THE INTERNAL REPRESENTATION OF THE WORLD IN KATHRYN ERSKINE'S MOCKINGBIRD VIA ELENA SEMINO'S COGNITIVE APPROACH

Alina Lucia GRAPINI
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Abstract: Kathryn Erskine's Mockingbird has been interdisciplinarily approached via Fowler's term "mind style" with the intention to capture "an impression of the protagonist's world view" (qtd. in Semino 2007: 166). According to the mind style concept, Mockingbird reveals an internal representation of the world in which, Caitlin, the main character, lives, including the presentations of the others characters' minds and, of course, the workings of her mind.
Caitlin's "world view" has the advantage of offering a representation of the world within her mind: "The gray of outside is inside. Inside the living room. Inside the chest. Inside me" (M 2). It is a combination between Caitlin's mental and emotional representations, including feelings, emotions, values, attitudes and believes.

Keywords: world view, mind style, speech presentation, linguistic and psychological patterns

The present paper focused on Kathryn Erskine's Mockingbird reveals the connection between the mind style of main character Caitlin and the linguistic manner revealed through the first-person narrative. Our protagonist, Caitlin, a ten-year-old girl affected by a "mild" form of Autism, experiences difficulties in communicational acts and in establishing personal relationships, even though she possesses a high level of intelligence and almost a normal conversational behaviour. Our intention is to render how Semino's mind style and Grice's Maxims, through linguistic and psychological patterns, will positively affect Caitlin's relationships and her struggle to survive after the dramatic death of her brother. The manner how Erskine has treated the Asperger Syndrome reveals her preoccupation for human characteristics, such as belief and empathy, without specifically emphasyzing the medical issue of autism.

From the very beginning of the story, the readers can identify Caitlin's atypical way of behaving. She is sensitive to the external stimuli such as light, sounds or even smells and feels like a drifting bird: "The bird will be trying to fly but never getting anywhere. Just floating and falling. Floating and falling" (M 1). Being a child affected by autism, she struggles with the incapacity to look into someone's eyes as a premise of establishing a good conversation. Autistic persons usually do not look into someone's eyes, they avoid direct looking and, while addressing people, they choose a random point to look at, to avoid direct looking. Caitlin is aware that she has an unwanted behaviour because she possesses a "manner- chart" which helps her to correct her atypical way of acting: "I got it right! I go to the refrigerator and put a smiley face sticker on my chart under YOUR MANNERS" (M 5).

Caitlin's behaviour can be easily differentiated from the other characters because she unintentionally causes problems, due to her Asperger's syndrome. For

instance, she does not like to be touched by strangers and not even by her father; this is a characteristic of autistic children who dislike to have social interactions via touching and looking. She behaves as an odd child: "He lets me stay there and pats my head through the sweater. If it's through the sweater I don't mind" (M 5). Caitlin has to live with her father after her mother's and brother's death. Having a close relationship with her brother Devon, killed in a shooting school attack, she feels desolate. After their mother's death, Devon, her brother, was the person who helped her to deal with the confusing and complex world around her. Her main preoccupations were drawing, arts and finding closure for her and the other people. Throughout the novel, Caitlin permanently tries to improve her atypical behaviour and the memory of her brother Devon will help her, as, due to her strong relation with him, she has a safe familiar environment and does not need any friends. Because of her previous experiences, she knows very well that people are noisy, used to touching and, for her, it is very difficult to decode their feelings because she does not know what empathy means.

As an autistic child, Caitlin unconsciously reveals the fact that she has social impairment through some of her behavioral patterns. Further narrative clues indicate that she is a cold person. This negative charge, that illustrates her predispositions not to respond with sympathy or empathy in communicational acts or in her social interactions with other people, can be cognitively interpreted as her incapacity to read social language. Regarding her cold and detached way of attitudinazing, highlighted in her relationships, a relevant example can be identified when Caitlin, after her brother's death, is eager to participate in a group project. She decided to draw a hurt heart:

"When I finished my last drawing I go to the sofa where Dad is sitting and show it to him. He reads it and his head droops almost to his knees." (M 54-55).

Due to her inability to show any emotional reactions and her low degree of awareness regarding most of the things and people around her, she appears to be mainly focused on herself.

