

# Mental Disorder and Stream of (Un)Consciousness in English and American Fiction

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**Abstract—** This study examines the presence of mental disorder in a number of famous novels. The retarded and mentally disturbed/disordered characters are "different", "less intelligent", idiotic, and they lack control over their mental activity. These novels provide clues as to how these individuals think and talk strangely in the eyes of ordinary and sane people.

The novelistic products of the best-known authors, simply, are the fruit of observing the characters and the verbal expression of such characters in the context of the unfolding action involving the methods of story-telling.

In this process, and in order to facilitate the narration, symbols, settings, chronological sequences, mannerisms, and distinctive features are used and required. This is basically because the mentally disturbed/disordered character is flat and unable to develop from experience.

The roots of the mentally disordered or stupid characters go back to Shakespeare, who used the fool, the clown, the simpleton, and the simple-minded imbeciles for comic relief in his plays or for unexpected philosophical turns to throw light on questions that were pressing the heroic age of England in the years of formation of the English Identity. But, in fiction, which is from the post-Shakespearean age, the writer who paid much attention to the disordered mind of a mentally-retarded character was Laurence Sterne (1715-1768). It is he who made it possible for Faulkner and Mark Haddon to follow this style and keep on the trend.

*Index terms-* mental disorder, mentally disordered.

## I. DEFINITION OF TERMS

The term "Stream of Consciousness" came into being as a phrase coined by William James (1842 - 1910) in his *The Principles of Psychology* (1890) according to Melvin Friedman's *Stream of Consciousness: A Study in Literary Method*.<sup>1</sup>

To describe the mental processes inside the characters' brains, the words "stream" and "consciousness" are used. Naturally, consciousness also refers to preconsciousness in the novelistic and fictional contexts. Moreover, it is Robert Humphrey who draws our attention that the Stream of Consciousness is "...a type of fiction in which the basic emphasis placed on the exploration of the pre-speech levels of consciousness for the purpose, primarily, of revealing the psychic being of the characters."<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, Charles Duffy and Henry Petitt define the Stream of Consciousness in the following manner:

Stream of Consciousness: the attempt to record life and character by setting down everything that bobs up in the mind. Seemingly irrelevant and chaotic thought-sequences are carefully depicted. It is also related to associational structure.<sup>3</sup>

Going from there to "associational structure" (Ibid, p. 15), one learns that it is composition by movement from one image or unit thought, to another, just like in a reverie, or a dream, or a psychic state."

The second item to define here is 'idiot'. According to *Penguin Dictionary of Psychology* by James Drever (1952):

Idiot: 1) The lowest grade of feeble-mindedness, attaining, when adult, a mental age of not more than two years, or an IQ not above 25.

2) A feeble-minded individual of any grade, who shows remarkable talent in some one direction, has been called Idiot Savant.<sup>4</sup>

There is another way to define 'idiot'. According to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, the item 'idiot' is defined in this way:

Idiot: 1) A mentally retarded person requiring complete custodian care. 2) A silly or foolish person.<sup>5</sup>

The reason why we insist on the word 'idiot' is because it is the literary word which gained currency due to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Shakespeare (1564-1616) never uses any other word than 'idiot' in the context of his play. In (Act V, Scene V, LI 19-28) as *Macbeth* is about to be defeated and killed, he hears that his wife is dead. His response takes the following form:

*Macbeth: Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day  
To the last syllable of recorded time,  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more: it is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.*<sup>6</sup>

Thus, the sort of the characters we will encounter and analyze in this study are idiots in the literary canon, even though they may be called a variety of medical names in the specialized field and journals.

So, the 'idiot' here is used as a generic term which stands for the imbecile, the mentally retarded, the mentally disordered, the mentally disturbed, and the mentally perverse characters encountered in fiction. In brief, the irrational personalities like Tristram Shandy, Benjy, and Christopher fulfill the requirements of fools and idiots in Shakespearean terms as well as post-Shakespearean.

