploring autism's incredibly flexible alterity as a signifier of social and cognitive difference, this book focuses on some of our culture's most canonical responses to autism, examining the role of autism and autistic characters in modern literature. (2, *Imagining Autism*)

Sonya Freeman in this book discusses the beginning from modern literature particularly Sherlock Holmes whether he is autistic or not. She breaks all the stereotypes related to autism from its connection to personal tragedy to its representation as a mystery or puzzle that has to be solved while fictionally depicting a character with autism. She also takes a jibe at the autistic savant. Through this paper, the researcher will further prove how autistic savant is the biggest of all stereotypes in fictional world. In the chapter on Sherlock Holmes, his individualistic traits, his quirks and his various modern representations are analysed by Sonya. She particularly focuses on unemotional characteristic feature, self-stimulation, his memory power among others. She portrays how false stereotyping of people with autism lacking emotion is wrong.

While the figure of the autistic detective may seem positive on the surface, a closer look reveals that these heroes often encourage dangerous tropes regarding cognitive difference. Depicted as cold and emotionless machines, imagined as puzzles to solve, these figures perpetuate negative depictions of people with autism. She concludes by stating:

Although the autistic crime fighter may seem to help dispel false perceptions of people on the spectrum as violent, Holmes and other characters like him maintain a lingering liminality between the autistic detective and the villains he pursues, suggesting that there is something inherently criminal about any kind of cognitive difference. (48, *Imagining Autism*)

It is at this point that the society operates; in its misunderstanding and indifference towards non-normative people. When the person falling into autistic spectrum is a kid, they have their personal wars of understanding and living with the difference is at times superseded by societal pressure. In the Korean Netflix Series, *Extraordinary Attorney Woo*, Young Woo the protagonist is 27 years old. Slightly above the age group of Young Adults, an adult. The viewers can easily differentiate attorney Woo with Joeng - Hoon, another minor character with autism. While it is easier to state that both exhibit differences as opposed to the neurotypical behaviour of their peers, they are both different in their own way.

Hence people dealing with children within the autistic spectrum have to consider the differences in dealing with autistic children with not just their biological age, but also their mental age. Woo Young Woo and Joeng Hoon may be of same biological age, but their mental age is totally different, hence their behaviour patterns as well. This proves that Autism though a common factor does not mean that every person with autism can fall under one category, hence the use of the word spectrum.

In case of a novel like *The Curious Incident of Dog in the Night Time*, different levels of understanding autism in a child is portrayed in a brilliant way. For example, the policemen who come to investigate the murder of the dog have absolutely no understanding of what autism is, they consider Christopher to be insane. On contrary, Siobhan is well informed on the autistic spectrum. The understanding of every person is based on their influence in life, their knowledge level and most importantly their field of knowledge. Fiction is a microcosm of reality and it is easy to perceive that in real life, the same trait can be established. Thus, understanding of autism is less in society and fiction like the works taken for research focus on representation of inclusion also provide education, understanding and information about autism; how to deal with children who are not neurotypical and most importantly how not to marginalise them and to include them.

In *Extraordinary Attorney Woo*, the colleagues who appear fazed by the quirks of attorney Woo, slowly come to the realisation that she is different and it is this difference that makes her unique. Thus, by doing so, she begins to feel included in every conversation and every gathering.

The Curious Incident of Dog in the Night Time by Mark Haddon features Christopher Boone a 15-year-old boy. Christopher is autistic and naturally curious. His inquisitiveness to identify and explore the reason behind everything makes him a mathematical genius, who is constantly questioning the working of the universe. He has his quirks, his mood swings but he is a good boy who struggles to manage in the chaotic world. His father loves him so much; his mother and father have huge fights because of him. Then his mother passes away. Christopher never gets to say good bye to his mother.

One night Christopher's neighbourhood dog is killed with a garden fork. Unable to bear the situation, Christopher hugs the dead dog and experiences a panic attack. The police who come to the crime scene misunderstand Christopher as the murderer and arrest him for beating the police men. Christopher is released from the police station when his father explains the situation. However, Christopher has made up his mind to solve the mystery as to who the killer is by that time.

Christopher has a mentor Siobhan who advises him to maintain a journal and create a story. Christopher takes this as a cue and decides to investigate the death of Wellington and note down all the information that he receives during this journey in the notebook. The issue here is Christopher being autistic can never talk to

strangers He is touch-phobic and he has to overcome the fear of crowds, people and talk to strangers to solve the mystery.