Mrs. Brook, her teacher, endowed with patience and empathy, is the person who helps Caitlin, through jokes and metaphors, to cope with her disability, even though the girl hates jokes and metaphors, because she is unable to understand them: "Mrs. Brook says you can talk with her anytime because her door is always open, I tell Mrs. Johnson. Actually it's almost always closed. But if you knock then she remembers to open it" (M 15). Endowed with logical thinking, when Caitlin hears the words "the door is always open," she interprets them literally, in the sense that the door will always be open and she will receive support, help and assistance any time she needs them.

Due to the Asperger syndrome, she uses restrictions, repetitions and stereotypes. Caitlin's stereotyped patterns reveal the fact that she is keen on arts, drawing and the significance of words. These patterns are emphasized by some important objects directly related to Caitlin's world. The first object is the art set which reveals her passion for drawing; moreover, her art experience reaches culmination with the box of coloured pencils, a symbol of her success, offered to her by her drawing teacher, at the end of the story. The second object is a dictionary, regarded as her only friend because she took it everywhere she goes as a witness of her love for words. The last significant object is a

board of wood with the caved word Scout, on it. Devon used to call Caitlin Scout, because she resembles one of the main characters from the film *To Kill a Mockingbird*, whereas Devon is similar to Jem and their father, to Atticus. Drawing is her refuge from an incomprehensible life and a way to show her ability as regards this kind of art, as it is proved in below utterances:

"I draw them and also a dogwood-–the state tree AND flower—with a cardinal in it—the state bird. Everyone thinks cardinals are red but actually that's just the male. I don't do colors so my cardinal is a female. When I'm done I show my group. Brianna shakes her head. You traced that. No I didn't. No one can draw like that. I can" (M 199).

As concerns restricted behavioural patterns, she is picky and inflexible when she must wear something. She chooses what to put on or the colour of her T-shirts, as rendered in the following quotation:

"The T-shirt can be any color. I don't care as long as it's not yellow or gold or mossy green or pukey green or poopy green—That makes Michael start gigling—or any kind of pink because those colors make me feel sickk. And it can only be one color because I don't like colors running into each other" (M 101).

The Autism disorder makes Caitlin wonder whether her teacher, Mrs. Brook, could also have Autism. Caitlin recognizes that she is as persistent as her teacher and she is also aware that persistence is an autistic characteristic; she concludes that all people who are persistent are also autistic: "We are at recess and I think Mrs Brook might have Asperger's too because she is very persistent which i sone of my skills" (M 89).

Caitlin's behaviour is illustrated through some coping mechanisms, present in many utterances, which reflect consciously or unconsciously, various forms of adaption meant to decrease her anxiety and offer security for her personal space. Such patterns consist of sucking her sleeve, which is the main reason why she wears only long- sleeved T-shirts, screaming, shacking, or even groaning. These atypical behavioural patterns stand proof to Caitlin's mind style and they are illustrated in the following utterance:

"DEV-ON! DEV-ON! DEV-ON! And I hear Dad's voice screaming like at the hospital and I don't want to hear it because I don't want any part of The Day Our Life Fell Apart to happen again so I focus and become the Heart Louder and louder and harder and harder but then I fall out of the chest because there's no way to close it and I feel Dad grabbing me but all I can do is scream the words from the green hospital people, I TRIED BUT THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO! Caitlin! Caitlin! I hear Dad yelling but I can't stop crying" (M 73).

Autism means a disfunctionality and a disturbance in someone's behaviour. Autism has intensely influenced Caitlin life's aspects. She is confused when she must interrelate with her family and relatives. She does not know how to behave when facing them. She also struggles to accept her father and interrelate with him, because her father hides his grief and avoids social interaction with her, which conveys disfunctionality and lack of mind style to their communication. Her inability to decode nonverbal language makes her insensitive to her father's feelings and emotions, without any intention to hurt him or produce unfunctionality in their relationship.

