THE DISABLED AS OTHER IN OUT OF MY MIND BY SHARON DRAPER

Sertuğ BAKIRCI

Master's Thesis
Department of English Language and Literature
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SHARON DRAPER TARAFINDAN YAZILAN İÇİMDEKİ MÜZİK ADLI ROMANDA ENGELLİLERİN ÖTEKİLEŞTİRİLMESİNE ÖRNEKLER

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TEKİRDAĞ NAMIK KEMAL UNIVERSITY

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ÖZET

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Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* adlı ünlü kitabında, Batılı zihnin ikili bir karşıtlık sisteminde kendini ve ötekini nasıl tanımladığını araştırır ve sosyal yapılardaki farklı gruplar arasındaki ilişkilerin bu özdeşleşmelerden nasıl etkilendiğini inceler. Bu farklılaşmış gruplardan biri olan engelliler de toplum içinde bu karşılaştırmadan etkilenerek ötekiliğe zorlanmaktadır. Bu çalışmada, Sharon Draper'ın son ve en çok satan kitabı *Out of My Mind*'a kapsamlı bir tematik yaklaşım sunulmaktadır. Araştırmamız iki bölümden oluşmaktadır: birinci bölüm, Sharon Draper'ın romanında kullandığı tematik bakış açılarını ve anlatı tekniklerini ortaya çıkarmak için geleneksel gerçekçi romana ilişkin eleştirel teoriye ve Rus eleştirmen Mikhail Bakhtin'in Bildungsroman'ı tanımlamasına ve açıklamasına dayanmaktadır; ikinci bölümde ise yazarın engellilerin toplumdaki yerini metinleştirme ve sorgulama biçimi, başkahraman Melodi'nin deneyimi üzerinden tartışılmaktadır. Bu amaçla, Michel Foucault'nun "*Şeylerin Düzeni*" (1966) adlı çalışmasında kavrama getirdiği yeni bakış açıları başta olmak üzere, özellikle "ben ve öteki" kuramına ilişkin olarak "episteme" kavramı açıklanmıştır. Bu amaçla Kripistemoloji, Epistemolojinin engellileri tanımlamadaki yetersizliğini vurgulayan yeni bir Epistemoloji alanı olarak tanıtılır. Son olarak, tez, çağdaş toplumların, bilinçsiz bilgi yığını sonucunda engelli grupları marjinalize etme ve onları dar kalıplara yerleştirme yollarını tartışır ve bunun için; Sharon Draper'ın *Out of My Mind* adlı eserinden çeşitli örnekler sunar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Episteme, Bildungsroman, Engelli, Öteki

ABSTRACT

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In his famous book *The Order of Things,* Michel Foucault explores how the western mind identifies the self and the other in a binary opposition system and examines how relationships between different groups in social structures are affected by those identifications. The disabled people, as one of those differentiated groups, are also influenced by the juxtaposition and forced into otherness in society. In this study, a comprehensive thematological approach to Sharon Draper's latest and bestseller book *Out of My Mind* is provided. Our research consists of two parts: the first part relies on the critical theory concerning the traditional realist novel and the Russian critic Mikhail Bakhtin's definition and explanation of the Bildungsroman in order to reveal the thematic perspectives and narrative techniques used by Sharon Draper in her novel; in the second part, the author's way of textualizing and questioning the place of the disabled people in society is discussed through the view of the experience of the protagonist Melody. For this purpose, the concept of "episteme" is introduced, including the new perspectives that Michel Foucault brought to the concept in his work "The Order of Things" (1966), particularly with regard to the theory of "the self and the other". To this, Cripistemology is prompted as a new field of Epistemology, emphasizing the inadequacy of Epistemology to define the disabled. Finally, the thesis discusses the ways in which the contemporary societies marginalise disabled groups and place them into narrow templates as a result of the unconscious bulk of knowledge and for this; *Out of My Mind* by Sharon Draper provides various examples.

Keywords: Episteme, Bildungsroman, Disabled, Other

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INTRODUCTION

As a professional educator, Sharon Draper meets with her readers in many successful books and poems along with her carrier and is named after as an award-winning writer in top lists of American contemporary literature.

She gains international fame with her books which are generally based on her African-American background experiences. However, in her last book *Out of My Mind*, which is also stood on the best-seller lists for almost two years, she leaves aside her racial background and introduces us to an eleven-year-old girl Melody, who is born with a congenital disorder, namely Cerebral Palsy.