His journey starts with the neighbourhood, where he interrogates Mrs. Shears, the owner of Wellington, then Mr. Shears, Christopher reasons him as a probable suspect because he is estranged from Mrs Shears and would want to cause trouble for her. His investigation annoys people and his father the most. He warns Christopher against going to people's house and questioning them. He is concerned about the wellbeing of Christopher and hides his investigation journal away.

Christopher is unable to let the incident go, goes into his father's room in search of his journal. To his dismay he ends up finding the letters posted by his mother after her so-called death; thus, creating a mystery within a mystery.

The narrative that begins as a tale of a dog's death, turns into an interrogation into one of a dead mother. In application of Tzvetan Todorov's theoretical framework provided in *The Typology of Detective Fiction*, this plot falls in the third category that shifts between the present and past. Till Christopher's search for his dog the plot is singular in its nature, but there is a shift between past and present, when the mother character is revealed to be alive. In plain sight no one appears to be what they are. Christopher's Mother Judy is alive and not dead, It is Christopher's father who has murdered the dog, Mrs. Shears and Mr. Shears are estranged because of Christopher's father.

Christopher being autistic finds it more complicated because he has to overcome the fact that his father has lied to him. Christopher distances himself and starts to live with his mother eventually. Judy's new boyfriend is not happy about the situation. It is his father who tries to compensate Christopher by various means and by apologizing multiple times. To understand the graph of Christopher, it is important to analyse his character in microscopic lens. When the novel begins, it reads like a book written by a young boy.

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. (9, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, Mark Haddon)

He uses a matter-of-fact tone to express himself and his behavioural pattern. He even incorporates his quirks in the creation of a book. He has categorized the chapters of the book in the order of prime numbers; hence the book starts with second chapter, there is chapter 3, but no chapter 4 and directly goes to chapter 5, then chapter 7 and so on.

Christopher though biologically 15, at numerous junctures reacts to situations like he is much younger than he actually is. While Christopher is mature enough to have come in terms with his differences, he still has not learnt to deal with it completely. He is intelligent in terms of mathematics, his understanding of science and other informations, but his emotional intelligence is low. He fails to understand his father or mother's true intention. Now this gap between analytical brain and emotional brain is prevalent in children with Autism, this becomes a great tool for deduction as detectives are expected to keep their emotions at bay and use logic to solve the mystery. Sleuths with autism perform well but in the process of deduction while encountering people, their emotions suffer. They lack the social skills to communicate which makes the investigation difficult. For example, if Christopher would have sat through the first conversation with Mrs. Alexander, he would have solved the mystery much earlier. He is unable to go ahead with that conversation and hence he runs away from her home, thus leaving the interrogation half way and he takes numerous months to build his courage and meet her again. Ultimately it is she who gives the most important clue that is needed to solve the mystery.

The comparison between Sherlock Holmes and Christopher Boone is inevitable. Christopher is a young adult who falls under autistic spectrum, while Sherlock Holmes is considered to have autistic symptoms in retrospective by literary critics. Both exhibit high intelligence, ability to use their logical brain to the fullest, enjoy solving puzzles and more so, both are unemotional. Sherlock Holmes has come to terms with his quirks and uses it to his advantages while Christopher is still exploring the same. Christopher eventually polishes his

skills and focuses on the crime, years later he might become a great sleuth but the representation of Christopher is based on Sherlock Holmes, Cold, Calculative, with Quirks. Here Cold is unemotional or inability to understand emotions, and calculative is analytical. Sherlock Holmes and Christopher Boone both lack empathy, but the variance between Holmes and Boone is different. Christopher is still at the learning stage, age being a vital reason.

Similar to Christopher, Oskar Schnell the protagonist of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* develops love for investigation from his childhood. His father who understands his hesitation to talk to strangers and be in public, designs specific tasks that would motivate him to come out of his mental constructs. Oskar is an autistic, it is a challenge for him to communicate, but he is able to overcome his hesitation when he is doing the activity his father as designed. These activities include puzzles and treasure maps, so he goes around solving the mystery as he encounters them. When his father dies, Oskar assumes that he would have left a puzzle for Oskar and goes around searching for the same puzzle. Unknown to him his father who never assumed that he will be dead in the first place has not left anything for his son to solve; yet he assumes there is a puzzle and goes around solving it, while also noting every person he meets and every location he goes to with photos and records. Oskar also feels that he is not close to his mother as much as his father and this puts him in pressure to all of a sudden live with her in the same house without him. While solving the mystery, he also finds how much his mother actually loves and cares for him and gets the closure that he is looking for.