Caitlin's constant preoccupation to find "closure," shortly after her brother's shooting, represents the core meaning of the story. She succeeds to find it only after she has overcome her daily life obstacles; such an enterprise implies that Caitlin should improve some of her social skills and should learn how to cooperate and behave in social interactions, even if she is tremendously intelligent but characterized by a low degree of functionality, the latter making her appear naive or a teasing and bullying victim. She lacks social skills which involves her lack of Theory of Mind and this is one of her disfunctional aspects due to Autism. This lack of social skills could be noticed in Caitlin's school life when she is urged by her classmates to leave them alone or when she must describe her friends. This disfunctionality of having friends and establishing social interactions represents one of the features of Autism, as it is illustrated in the following quotation: "I already have friends. Tell me about your friends. My dictionary, TV. Computer. Mrs. Brook shakes her head. I'm talking about people and learning how to get along with others. I know how. I leave them alone" (M 49). Without having any friends but possessing a strong wish to be accepted, an autistic child is always the victim of bullies. Because of her diagnosis, she is rejected by her classmates, who regard her as a weird person. Her classmates often use rude words or insult her, which cause her distrees and anxiety, as pointed out in the below passage:

"Ew! he yells. You're like a dog! Slobbering all over your sleeve! I stop sucking my sleeve even though I don't know why he says Ew. I like dogs. Dogs sit next to you and put their chin on your lap. Dogs are sweet and and kind. I'm happy if people think I'm dog. What do you want? Freak! Josh says, and I remember why I'm there" (M 37-38).

Her behaviour and strange coping mechanisms make people see her as a weird and freak child. This is not her guilt, it is the guilt and incapacity of those people who can not comprehend the features of Asperger syndrome and behave in an improper manner, without taking into account someone's feelings and emotions; it stands proof to the people's lack of mind style and also to Caitlin's unusual perception of the world.

Erskine's narrative style is also rich in figurative language, which better outlines the character's mind. The story abounds in similes and metaphors and Caitlin's voice interrelates with the author's voice, highlighting aspects related to mind style. For instance, the sequence when "Caitlin takes off her shoes and touches the floor" (M 130) is a 'pedagogical effort' to comprehend what empathy means: "At least I tried dipping my toe in empathy" (M 130). The metaphorical construct "taking off her shoes and socks" (130) reveals Caitlin's endeavour to learn what empathy is and it is a figurative linguistic device artistically conveyed by the novelist, not being rooted in the character's experience. This construct is depicted outside Caitlin's way of reasoning, written in a comprehensible manner for the reader and in an incomprehensible manner for Caitlin. Standing barefoot on the grass, she does not know how to explain the significance of her actions. The same imagery is rendered at the end of the story, when Caitlin has learnt to feel empathetical:

"I look down at my shoes and socks. Slowly I push off my shoes and let the cool grass tickle my feet through my socks. Then I bend down and pull my socks off and stand

right on the top of the grass and the earth and I feel a shiver run up my legs and all the way to my neck and it gives me a little chill" (M 237).

This cognitive analytical paper requires the mentioning of the fact that Caitlin is aware of her own difficulties and inabilities, especially of the way in which other people perceive the metaphor. This is the main reason why she is confused in relation to the children from her school. Her conversation and communicational acts are revealed in her relationship with Michael, a colleague who shares the same grief, and whose mother was killed in the same incident as her brother Devon. Rendered on page 95, it reveals the fact that he uses many metaphorical constructs when his grandmother addresses him. For instance, the metaphor "be an angel," used by his grandmother whenever she demanded that Michael should bring her some cold tea, makes Caitlin literally imagine this construction. It reveals Michael, like an angel, who holds a glass with cold tea for his grandmother. The utterance "pants tight," instead of saying "be patient" makes Caitlin amuse herself, figuring out that Michael needs to put off his pants.

Caitlin is not aware of what friendship should be like, and, in her attempt to be honest, she has unintentionally insulted a classmate, Rachel, regarding the injuries from her face. Her attitude attracts her classmates' strong dislike of her. Being an autistic child, she does not understand people's emotions and, for this, she is usually portrayed in black and white colours.