Sharon Draper, for the first time in her writing history, without referencing any racial features and international problems, tells us Melody's story generally focusing on her adaptation to society and creating her identity successfully. Although she never openly admits that she focuses on the social exclusion of disabilities from society, as she is a mother of a daughter who is also a patient of Cerebral Palsy, it is inevitable to ignore that in her book she represents us their daily routines, and arguing how to think about their problems.

This study, in which a detailed analysis of Sharon Draper's book *Out of My Mind* is made, deals with the text in two main sections.

In the first part, how human perception works and how the source of knowledge comes from past to present are discussed. To do that, we examined the concept of Episteme as a term and introduced Epistemology as a science, and explained the new perspective that French sociology professor Michel Foucault brought to the definition of Episteme.

Later, it is aimed at that how disabilities are reflected from this new episteme factor and explained how disabled bodies are placed as the other in the unconscious bulk of knowledge of people in the society. As a result, we introduced Cripistemology as a new

kind of Epistemology in which scholars mainly focused on to detect false epistemes about disabilities and their sources, and tries to change human perspectives with new ones.

In the second part of the dissertation, structural features are examined of the novel *Out of My Mind*. For this purpose, Traditional Bildungsroman has introduced, and Russian literary critics Mikhail Bakhtin's new perspectives to identify Realist Bildungsroman and its features on both structural and thematological side are explained in detail. Also, the historical development of English literature and Post-Modern Period's effects on this development slightly mentioned to show that how the author Sharon Draper developed the story of Melody under the structural and thematological features of Post-Modern Realist Bildungsroman.

In the last part of the dissertation, as she is a representative of a disabled minority, it is discussed that how Draper chooses to reflect on the social problems that accompany the lives of people with disabilities; such as wrong epistemes and beliefs revealed from false terminology, alienation and identity crisis of disabled bodies, and human behaviours towards the disabled, and their effects on the psychology of the disabled person on her book *Out of My Mind*.

DISABILITIES AS THE OTHER

French philosopher, sociologist, anthropologist, psychologist and literary critic Michel Foucault (15 October 1926 - 25 June 1984) expresses his views on the relationship between objects and their names in Western languages in his book "Les mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines" (1966). In doing so, he makes use of Phenomenological and Epistemological terminology and expands his explanation to the limits of representation by supporting his ideas with the help of many examples from different areas of human life. His work can be divided into three main categories; natural history, economics and philology, respectively; and details his idea of episteme by how these areas deal with the principle of "the self and the other" in their terminology and structures.

In the natural history section, he explains how human beings find their place among the other creatures of the god and how they categorise every kind of existence around themselves with respect to the great chain of beings. According to Foucault, phenomenological categorisation of the human mind, namely Eidetic Abstractions, divides everything into different groups by their differences. The process begins with the definition of oneself as a living, perfect being with fully functional features such as thinking, seeing, hearing and speaking, walking, or grasping objects. As a result, relations with other humanoid forms of life and differences between animals and vegetation begin to appear in the mind. In his own words "according to this order, every chapter dealing with a given animal should follow the following plan: name, theory, kind, species, attributes, use, and to conclude, Litteraria" (Foucault, 1994, p. 130). These abstractions also trigger people's survival instincts, leading them to avoid different and dangerous ones, such as humans with different colours or languages or wild animals; and attempts to dominate weaker or harmless things such as pets or vegetables or younger, older and sick people.

For the primitive mind, it was important to identify things with their physical features at first sight. However, while developing their understanding, instead of their visible features, humankind learned how to focus on the functions of creations and discovered similarities among living beings and saw its place in the universe with more accomplished meaning. Still, over time, it turned out that the true meaning is not in differences but the essence. It was the life itself that had meaning and every creature on the earth was the only another way of representation of life. Visual or non-visual features or functions of beings did not give any superiority against the other life forms.

On the other hand, instead of trying to live alone under alien conditions, the power of living together in a society understood, and communities started to be formed based on the similar characteristics such as physical, lingual and cultural similarities or just living in a common geography. While, rather than survive among wild animals, it makes life easier to join a communal system, it also brought many other challenges in different contexts.

One of those problems appeared on providing individual needs and compensation of individual labour.