Oskar Schnell and Christopher Boone are portrayed as clever geniuses who are constantly making calculations in their mind. There are pages and pages of their detection process provided through pictures, illustrations and problems given within the context of the book. These are children whom nobody takes seriously but that also provides them a perfect opportunity to be a detective of their liking. Both their characters are influenced by Sherlock Holmes. They are not just good in solving puzzles, but they have a universal view, one of them include that people are really ignorant, in blatant words, they are stupid. This is because though both the protagonists are children, they read a lot, they have understanding of the working of universe, even more that they know how intelligent they are in actuality. In clinical terms they are both Asperger's. What affects them the most is this understanding of their intelligence and to keep it occupied, they have no purpose in their life. These are young children, but they need a purpose, a project, a goal or they experience ennui. One of the most common dialogues used by Oskar Schnell is that "Don't act your age" (*Extremely Loud, Incredibly Close*, 72). The reader can notice, both their fathers going out of their way to help their sons out, particularly in developing their intelligence and knowledge.

This influences them to retort to a most obvious solution when they are hit by a tragedy because their emotions are always at bay and they do not know how to express, they choose the best method available. Unconsciously they take up solving the mystery. Detectives generally take a conscious decision of solving a mystery, here the detection happens in search of a closure. Both are looking forward to a closure, to find out because they do not like loose ends. In case of Christopher, he wants to know who killed the dog, in case of Oskar he wants to know who the key belongs to. It is as simple as these cases are not earth shattering and solving them has no direct implication in their life. The dog that died is the neighbour's dog. It is not even Christopher's dog, but he cannot let go. Similarly, the key has no direct connection to his father, and Oskar knows it really well, yet he goes on thinking it is a loose end. Both these mysteries and the search are for their own satisfaction. A similar strand of thought process can be encountered in the book, *Colin Fischer*. Colin who is also in his early teens and affected by Aspergers encounters a crime and makes it his life's point to solve the same. Again, he has no direct connection to the crime. Someone in the school brings a gun, someone in the school is suspected of bringing the gun and gets dismissed from school. He is not even a friend of Colin, yet Colin cannot let it go. He makes it a point to solve the mystery and find out the real culprit. Many times, the young adult detectives do not solve a problem, because they need to solve it, but they solve it because they need closure. This compulsive behaviour is a symptom of being not a neurotypical.

Many Critics today claim that Sherlock Holmes was also Autistic. While there is no conclusive study to say the same, there are numerous patterns that connect with autism exhibited by Sherlock Holmes in his mystery and obsessive need to solve a crime, noticing for a pattern and understanding something is wrong if the pattern is disturbed and most importantly finding a closure. Detective fiction as a genre of tropes, can be identified by

repetition of similar elements like Scene of Crime, Tailing and Investigation and Grand Reveal among others. Authors of young adult detective fiction also use these tropes that belong to the genre, but their primary goal is not the solving the mystery or creating a great detective. Detection becomes a secondary goal, or even a narrative technique to take the story forward.

Most of these novels are bildungsroman, and focuses on the growth and learning of the protagonist, detection and mystery are aids that carry the story further, they are merely the goals of the protagonist and not that of the writer itself. The writer's focus is on the character and if the growth can be assured by solving a mystery the authors are willing to take it up. For example, in all the books that deal with young adult detective with autism, the predominant factor is to create a Bildungsroman and trace the development of the protagonist throughout the novel and not the mystery itself.

Christopher is a young adult who is living with his father and his father has informed Christopher that his mother is dead, Christopher believes it and goes ahead with his life. He is struggling with coping up, but his mentor Shioban helps when he goes to school. The author brings a small situation here and lets Christopher react. It is the death of the dog in the neighbour's house. Mrs Shears whose husband has left her lives alone in the house next to Christopher and she tends to a dog named Wellington. One day in the middle of night Christopher looks at Wellington lying in the garden, at first he assumes it is sleeping and then in closer look he finds it not breathing, he goes and inspects and sees that someone has stabbed the dog with a garden fork, unable to bear the sight, he holds the dog close to his chest and cries.