## II. TRISTRAM SHANDY AS A MENTALLY-RETARDED CHARACTER

Tristram Shandy is the major character in the novel bearing the same name as the title. The hero of this novel is a human being much attached to his father and his uncle. He is a character that sounds stupid, unwise, unable to focus on one single topic, unable to talk common sense, unwilling to communicate meaningfully or fruitfully. He may be regarded funny or unfortunate. Unhappy accidents keep on happening to him even before his birth. He is eccentric and illogical. He is the product of a family of freaks. Terry Eagleton thinks of the novel and the character in this way:

Tristram Shandy is a defeatist tale of the blighted and the battered, of impotence and disfigurement, of lives of quiet desperation conducted far from the centers of power and prestige. The family is ... an assemblage of freaks, madmen, and emotional cripples. Life is one long set of petty errors, annoyances and frustrations .... Language is a way of Not communicating...[.]<sup>7</sup>

One of the important parts in the novel is where Tristram stupidly wants to urinate from out of the window. At that moment, the window, or rather the sharp glass falls upon the hero's urination organ: this offers a good chance for digression: –'twas nothing, – I did not lose two drops of blood by it – 'twas not worth calling in a surgeon, had he lived next door to us – thousands suffer by choice, what I did by accident. – Dr. Slop made ten times more of it, than there was occasion: – some men rise, by the art of hanging great weights upon small wires, – and I am this day (August the tenth, 1761) paying the price of this man's reputation. – O 'twould provoke a stone, to see how things are carried on in this world! – The chamber-maid had left no .....[Chamber pot, urination pot] under the bed: – Cannot you contrive, master, quoth Susannah, lifting up the sash with one hand, as she spoke, and helping me up into the window-seat with the other, – cannot you manage, my dear, for a single time, to .....? [piss out of the window?]

I was five years old. – Susannah did not consider that nothing was well hung in our family, – so slap came the sash downlike lightening upon us; –Nothing is left, – cried Susannah, – nothing is left—for me, but to run my country. – My uncle Toby's house was a much kinder sanctuary; and so Susannah fled to it.<sup>8</sup>

The long quotation above is typical of the stream of consciousness in this novel. First, Tristram is contemplating in 1761 an important incident that almost castrated at the age of five. Like Benjy later on, whose narrative associates itself with yonic symbols such as his sister's underwear, Tristram is encouraged to expose his Phallic symbol from the window, which is a yonic symbol, because the maid Susannah took away the chamber pot, another yonic symbol. We must remember that chamber maids in eighteenth century novels

often play roles highly suggestive of sensuality. This takes us back to the Oedipal level of the novel, which is clear from the early pages of the novel: that is, Volume 1, Chapter One, where Tristram describes how his father was about to impregnate Tristram's mother:

I Wish either my father or my mother, or indeed both of them, as they were in duty both equally bound to it, had minded what they were about when they begot me; had they duly consider'd how much depended upon what they were then doing;—that not only the production of a rational Being was concern'd in it, but that possibly the happy formation and temperature of his body, perhaps his genius and the very cast of his mind.... (Tristram Shandy, p. 1)

The Oedipal sexual orientation of Tristram's line of thought is obvious here. In this quotation, just as in the earlier one, we notice the free association of ideas, the irrationality of logic, and the absence of reason or the absence of coherent cause and effect. The link in between the phrases is arbitrary rather than logical. This is evident in the peculiar punctuation, especially the use of unusual combinations as . –, . –, or the absence of punctuation in the first place.

It is passages like the above that invited people like A. R. Humphrey to regard Sterne as an unusual novelist:

Sterne (1713 – 1763) is among the most disputed of novelists..., he provides an extra-ordinary complex of speech, thought, and action, in prose often reduced to a syntactic minimum with startling vagaries of punctuation, which sometimes serves for laughter alone, but sometimes, more functionally, suggests the quick slipping of thought from subject to subject (he made play with John Locke's theory of association of ideas) ....Sterne's structure is that of the world where the fringes of the mind encroach on its central clarities.<sup>9</sup>

The critical viewpoint above tells us that Tristram's speech, thought, and action reflect fluctuation and inarticulation, moving from one digression to another, as represented by the curious punctuation which follows the mental peculiarities. In brief, the novel discloses an idiotic and a deviant mind. Nevertheless, Sterne chooses to look at the amusing side.