While interrelating with Josh, who is the cousin of the one who killed her brother, Caitlin perceived him as being a bad, rude and impolite boy and calls him "evil." Similarly, when her father tells her that they should finish Devon's chest and that this required they should cut the oak with a quarter, she takes literally the metaphorical construct and tries to cut wood from an oak tree, injuring herself. Caitlin's seriously disturbed patterns of behaviour are depicted as self-harming or even temper-tantrums, when she rubs the wood to draw Mrs Book's attention or when she cuts an oak.

The Autism disorder is not a jigsaw puzzle to be solved, because we can notice Caitlin's ways of behaving and thinking and they are important patterns which define the main character. Mrs. Brook informs the readers that Caitlin is difficult to be understood because she is an autistic child, and that people face problems because they are not able to understand Caitlin; so, she must pedagogically correct her behaviour working on her emotions and feelings: "Mrs. Brook says people have a hard time understanding me because I have Asperger's so I have to try extra hard to understand them and that means working on emotions" (M 7).

For Caitlin, metaphorical expressions are a provocation, because she must use them properly in her relationships with the adults. For intance, the construct "it rains cats and dogs" (M 142) is reformulated by her as "to pour out" (142) or "to rain heavily" (142), even although she clearly mentions that the cats and dogs do not fall on a person. Surprisingly, she tries to explain the construct "it rain frogs" (142) in terms of the idea that frogs can fall on a person during a stormy day.

The most significant metaphorical construct that sets the tone of the story is outlined by pain, grief, loss, understanding, empathy, closure and hope and, it is rendered when Caitlin is presenting what the chest looks and feels like, to a world that is

as the gray as the sheet which covers the chest and which resembles the colour of her feelings. The following passage reveals the metaphorical construct which helps reader to imagine the gray atmosphere of Caitlin's world and the dramatic manner in which she feels like a bird floating to nowhere. The chest covered with a gray sheet is hidden in a corner, abandoned, waiting to be accomplished and brought to life, as Devon himself once wished:

"The gray of outside is inside. Inside the living room. Inside the chest. Inside me. It's so gray that turning on a lamp is too sharp and it hurts. So the lamps are off. But it's still to bright. It should be black inside and that's what I want so I put my head under the sofa cushion where the green plaid fabric smells like Dad's sweat and Devon's socks and my popcorn and the cushion feels soft and heavy on my head and I push deeper so my shoulders and chest can get under it too and there's a weight onme that holds me down and keeps me from floating and falling and floating and falling like the bird" (M 2-3).

Caitlin possesses a rational mind and a great perception of some physical appearances but, sometimes she is incapable to realize the importance of the situation and acts in accordance with her limited vision, as it is well illustrated on page 117. The scene presents Caitlin at a charity action where she was challenged to say some words. Surprisingly, in her direct manner, in accordance with her unusual sense of perception, she said: "I don't think you are disgusting only because you've got hair in the ear" (M 118). There is another shred of evidence, well illustrated by Erskine, regarding the fact that, for autistic persons metaphors are challenges and they cannot express anything else but the truth. "I stare at the chart some more and hear myself sigh" (M 19) is an exemplification of her inability to sense the other people's feelings and her struggle to succeed it. An important advice offered by her drawing teacher, Mr. Walter, happily completes Mrs.Brook's lesson to Look At The Person so that she could become familiar with what empathy stands for: "Eyes are the windows to the soul, Mr. Walters says. If you look inside the eyes you can see so much about a person" (M 149).

Being fond of words and constantly preoccupied with letters, Caitlin's story is sustained by various similes which have the role of colouring the images and conveying concrete exemplifications of the characters' behaviour. "Books are not like people. Books are safe" (M 42) highlights Caitlin's concern and love for books which offer her a safe environment without conflicts and meanings to decode.

The simile "I stand and put my arms around me like a force field and squeeze my eyes almost closed to try to shut everything out" (M 34) is a nonverbal way to communicate when she feels in danger and does not know how to behave. The utterance "I put my arms around me like a force field" (34) reveals her communicational barriers. All the below similes are nothing else but Caitlin's lessons, visual imageries of her thoughts and ways of perception experienced during her healing journey for finding friendship, empathy and closure: "If you take the monkey bars and the people and blur them together they get soft and fluffy and kind just like a stuffed animal" (M 36); "Josh's face is red and he's breathing hard all of a sudden like he has been running even though he hasn't been" (M 38); "They are like Bambi eyes" (M 66); "I tell her my list and make my head go back and forth like a ticktock of the clock" (M 91); "I feel like Snow White

because now I have a bunch of little dwarf friends who love me "(M 104); "Her cheeks puff up and her eyes squish and water comes out of them and her face looks a little bit like a sponge" (M 179).