It was 7 minutes after midnight. The dog was lying on the grass in the middle of the lawn in front of Mrs. Shears's 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 Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time, Mark Haddon, 8)

His wail wakes up the neighbours and Mrs. Shear calls the police; the first assumption of police is that Christopher is the culprit because of his behaviour. In the confusion, Christopher hits the policemen, thus leading to his arrest. Now after the release, Christopher's father warns him to let everything go and settle back in his routine, Christopher does not agree to the same. He instead decides to go around and investigate the murder of the dog, to his surprise he finds that his mother is alive and his father has been lying all the while.

He also finds that his father is the one who killed Mrs. Shears dog to hurt her. This creates a complicated situation and Christopher starts to despise his father. It takes him a while to understand the reason behind his action and his love for him and finally he understands. But his focus is now in his future to become a successful scientist. In this plot it is clear that the detection and the investigation is just auxiliary. The author uses the character's natural curiosity and investigation of dog's murder leads to him finding his mother. Christopher finding his mother is the crux of the story.

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. (The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time, Mark Haddon, 177)

Unlike others even after he finds the mother, it is not very easy for him to navigate and go in search of her. He has to overcome his fear of people, of public spaces and travel to London alone and search for her apartment. When he navigates those complex terrains with police following him around, because his father has filed a missing person's report. Even then, things are not any less complex, he now has to navigate the new situation of living away from his home, with a stranger and his mother. He is afraid that his father is the bad guy and may kill him as well. He takes a long time to understand the reason behind his father's act of violence. Growth

and development of Christopher and his character arc is the primary plot of the story and it is supported by the mystery narrative. In case of detective fiction this is different, as the plot will start with the murder/ crime and the whole narration will be only towards finding the culprit. The format of whodunit moves towards the grand reveal. In this plot, the murderer is mentioned as a matter of fact, with no great theatrical effect.

I had to get out of the house. Father had murdered Wellington. That meant he could murder me, because I couldn't trust him, even though he had said "Trust me," because he had told a lie about a big thing. (The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time, Mark Haddon, 193)

Colin from the novel *Colin Fischer* is a teenager, who is struggling with coping up in the school. He has no friends; he is constantly bullied for being different; also, he is having issue with his new growth mostly in terms of physical aspects. He is extremely clever; he has a supportive parent who love him so much. He also has a younger brother, who is also a bit of bully, but this is primarily because the younger brother Danny feels that Colin gets all the love and care. He assumes that his parents are too supportive and partial towards Colin. His parents support Colin because he has to deal a lot with external world and this Danny does not realise. Also, Colin's needs are very specific like he wants his room to be arranged in a particular way. He is always obsessed with the order and minute details.

Piles of books. Piles of magazines. Piles of toys and half-disassembled household appliances. The piles were everywhere.

To the untrained eye this was just a mess, not so different from the mess any other boy could have created in any other room in any other house. But its true nature was in its details—not as it appeared, as Colin might point out, but as it was. Neatly organized, like-with-like. (Colin Fischer, 32)

Wayne is one of the students in his class and a bully, who does not hesitate to dunk Colin's head in the toilet seat. Colin accepts all this torment and goes ahead with his life in a cheerful way. On a particular day someone brings a gun to his school. There is no mis-happening and before anything can happen, the gun gets discovered by the teacher. But the owner of the gun is unknown, everyone suspects Wayne and he is dismissed from the school. Colin feels disheartened from this event, because he strongly feels Wayne did not bring gun to the school. Hence Colin begins a series of investigation. He asks people around, tries to identify the clues and solve the crime. His only evidence to begin with is that Wayne is not a messy eater and there was cake cream in the gun. With this single evidence and strong conviction that Wayne did not bring a gun to school, Colin begins the investigation which leads him to dungeons and meeting several uncouth people. Colin who is afraid of talking to strangers seems to enjoy the investigation and Wayne joins him leading them to form an unexpected friendship. His parents are initially worried about this unusual friendship between a bully and a bullied but they are happy that at least Colin is trying to develop a friendship.

Colin goes to the extent of getting detention by trying to spill the information about his findings to the principal, who is not open to listen to Colin's investigation. The principal feels that Wayne is the culprit. Slowly, Colin understands that Wayne is not happy in his home and he is ill-treated by his father. More so that he trembles at his father. Colin has a book that helps him decipher the facial cues of the people and it is with this that he communicates with people and understands their emotion.