In a much related context, George Sherburne and Donald F. Bond in their Restoration and Eighteenth Century express their views as follows:

"He [Laurence Sterne] was much influenced by John Locke's theory as to the irrational nature of the association of ideas...." <sup>10</sup>

Sherburne and Bond carry on to state that: "Quite possibly, the comedy of the human mind depends much upon the grotesquely indecent associations found even in the purest minds." <sup>11</sup>

Thus, Tristram's speeches, or rather his imbecile thoughts, are important because the stream of consciousness in them forms the interesting part of the narrative, giving it its humorous feature, relating the work to the comic tradition, rather than tragedy:

"...the comedy of mental processes becomes more sweetly tender."<sup>12</sup>

In the novel itself, in Chapter Three, Volume One, Tristram gives away one of his informative digressions, revealing that

his mental feebleness comes from his father, even though he thinks highly of his intellectual power:

...my father, who was an excellent natural philosopher, and much given to close reasoning upon the smallest matters, had oft, and heavily, complain'd...My Tristram's misfortunes began nine months before ever he came into the world. (Tristram Shandy, p. 37)

Such utterances and interlocked speeches within earlier speeches help to make the book resemble a long self-centered soliloquy. Tristram alone is on the stage, giving a speech which covers 615 pages in print, to reveal his thoughts, opinions, and narrate his life. Despite all these 615 pages, as Terry Eagleton confirms:

"In the end, we get neither Tristram's life, nor his opinions."<sup>13</sup>

The book, as it calls itself on its last page, is a madman's digression, a bunch of psychic asides, a "Cock and a Bull Tale, said York – And one of the best of its kind, I ever heard." (Tristram Shandy, p. 615)

Eagleton goes on to say that Tristram Shandy is just "one form of madness [...] pitted against another."<sup>14</sup>

The presentation of thought, the digression, and the process of meaningless communication are humorous and enjoyable but manage to get the reader lost in the midst of associational structure. Most important in this, Tristram shows no signs that he is aware of his mental disorder, that he is unable to make a coherent chunk, a coherent piece of verbal articulation. He dominates the structure of character, conflict, themes, plot, setting, story telling, but all of that falls short of becoming the cement to hold the book together. What holds the book together, most probably, is the invisible presence of William Shakespeare. Most specifically, the presence of Shakespeare's "Told by an idiot" as well as "signifying nothing." This, by the way, makes us regard the conscious as really unconscious.

### III. IDIOTY AND HEROISM

Shakespeare has always been a writer who raised to the status of heroes, a number of questionable characters who may be regarded as anything but heroes in real life. For instance, King Lear was a lunatic, crazy man who failed to raise a good family. Such an imbecile was supposed to protect 'Great' Britain. In a manner similar to Shakespeare's, Sterne chose to make a thoughtless idiot, the hero of a novel, supposedly abundant with the hero's ideas. The real achievement is that the hero is an anti-hero, and the ideas are absent. Sterne transformed a contemporary idiot into a hero and a thinker: The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman. The man is an idiot and his life is both insignificant and unedifying. It must be a very humorous satire to present the mentally disturbed, retarded, idiotic man as an author and a thinker. Does Sterne intend to mean that the authors in his own days were hardly any better? Given the jocular nature of Sterne, it could well be the case, as hinted by Eagleton in his chapter on this author in *The English Novel*. There seems to be an inner joke or a concealed irony implying that Sterne needs to state obliquely that the authors of his day involved in the Battle of Ancients Versus the Moderns were mentally defective.<sup>15</sup>

Tristram expresses his true independence from the usual norms with the following free association, replete with misnomers and showy misinformation.

Pray, Sir, in all the reading which you have ever read, did you ever read such a book as Locke's Essay upon the Human Understanding?—Don't answer me rashly, - - because many, I know, quote the book, who have not read it, - - - and many have read it who understand it not: - - - If either of these is your case, as I write to instruct, I will tell you in three words what the book is.—It is a history.—A history! of who? what? where? when? Don't hurry yourself.—It is a history-book, Sir, (which may possibly recommend it to the world) of what passes in a man's own mind.... (Tristram Shandy, Volume Two, Chapter Two, p. 107)