Erskine's intention to render the narration in Caitlin's manner offers to the reader the possibility to identify many figures of style, such as hyperboles and personifications with the role to provoke situational comic or to sustain some feelings emotions or thoughts.

The hyperbole "Dad swallows hard even though he's not eating anything" (M 32) is Caitlin's way to decode nonverbal signs of communication in relation to her father who is also in a state of social autism, as a response to the factual situation. His grief is very well detected by Caitlin. Josh is characterized by Caitlin as having "a big grinny smile" (M 36), an improper way to relate and, why not, a way to express his lack of tolerance and disgust. As a desire to find closure and finish the chest, Caitlin, through the hyperbole: "The more I look at the chest the more I start turning it from a sharp-shaped sheet into something soft" (M 136) suggests that she has experienced a revelation, in the sense that the Scout Vultur Project will be accomplished. First depicted as something hard, unrealizable, it is transformed into something soft, realizable. It stands for a sign of a job well done, associated with the feeling of having accomplished something important: "Mrs. Brook smiles so wide she has two rows of dimples" (M 179).

Personifications come to complete the figurative language panel, as a way to express visual elements through words and bring salt and pepper into the story. A couple of personifications have been selected from the novel: "His lips turn down at the ends" (M 30); "Now my heart is pounding loud…" (M 35); "My eyes feel hot and itchy… " (M 35); "The Chicken Dance " (M 37); "I'm happy if people think I'm a dog " (M 37); "Or any of those words that mean their loudness fills up my ears and hurts and their face and waving arms invade my Personal Space and their constant talking sucks all the air out of the room until I think I'm going to choke" (M 52); "… but Devon says the music is crying music and Dad is already crying so I don't want that" (M 56); "…he brightness outside hurts my eyes and the wind makes them water and the screaming on the playground stabs my ears" (M 59); "I'm shaking and sucking my sleeve and I try to stop thinking about The Day Our Life Fell Apart but when I open my eyes Devon's chest is staring at me so I slide off of the sofa and crawl over to it and pull the sheet up from the bottom and push underneath it and get inside the empty hollow chest and I imagine myself as the Heart. Devon's Heart (M 72); "crying showers" (M 75); "I get a recess feeling in my stomach" (M 133).

Onomatopoeia, unintentional speech acts, produced by Caitlin's need to communicate and reveal her serious feelings, also reflect her Autism. These figures of speech render the objects and the character's actions in a figurative way; the most significant employment of the metaphor is to be noticed in relation to the heart, depicted by Caitlin as follows: "I'm nervous enough. My Heart is going POUND-POUND-POUND" (M 228).

Dramatic irony as "an infringement of Grice's Maxim of quality" (Pinies qtd. in Semino 2007: 20) is reflected through her counsellor, Mrs. Brook, who strives so that

Caitlin could have friends. Unfortunately, the girl is forced to accept her colleagues 'rules instead of taking her teacher advice's into account: "But that's what they always tell me—Leave me alone. Caitlin go away—so I'm listening. And I'm doing what they asked so I'm being nice" (M 50).

Erskine makes the readers perceive the main character as a "personal consciousness" and "not as a social and collective consciousness" (Semino 2007: 20) and depicts her in a credible manner without any intention to force the reader into realizing her purpose. The author makes an analogy with the film *To Kill a Mocking Bird* due to the fact that Caitlin and Devon used to spend their leisure time watching together this film. Their life story resembles the story from the film where the father killed the dog. Similarly, Caitlin expects that her father to kill a bird as well, as an infringement of Grice's Maxim of relation. Regarding this issue, Devon explains Caitlin the meanings of the events from the film in order to eliminate Caitlin's subjective reasoning about her father's animosity for dogs and birds. Devon does not want to spoil the entire significance of the film and argues that "it is not correct to kill an innocent person, who, anyway, does not intend to harm anyone" (M 89). This great emotional impact of the utterance is enunciated by Caitlin who claims that the killers of her brother were absent or inattentive to the English course when the film was disscussed and they "did not get" (M 89) the main significance of the book *To kill a Mocking Bird*. Through this sequence the author desires to enhance Caitlin's emotional and intuitive charge in relation to Devon's perceptual state.