As Colin explained it all, he carefully watched Wayne's body language, how the boy went from crossing his muscular arms across his chest to drumming them against the boulder. He leaned forward to listen with growing INTEREST, flashes of INDIGNATION, and occasional ambiguously directed ANGER. (Colin Fischer, 224)

Colin eventually finds out the culprit, again this narrative does not focus on the aspects of detection as much as it does of Colin and his struggles. Colin and his growth become the major plot of the story while finding the criminal is just a part of the narrative. Colin is a young adult with Aspergers and he has specific problems like inability to communicate and decipher people's expression. He is a clean freak and particular about a lot of things.

But Colin isn't an ordinary kid; he suffers from Asperger's syndrome. "It's a neurological condition, related to autism," he explains to his gym teacher, with characteristic precision. "I'm diagnosed as high functioning, but I still have poor social skills and sensory integration issues that give me serious deficits in areas of physical coordination. (Colin Fischer, 10)

Colin Fischer is a story of an autistic child who navigates the odd of the life. Colin Fischer is not a story of a young adult detective. The author firmly differentiates this aspect. In a detective story the process of investigation, the crime and the reveal of the criminal forms the primary narrative in here similar to other books on the genre with Autistic child as the protagonist, the protagonist itself is primary with everything else becoming secondary and tertiary.

Detective fiction is one of the genres that appeals to the masses and has a huge readership and the authors use the element of thrill and suspense that the mystery creates to move the plot forward and create societal awareness by bringing in inclusiveness through their protagonist. Being non - neurotypical does not change the outlook that the young adult has on life. Like every child, children with autism also navigate the same issues of identity crisis and teenage angst. However, their condition adds to their problems like finding friends, understanding the emotions of the classmates and escaping from bullies.

Oskar Schell, the protagonist of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* is a 9-year-old, self-proclaimed atheist, who discusses philosophy and theology with his father. He has an intelligence of a well grown man and lacks social presence and ability to understand emotional cues. He is extremely close to his father; their discussions revolve around great scientists and leaders around the world. His father in order to make him come out of his fear, designs puzzle and makes him solve treasure hunts that help him converse with strangers and take help from him, in order to find a solution. He carefully combines intelligence and social skills in every puzzle to challenge and streamline his son's thought.

I went up to people and asked if they knew anything that I should know, because sometimes Dad would design Reconnaissance Expeditions so I would have to talk to people. But everyone I went up to was just like, What the? I looked for clues around the reservoir. I read every poster on every lamppost and tree. I inspected the descriptions of the animals at the zoo. I even made kite-fliers reel in their kites so I could examine them, although I knew it was improbable. But that's how tricky Dad could be. There was nothing, which would have been unfortunate, unless nothing was a clue. Was nothing a clue? ((Extremely loud, Incredibly Close, 30)

He is so close to him, until he goes to The Twin Towers for the sake of work and ends up in the attack. Minutes before he succumbs to the attack itself, he calls his son to talk to him for one last time and give him final adieu. Unfortunately for him, his son is scared to pick up the call because of his communication disability and ends up not answering the call. Hours later, when he looks at the television and then hears the recordings in the phone does he understand what he has missed. This traumatizes him deeply.

But I hadn't gone back in since he died. Mom was with Ron in the living room, listening to music too loud and playing board games. She wasn't missing Dad. I held the doorknob for a while before I turned it. Even though Dad's coffin was empty, his closet was full. And even after more than a year, it still smelled like shaving. I touched all of his white T-shirts. I touched his fancy watch that he never wore and the extra laces for his sneakers that would never run around the reservoir again. (Extremely loud, Incredibly Close, 65)

Oskar Schell feels that his father could have left one unsolved mystery for him and he accidentally finds a key inside a jar with the name Black written under the jar. Hence, he feels this is the mystery and goes in search of the person Black. He uses internet to look at all the pictures related to 9/11 and try and find his father, he looks at the falling man and assumes that it is his father. He is haunted by his father's memory but most importantly he has a secret that he has not told his mother yet. That is the recording, which he keeps hidden along with all the other memorabilia of the father.