In the beginning, Mother Nature was supplying every need of human beings by giving it beautiful fruits, vegetables and cereals. Yet, later on, when humankind understood that it could not be enough to recuperate its needs by these resources, they began to learn how to hunt, skin and cook animals. Unfortunately, it did not take a long time to see that the human body is not created with the ability to collect every need of its biological structure. As a result of that understanding, the concept of sharing commodities appeared.

In this model, one person was exchanging excess products obtained by their profession in order to get other kinds of products from others. As time went on and many inventions were revealed in technology, humankind understood that there were many things

waiting deep inside of Mother Earth and it needed a great labour force to unearth and share them with people.

Unfortunately, again, it was not possible to share these new commodities with every individual because of their difficult production processes. These problems gave birth to other ones such as the value of the goods and meaning of the wealth; because: "the great 'paradox of value' was dealt with, by opposing the useless dearness of the diamond to the cheapness of the water without which we cannot live" (Foucault, 1994, p. 167); and did lead people to create representative, symbolic values which helped to distribute products among people. Initially, gold dominated the markets, but later it became clear that the creation of symbolic value, that is money, was important and the whole economic structure had to change from bottom to top. Yet there was a lot of work to be done and many more people waiting to meet their needs. Therefore, they had to categorise labour into different groups and compensate them within a bounded structure with respect to work's difficulties.

In this system of values, an individual's capacity to handle a work gained great importance and people without such ability, such as old and ill ones, and especially disabled ones lost the interest of society and were left to their doom. Because of the principle of "*self and the other*" which takes self in the centre and leaves the other aside, society had to think of its interests and had to leave these people who had no expectations for the future behind.

The traces of the concept of self and the other can be seen not only in the history of nature and in the socio-economic structure of society, but also in the development of language and the construction of every sign pattern of the human mind.

When the primitive mind of humankind discovered that it could make certain sounds and use them to manifest its emotions, demand its needs, and frighten the wild animals and different people, it began to use these sounds within a certain order. Early humans, in the beginning, tried to express their feelings and needs in simple, animalistic

voices; however, after a while, they realized that it was not possible to express their every need and communicate with such simple patterns. As a result, each community began to develop a local and unique language that it could use amongst itself. These languages were originally based on the same pattern as the sounds they used; however, it made it possible to express themselves more easily and correct syntax while building more complex structures by putting different sounds side by side.

While explaining this linguistic development, Foucault focuses on the concepts and their representations on the linguistic structures, and mainly centres on three different and important eras in English literary history; Classical Era, Renaissance Period and Modern Period which begins with 18th century`s ideological and technical advancements.

According to him in the Classical Era words only presents things in their existence. As people's needs increased, it began to be understood that it was not possible to be content with natural products and the necessity to produce their commodities arose. This has revealed the need to create new words and language structures to describe the features of newly produced products and concepts.

However, while all these developments were taking place, human beings still maintained the same primitive motives and needed to separate their existence from others. And so, the need for people to define themselves differently from others in the chaotic universe they lived in first caused some binary oppositions in their minds, and then the need to express these concepts that appeared in their minds began to be reflected in the languages.

Therefore, words which are only present things in their existences turns to representations in Renaissance and this new form of words "are not rooted in a world that gives them meaning; they open of themselves on to a space that is their own, whose internal network gives rise to meaning" (Foucault, 1994, p. 78).

This endless development turned "representation of representations" at the Modern Era within a complex structure. Thus, the need to define self and the other gave rise to terms such as I and you, black and white, God and devil, good and bad, rich and poor, healthy and disabled etc. For this reason, it can be said that the binary opposition order of self and the other is the basis of the introduction of concepts and terms such as social groups and institutions, ethnicity, moral values and ethics, crime and punishment or rewarding goodness into our daily lives.

According to Michel Foucault, humankind's need to describe oneself and the other creates some "a priori" concepts in the human mind and these concepts shape all our world with respect to contemporary contexts. He explains it by:

> "Natural history is contemporaneous with language: it is on the same
> level as the spontaneous play that analyses representations in the
> memory, determines their common elements, establishes signs upon
> the basis of those elements, and finally imposes names.
> Classification and speech have their place of origin in the same space
> that representation opens up within itself because it is consecrated to
> time, to memory, to reflection, to continuity" (Foucault, 1994, p. 158).