We can admit that Caitlin's identity is a mixture of qualities, emotions and intuition which are embedded in her abilities for drawing, denying realities, remembering unusual things, searching for meanings, offering help to other people, hearing strange sounds, being humane and candid, preferring reading, noticing unexpecting things, knowing how to use washing machine, preparing breakfast and being tenacious. As Semino claims, Caitlin, through this embedded abilities, tries to "extend her mind beyond the skin" (Semino 2007: 4) and make her body one with the soul, especially when she brought to her mind the scene from the hospital when the doctors could not save Devon and when she pondered over the fact that Devon's heart is inside his chest, a Scout Vulter's project. The analogy between the inside of the chest and Devon's heart reveals Caitlin's ability to identify the heart with his brother, which allows her to imaginatively entertain the presence of her brother. She failed to resurrect his brother and this imaginative mentally and emotionally projected state ends up in the same way as it started, when the doctors felt incapable to save Devon's heart "We could not do anything" (M 104).

Caitlin's father must face Devon's death and, on the other hand, he must cope with Caitlin's behaviour which needs lot of attention. In his attempt to avoid her disturbant behaviour, he switches on the TV the very moment when it was announced the killer of his son and when the reporter concluded that no matter how serious the problem is, people should find "closure." Caitlin is keen on finding out the significance of the word "closure" in dictionary. Looking for the meaning, this is what she reads: "the

condition of reaching an emotional conclusion due to a difficult event such as the death of one's beloved relative" (M 105).

As an attribute of Asperger Syndrome, Caitlin's lexical and grammatical patterns are a reflection of the lack of communicational and social skills. It is more visible in her communicational acts with her father and with her guidance counselor, Mrs. Brook. Mrs. Brook is the person who supports Caitlin and who succeeds to make her improve her behaviour especially as concerns the act of looking in someone's eyes while speaking, of controlling her emotions, of not sucking anymore the sleeve of the T-shirt, of observing the people's emotions and of her behavioural manners, together with her "tact" and "ability" when she faces difficult situations. Caitlin is outlined by "empathy" (M 110), a moral value, which allows her to refer properly to the others. For instance, through empathy she succeeds to establish a close relationship with Michael, because he feels the same grief as she does, due to the loss of someone dear during the same attack. Both children use an informal way of communication and share many common things such as their preferences regarding clothes: Michael's overalls look like Scout's overalls from the film *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Their conversation acquires a formal aspect when they discuss about serious things such as school, or facts from their private world: "I will be eleven next month" (M 102). Caitlin uses a private way of interrelating with Michael who is seven years old and also with his friends, for instance when she is "belching" (M 120) the alphabet. Her need to be empathetical reveals some atypical external aspects, genuine shreds of evidence, depicted as sounds and gestures while interrelating with other people. The utterance "They all consider me extraordinary" (120) reveals her compulsory behaviour rather than her conscious and voluntary behaviour. This compulsory behaviour is rendered in the scene where Devon tries to express his opinion about the film and makes references to those scenes that allow him to compare Caitlin with one of the protagonists, namely Scout, who is always concerned with the truth and with palpable things. Caitlin's reaction is described in terms of the promptly uttered exclamatory construction: "Oh" (M 92). Acting like Scout, Caitlin will succeed to accomplish all the things she wants to do and, when she hears her brother's comments on Scout, she asks him if she could wear the same overalls as she does.