Oskar Schell goes in search of Black based on the yellow pages, he calls everyone with the name Black and goes to meet them. One of them he encounters is his own grandfather. From his grandmother he learns a lot about his grandfather and his own father. He is looking for an ending, a clue as to how to cope up with life that his father might have left him, he assumes it as a mystery that he and his father used to solve together.

While he is trying to cope up with father's death, one another thing that haunts him is his mother's new venture in finding a boyfriend for herself. This puzzles him, he questions if his father means something to her in the first place and when she does find a boyfriend, he is extremely annoyed about the whole situation and distances himself completely from his mother. His mother all the while is caring for him, only when he does understand his mother's love and finds that there is no mystery that his father has left but going on solving it leads him to find a lot of friends. He even writes a thank you letter to every one of them for being so loveable and caring towards him.

"What do you mean I sound just like Dad?"

"He used to say things like that." "Like what?" "Oh, like nothing is so-and-so. Or everything is so-and-so. Or obviously." She laughed.

"He was always very definitive." "What's 'definitive'?" "It means certain. It comes from 'definite.'" "What's wrong with definitivity?" "Dad sometimes missed the forest for the trees."

"What forest?" (Extremely loud, Incredibly Close, 65)

This is a story of a young boy who is trying to cope with the death of his father in such a tragic way. He uses adventure and mystery as a coping mechanism. The detective plot in the book plays the role of aiding him to accept that his father has passed away and in order to do it he uses the same aid that his father used to make him bring out of his shell. In this book, it is never mentioned that Oskar Schell is autistic, unlike other books discussed above, but Oskar Schell does have all the qualities of Asperger's syndrome; his compulsive needs for closure, his problem with communication and his poor social skills exemplifies the same. When a small boy loses his father, his search for the father's memory and his last words is beautifully brought together by the author in the form of a mystery book. Until the end, the puzzle remains unsolved but Oskar Schell does find a letter in the park bench he usually sits with his father, but the readers are never told if it was the father who actually wrote it.

CONCLUSION

The representation of Christopher unlike Holmes is not intentional. Christopher is clinically diagnosed as a child belonging to the autistic spectrum. For Christopher, Human emotions are complex to navigate. He finds it overwhelming at times, when he has to have a conversation, or when people have physical contact with him. His universe is highly influenced by Sherlock Holmes but it remains occupied by his own set of quirks. He decides the day of his investigation by the number of red cars. He dislikes when yellow colour food is on the plate. He does not like when he has to communicate with more than five people on any given day. Now these are quirks that sabotage the deduction process. For example, in any crime, time is of essence but his emotional monitor states that he cannot investigate on some days because they are bad. Similarly, he cannot investigate everyone on a single day, because he dislikes talking to lot of strangers on any given day. On the other hand, his calculative, logical personality also makes him a great sleuth. He wants to find answers, no matter what. He is ready to risk himself, make sacrifices, even let go of his quirks because he wants to find a solution. The intensity of how much he understands the case, or how much it can turn riskier is not well- thought by him. In this particular case, there is no one wishing him physical harm because people involved are directly related to him. This may not be the case all the time.

Colin's primary aims to solve the mystery, or the piece that does not fit in. He does not solve crimes because he wants society to be a better place or any other universal goal. Colin is looking for a closure and this element of disparity does not convince him. He is also inspired by Sherlock Holmes and other detectives greatly. Though

Colin, Oskar and Christopher take influence from great detectives like Poirot and Sherlock Holmes, they are different in the characterization itself because they are clinically tested to be autistic. For them and their parents living and dealing with autism is primary, and everything else is sidelined. Christopher's mom wants him to be happy and if it means giving up on the examination, that is acceptable. Oskar's mom goes ahead and tries to communicate with every person whom Oskar will be meeting on the course of his investigation. She goes a step ahead and explains to them her son's situation so he can get the closure that he looking for and feel that he is solving mystery and be occupied at the same time. There is no discomfort for him or anyone else. One can see Colin's parent's primary happiness is him surviving and finding a friend, everything else is secondary. Thus, though these are mystery stories, the mystery itself takes a backseat. The aim behind creating a narrative must be to focus on the protagonist and mystery is used as a tool for the story to move further.

By representing Autistic Detectives, the authors bring in inclusion and awareness. The authors do not create a pure mystery, the growth of the character and their life in society is important. The books provide a fresh perspective on detective fiction for incorporating Children as sleuths, but also for creating awareness on Autism.

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