The Stream of Consciousness above reveals the mental state of mind with respect to Tristram is unconsciousness. He may know well how to read and write; but, he fails to distinguish what he reads. For anyone to say that Locke was a historian, is actually a very big mistake, a sign of confusion, an indicator that *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* is a tale told by an idiot, signifying nothing. The real value, in our opinion, lies outside the tale or the significance. The value lies in the idiot and how he communicates his nonsense. Besides, it seems that the nonsense of the idiots may be more important in some ways than the wisdom of the intellectuals. Most probably, the Oedipus complex, the sexual inhibition of the fathers upon the sons, will produce such idiotic, imperfect personalities. Again, Tristram's imminent loss of his male organ at the age of five haunts his memory, even though he only lost that part which is usually removed in male circumcision. The symbolic value is deep. He was about to lose his future manhood, which is a disastrous loss in a male-dominated culture like that of the eighteenth century. Thus, this novel is the strange fruit of exploring a mentally retarded man who wants to become an important novelist while he is intellectually still a little boy, and half-witted at that. The stream of consciousness is the only method to work in this text.

### IV. THE IDIOT IN THE SOUND AND THE FURY (1929)

Lilian Feder, in *The Pelican Guide to English Literature: Volume Nine: American Literature*, expresses this important opinion:

...the stream of consciousness that is the idiot Benjy's perception ...discloses a sensuous and emotional apprehension of relationships within the Compson household.<sup>16</sup>

The quotation above indicates that the idiot's presence is a source of emotions, sensations, feelings, fears, reactions, but never ideas or actions in the true sense – Benjy is an idiot. Thus, he is impulsive. The role of Benjy is truly important to embody Faulkner's narrative method. As Warren Beck's stylistic analysis of this novelist proves to us:

"Faulkner's whole narrative method ...may seem to be ...depending simply upon ... an ostensibly complete and unbroken reproduction of the flow of consciousness."<sup>17</sup>

However, Faulkner's characters are different. Benjy is different from Joyce's characters who are mostly above the ordinary levels of cleverness and sometimes, intelligent and smart, whereas, Benjy is an idiot. Thus, the significance of

Faulkner's narrative method is distinguished from the narrative sequence of his contemporary novelists. His departure from the older methods of writing is different from the departure of other novelists. His memories are different.

The above leads us to state unequivocally that *The Sound and the Fury* is a book that "resembles older literary uses, such as the dramatic chorus... and the dramatic personae themselves in soliloquy and extended speech."<sup>18</sup> In other words, it is like the epic scale of Macbeth's tragedy.

*The Sound and the Fury* is a story focusing on wrong-doing over a long period of time by various members of the notable Compson's family in Jefferson Town, Yoknapatwapha County at the Mississippi River. The intelligent individuals in the Compson family are the source of trouble. The only one free from sin, but not from trouble-making, is Benjy the idiot. The novel is an embodiment of Shakespeare's well-known words: "Told by an idiot/ signifying nothing."

However, the idiotic tale may have a good deal of meaning; it may reasonably have a good deal of significance, when the narrative is told by a Faulkner character like Benjy.

Benjy appears in Chapter One as a noble-born character, of a very limited intelligence and plenty of physical strength. He needs to be guarded by Luster, the Afro-American boy. Benjy is deprived of the power to speak. He is unable to read or write. He lives in his own world. He lives in his memories.

It is unclear from the text itself, who is doing the thinking and talking for him. But, we will take it for granted and at face value that Chapter One is Benjy's mind-contents, it is his narrative and mental product.

In this context, it is important to notice the presence of the above in Benjy's first sentences:

Through the fence, between the curling flower spaces, I could see them hitting. They were coming toward where the flag was and I went along the fence. (*The Sound and the Fury* p. 3)

Benjy realizes the predominance of the fence between him and the outside world of the golfers. There is a special function for the verb "Hitting", symbolizing what was really happening to Benjy in the hands of fate: he and his family have been hit hard. Wherever Benjy goes, he will fail to cross the fence, which stands for the barrier of his life. It is similar to an idiotic nightmare. Beck's viewpoint is relevant here:

"Faulkner's fiction [is] dream-like....Dreams are not always delirium."<sup>19</sup>

Benjy's sense of time is both confused and confusing. After the earlier quotation from Benjy, he recalls his sister at Luster's mention of the verb "crawl":

Luster [to Benjy] "...Can't you never crawl through here without snagging on that nail."