Finally, their divergent discussion ends with a reconciliation. The above-mentioned discussion can be interpreted as Caitlin's strong inability to make the distinction between relevant and less relevant information and how much information is needed to clarify something or understand facts properly. According to Grice's Maxims of quantity, Caitlin's behaviour is an infringement and not a "violation of the relevant maxims" (qtd. in Semino 2007: 12). According to Thomas Jenny, the concept of "infringement" (qtd. in Semino 2007: 12) highlights unobservable significant data emerged from the fact thar her performance "is impaired in some way, by nervousness, excitement or because of some cognitive impairment" (Semino 2007: 12). In Caitlin's situation, the "breaking" (12) of Grice's maxims of quantity is perceived as a "cognitive impairment" (12), because of her incapacity to distinguish between the relevant and the "irrelevant or distracting" (12) aspects, a feature often encountered with autistic people. Equally significant and in concordance with Happe's "theory of mind," defined as an

inability to comprehend "the mental states of other people" (qtd. in Semino 2007: 13), is Caitlin's reaction when she sees Josh, the cousin of Devon's killer, that helps and protects another autistic child, Michael, while he is climbing the bars in the school's yard.

The same misunderstanding occurs when a colleague is injured and another one tries to comfort her. It concerns Caitlin's classmate, Rachel, who was scared because she heard a noise similar to the one from the shooting scene and thought that another armed attack took place. She was riding her bike when she felt down and injured herself. Caitlin perceived this event as if Rachel had liked to hide so as to avoid rude discussions or ironies. She resorted to a coping mechanism and decided to rearrange various classroom's objects; perceiving Rachel's discomfort and facial expression she uttered her opinion that it looks "swollen and bluish and repulsive" (M 111), attracting animosity and the colleagues' opinion that she is bizarre. Caitlin's mind limitations are due to her predisposition to always tell the true, be sincere, as it actually happened when she saw Rachel's face injured in her bike accident; whereas those who behave differently were regarded by her as being disrespectful.

In terms of the mind style, the main protagonist's conversational behaviour is rendered through direct speech. The narrative style is similar to that of a diary in which Caitlin is her own narrator able to draw the reader's attention and win him over. As an effect of Asperger's syndrome, there is no internal monologue, usually employed to render emotions and feelings, empathy and the ability for imaginary thoughts. The author emphasizes Caitlin's inability to assume behavioural patterns, to handle difficult situations and accept changes and all these issues are rendered through the first-point of view of introspection. All those aspects which are transmitted to the reader under the form of dialogue sequences are "models of micro utterances" (Semino 2007: 14) and reveal Caitlin's subjectivity. The basic grammar clues consist of verbs used in the first person, possessive adjectives and pronouns such as *my, her, hers, mine*, through which the characters' minds are depicted, confirming once again the need for social acceptance and tolerance for children with Asperger's Syndrome.

There are many verbs which express states of mind and feelings. The verb "to like" offers to the readers further shreds of evidence regarding Caitlin, revealing her predisposition to tell us her likes and dislikes in a direct manner. We can notice that we have a journal of a narrator without possessing a real journal. Through this kind of narrative style, that resembles the one used in diaries and which helps her learn to be empathetic with the other human beings, Caitlin depicts her feelings, her regrets regarding her moments of misbehaving and all the events of her life, related to finding "Closure" (M 78). Her deviant behavioural patterns generate humorous scenes, but they also point to the Asperger Syndrome which affects her ability for proper social interactions. The diary style allows Caitlin to accept herself and make the others accept her as well. This kind of narrative style offers the author the opportunity to better understand how an autistic child behaves and interrelates, turning him into a good observer of the protagonist's mental patterns (Semino 2007: 15).

To conclude, the direct speech, incorporated in Caitlin conversational behaviour, her complex mind, enriched by means of adjectives that enter beautifully articulated

epithets whose role is to amplify the importance of the depicted situations, together with repetitions represent some important characteristics of the Autistic language.

The entire story is focused on the transition from darkness to light, on finding closure and acceptance in direct relation to Caitlin's psychological and emotional constructs, rendered through speech acts and her inner thoughts. The climax of the novel emerges from her relation with her friend, Michael. At the end of novel, when Devon's chest was accomplished by her and her father and was offered by them to their school as a gift, he was happy and said, "she did everything" (M 131).

Conclusively, I argue that the methodological cognitive grid, used to decode the intricate mind of Caitlin, highlights the positive consequences of communication and of successfully constructed human relationships, in connection with an extremely gifted disabled child.

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