[Benjy now does his stream of consciousness]

Caddy uncaught me and we crawled through. Uncle Maury said to not let anybody see us, so we better stoop over, Caddy said. Stoop over, Benjy. Like this, see. We stooped over and crossed the garden, where the flowers rasped and rattled against us. The ground was hard. We climbed the fence, where the pigs were grunting and snuffing. (*The Sound and the Fury*, p. 4)

Benjy recognizes Luster, his sister Caddy, almost everyone else. He, in particular, recalls Caddy's muddy pants, as the narrative gradually shows. Again, as Warren Beck observes: Faulkner's whole narrative method...may seem to be ... depending simply upon ...an ostensibly complete and unbroken reproduction of the free flow of consciousness."<sup>20</sup>

Benjy recognizes Caddy, his sister well. He recalls her muddy panties when he (as well as others) was looking upwards while Caddy climbed the tree. At the start of the chapter, Benjy was already 33 years old and castrated (he was called by Jason "the Gelding").

As an idiot, he was sexually drawn to his sister. The image of the muddy underwear is both a testimony for Caddy's moral liberty, as well as the uncontrollability of the idiot's incestuous tendencies. In his *Recent American Novelists*, Jack Ludwig expresses his opinion that:

Most American writers feel at home with a hero explicitly inferior to themselves, whose ideas are more naïve than the writer's.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, in his role as the idiot of the novel, Benjy recalls in the present moment, the central memory defining him and his strange kind of attraction to his own sister:

"He [Versh] pushed Caddy up into the tree to the first limb. We watched the muddy bottom of her drawers. Then we couldn't see her. We could hear the tree thrashing." (*The Sound and the Fury*, p. 39)

In this regard, Jean Pouillon states that in *The Sound and the Fury*:

"...the past is evoked by the present; for example, Benjy remembers his sister Caddy when he hears golf caddies mentioned."<sup>22</sup>

This brings to mind this logical conclusion which goes beyond literature or novel-writing: memory is the backbone of consciousness as well as unconsciousness. Truly, Jean Pouillon states: "Consciousness, therefore, is mostly memory."<sup>23</sup>

Memory is different, in Benjy's role, from thinking. Benjy is able to recall. But, he is an idiot, obviously incapable of doing any real thinking apart from the impulses. He stands for Man's misfortune, because to him memory is both the process of remembrance, and the measure of time. Benjy's stream of consciousness is his time and memory. In a related context, Jean-Paul Sartre writes:

"Man's misfortune lies in his being time-bound."<sup>24</sup>

In Benjy's case, there are no ideas or thinking at all. Benjy is an unthinking, completely instinctive creature in human form. He is the outcome of accumulated sinfulness, bundled together in memories.

Benjy scarcely intends to have any coherent chunk of disconnected utterances. However, he somehow conveys a more trustworthy meaning than his sane brothers, i.e., the suicidal Quentin and the materialist Jason. The message of the idiot Benjy is far from idiotic. It expresses human nature. Man is corrupt. Benjy's idiotic retardation is a proof that his people sinned an unspeakable sin. So, Benjy is a born idiot, unable to express himself, unable to learn how to read and write his own destiny.

Benjy fails to have access to the objective knowledge. Being an idiot means that his consciousness is defective. But,

this hardly diminishes the quality of his sincerity and honesty of presentation. In Benjy, Faulkner has created his local version of the fools, clowns and idiots in literature all over the world.

Faulkner's idiot is so simple and thoughtless and uncomplicated that the author needs a sophisticated method of presentation to make up for the lack of any real *raison d'être* for the fool's role in the novel.

As an idiot, Benjy only has access to a few impulsive particles of knowledge, or rather, information. He lacks logical forms of presenting what he knows. The way he sees the world is different from the way ordinary, sane, normal people see it.

Despite his absent logic, his perverted understanding, his lack of worthwhile knowledge, there is in him something which the others lack. It is called sincerity. Besides, he lacks what may be called the "speech situation". The utterances he makes are his mental, free association of the stream of consciousness. Better to say, unconsciousness.

In Benjy's role, there are two important points noticed by the researchers of this paper. First, the fool as an important Shakespearean character is fulfilled by the idiot Benjy. He is given the honor to open the book and get it started, like the heralds of Shakespearean drama. Obviously, Faulkner was recycling Shakespeare in his own peculiar Southern way. This is remarkable from the title of the novel, taken straight from Shakespeare.

The second point to note about the role of the idiot here is that he serves as the touchstone of Human Nature. The disconnected and lengthy utterances of Benjy try desperately to convey this basic and elementary piece of information which Faulkner wanted to emphasize: "Man is corrupt," or "Human Nature is repulsive." To prove that Jason is evil, Faulkner made up a role for a stupid and retarded creature named Benjy.

Notice, for instance, this part:

Caddy held my hand out and Dilsey took the bottle. "Well I'll declare." Dilsey said. "If my baby aint give Dilsey a bottle of perfume. Just look here, Roskus." Caddy smelled like trees. "We don't like perfume ourselves." Caddy said.

She smelled like trees.

.....

"Jason." Mother said. "How can you. You'd sit right there and see Maury shot down in ambush, and laugh." (The Sound and the Fury, p. 34)

The quotation above reveals a semblance of psychological depth, by the free association of memories, past events, confusing the past with the present and mixing criminal tendencies with primitive instincts.

Despite the semblance of psychological depth in Benjy's chapter, it is the function of the retarded Benjy that counts. Even here, it is only by juxtaposition with Jason and contrast with Quentin that the reader is able to see at all what purpose this Benjy serves.

Because Faulkner was a man who got the Nobel Prize; because he was a celebrated American author, he has many merits. One of these merits is creating a fool who is unforgettable in modern novel. Benjy draws much sympathy, as any idiot or any human with a handicap usually does. Thus, the source for admiring him is artistic and aesthetic. It also lies

outside the literary realm, that is, psychology of pathological cases. The Sound and the Fury is interesting for Benjy's part. One wonders why it has occupied a full chapter. Faulkner made good representation of the idiot. The author could report the mental process of a mute, inarticulate imbecile.

The authors of this study regard Benjy and the way he is represented as the most convincing among all the three idiots analyzed in this research.

#### V. THE AUTISTIC HERO IN THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT TIME (2003)

This novel is a narrative written entirely from the idiot's point-of-view. It is a bit different from the earlier novels in one important detail: the speaker, the narrator, is a boy who has difficulties in self-expression. From the text, we learn that he is unable to distinguish metaphoric expressions from literal meaning: the boy's name is Christopher. He loves to be alone. His happiness is fulfilled when everyone in the world is gone and only he survives:

It meant 'happy'...when I am still awake at three or four in the morning and I can walk up and down the street and pretend that I am the only person in the whole world. (The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night, p.2)

He goes on to say that his understanding is very limited, and this reflects on the language he uses:

"I find it hard to imagine things which did not happen to me."

He loves dogs more than humans. He lacks sympathy with other handicapped children. For instance, he fails to sympathize with a boy who is completely paralyzed, to the point that his teacher Miss Siobhan asks him not to talk like this in the presence of the boy's mother, to avoid offending her:

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 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." (The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night, p. 6)

Like a typical idiot, he fails to see that Steve is in need of help because he is completely paralyzed, not because he is boring. The idiot is unable and unwilling to realize that Steve is a human who is not supposed to react as a dog to fetch a stick. Only dogs are trained to do this. Dogs are faithful by instinct, not by choice. The idiot fails to see that. His unconsciousness is revealed in his dream contents. What he dreams of is a world void of mankind.

Christopher's idiocy borders on the evil. Christopher may be the evil version of the previous idiots discussed so far. It may be Mark Haddon's chief virtue in this book to point out to the people that idiots, half-wits, and retarded children are too dangerous to forget about. They are capable of much unimaginable evil.

Christopher causes misery to his parents, is the reason for their failed marriage, divorce, and the failure of his mother's cohabitation with her boyfriend. He causes his father much trouble with his neighbors, with the police, with his ex-wife (the idiot's mother), runs away from home, and starts to make

trouble to all around him. This idiot is to himself, the hero of an adventure series.

Haddon's approach to the idiot's character is to show us a view which is different from the expected. We are meant to sympathize with the idiot: We are supposed to sympathize with those around the idiot, because he is causing them to miss the chance to lead a normal, ordinary life. Actually, Mark Haddon draws our attention that the idiot is a very bad presence in the lives of the people whom he lives with. Actually the retarded members of society cause all society to be pulled backwards.

But, above all the above, Christopher believes he alone should survive and all mankind should die. This is a wicked mentality. Let us consider this passage to realize how serious Mark Haddon is in blowing the warning whistle that the mentally retarded people are truly dangerous: Christopher says about his dreams:

And when I was a sleep, I had one of my favourite dreams... And in the dream nearly everyone on the earth is dead, because they have caught a virus...the virus makes them crash their cars or walk into the sea and drown, or jump into rivers...and eventually there is no one left in the world except... special people like me. And they like being on their own and I hardly ever see them. (The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night, pp. 242- 243)

The extract above may be the core of the book and the core of the core of the idiot's mind. No matter what names and nomenclatures we give to mentally retarded people, they remain basically insane people, mentally unbalanced, abnormal, and practically mad. Haddon suggests we should not only protect the idiots from the possibility of harming themselves. We should, rather, protect ourselves from their madness: because the idiot thinks that he is special, he is better, and he should live but everyone else should die.

The associations of Christopher's idiotic bizarre ideas may be seen within the perspective of John C. L. Ingram's *Neurolinguistics: An Introduction to Spoken Language Processing and its Disorders*:

Thought disorder is traditionally clinically characterized in terms of either 'looseness or bizarreness of association' between ideas, or as an absence of appropriate expressions which enable the listener to construct a coherent model of what the speaker is talking about.<sup>25</sup>

Ingram goes on to say in his book that "There has been much debate about the underlying cognitive pathology of thought disordered speech". In addition to the disconnected contents and incoherent speech production, there is an impairment of the language competence, with a cognitive deficit.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, we see in the utterances spoken by Christopher that there is hardly anything more than a memory of a paralyzed boy whom he detests; and a wishful thought that the world would come to an end by a global and fatal virus; consequently, this idiot will be the master of the universe.

Subsequently, the idiotic element is hereby evident in the cognitively impoverished contents of the imbecile's reminiscences and reveries, as well as the bizarreness of his unedifying speech performance, or the flow of his incoherent ideas.

It should be noted that the above is present in the previous novels as well, minus the wickedness of Christopher; or, free from Christopher's malice and malignancy.

We have no clue how Mark Haddon was able to penetrate the idiot's mind. We have no proof that Haddon's idiot is scientifically accurate, that he is portrayed with correctness and faultlessness from the medical perspective. But, we know that Haddon as novelist is guided by his art and his understanding of human nature.

The achievement of Haddon in the depiction of the autistic child stands out brilliantly. He has shown us the evil, wicked, sinister, jeopardizing, ruthless, merciless, unforgiving side of the seemingly innocent creature called the idiot. So, in appearance, he is just a retarded boy. In reality, he wishes for the extinction of the entire human race. He only wants the stupid morons to survive, only the brainless to live on. But, Christopher is too stupid to realize that the ordinary and intelligent people are the ones who give the chance for the survival and welfare of the idiots.

To conclude this section, Haddon tells us to stop being naïve and start looking at idiots as they really are: probable offenders as soon as they get the chance.

## VI. RESULTS

1- From the discussions above, the researchers believe that the term "stream of consciousness" is actually a misnomer that misrepresents what goes on in the idiotic characters' minds. What these unfortunate characters have and what they truly expose is just unconsciousness in digressive bursts.

2- These characters lack control over their memories and reminiscences. They move aside from the direct line of narration, causing repeated digressions from the main direction of the focal point.

3- All these novels, with various degrees, deal with special people in Mark Haddon's words. They dwell in memories, digressions, and nightmares. If we chose to abandon seeing the amusing side of such characters, we may detect a freakish and much disturbing element in them. These pathological cases may jeopardize the entire species or the entire planet. That is, their perilous existence endangers all mankind. That the novelists write about them is a good warning.

4- Mentally retarded/disordered characters inspire literature, especially in characterization.

5- The focus of the writer changes from events and Chain-of-Being to the retardation-embodiment (i.e, the insane boy) of the protagonist in the book.

6- Such a character is flat. But, its flatness is the source of eccentricity in the text.

7- Social behavior is criticized indirectly by the author when he uses a retarded sick mentality for the heroism of the novel.

8- Shakespeare's clowns, fools, and jesters were the source of the mentally-retarded hero in English literature. But, Sterne, the novelist, changed it from the genre of Drama to the genre of Novel.

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