This unconscious knowledge of the human mind comes from previous individual experiences and, for a particular period, influences all society as if they were true. This phenomenon is called Episteme in the history of philosophy, and it is possible to discuss many different themes from the aspect of epistemology. The next section will be interested in discussing disability issues from the perspective of Michel Foucault's ideas about episteme and its political discourses, and show how this epistemological knowledge changed the look to disabled people. Then, Cripistemology will be introduced as a new type of Epistemology that approaches different aspects of disabilities as a part of social diversity.

DISABILITY AS AN EPISTEME

As I discussed in the previous section, since the beginning of life, humans have attempted to give meaning to both themselves and the other things around them. According to Edmund Husserl human mind gives meaning to objects, subjects and events with the help of phenomena which are interactions between subject and object. Epistemology is also related to these phenomena because epistemes appear as the results of the previous experiences of individuals and it could not be possible to mention any experience without any interaction between subjects and objects.

Prior to the work of Michel Foucault, the episteme was considered as unconscious bulk of knowledge that accumulated cumulatively over generations. However, Foucault approached the topic from a Post-Modern Marxist perspective and claimed that episteme is not only an unconscious bulk of knowledge but also a political discourse to dominate people. Hegemonic groups always wanted to normalise their discourse and eliminate deviant ones by the power of episteme. It is possible to mention many different groups such as women, coloured ethnicities, people with different beliefs and disabled ones which are affected by those political discourses and find themselves alone in the history of humanity as deviants. Whereas many of those minority rights have been defended since the last two centuries, unfortunately, people with disabilities, as one of those groups, were remembered by society only for the last fifty years. "When President Ford signed the EHA on November 29, 1975, it signalled the culmination of a long struggle for greater educational opportunity and the beginning of a new era..." (Engel, 1991, p. 170).

From the beginning of history, disabilities have been accepted with pity and people with disabilities seen as people cursed by gods. Clearly, this is a reflection of the ignorance of primitive people, but interestingly, this reflection has not left human society for millennia. Even today it is possible to see the same approach to people with disabilities as the other. This prejudice against disabilities comes from the accepted episteme of societies and "this

unconscious prejudice against persons with disabilities can result in segregation, isolation, persecution, and the consideration of the individual with a disability as a social outcast" (Murdick et all. 2004, p. 310).

Roots of the idea of episteme based on Herder's "Collective Individuality of Society" idea in which every individual adjusts to the collective mind of a society with its own experiences, and "a priori" knowledge in a specific society in a specific time could only be the result of the accumulated old experiences of individuals in the same society. Likewise, it is also possible to say that in the core of that episteme about disabled people stands "the horror of the unknown."

> "The psychological term for fear of the unknown is "xenophobia." In modern usage, the word has evolved to mean the fear of strangers or foreigners — but its original meaning is much broader. It includes anything or anyone that's unfamiliar or unknown." (Understanding and Overcoming Fear of the Unknown, Medically reviewed by Cynthia Cobb, DNP, APRN, WHNP-BC, FAANP — Written by Rebecca Joy Stanborough, MFA on July 23, 2020)

Since the first ages, people with impairments could not be understood correctly by normal people and have been excluded from every kind of interaction unintentionally. The development of society and gained importance of the labour force also led them to their inevitable doomed positions. Except for some deductions based on some monstrous representations in the first examples of cultural materials such as mythologies, legends and folk tales, it is very difficult to find any information about disabled people's conditions in the first eras. In those archaic ages, communities only defined them by their lack of abilities and give terms to their visible problems such as blindness, deafness, lameness, muteness etc. However, in the Middle Ages, it is possible to say that they were mostly locked down in their houses and kept away from social life; because in those times, even for a normal person, life was very harsh and for disabled ones, it was impossible to resume their lives

without any familial support. As we have said before, it was inevitable for people with disabilities to be abandoned to such conditions, because it was impossible for them to join the workforce, which was mostly based on physical strength, and to continue their lives because of their disability, and this caused them to fall out of favour with the society. Besides, human sciences were not developed yet to study and understand their real problems and psychological world. With the development of social and economic structures, they were mentioned with new terms based on their active role in the community and the contrast by their features with the majority, such as disabled, handicapped or malformed bodies. This type of grouping people with impairments and leaving them to their fate results in many other ethical questions and created the otherness of these minorities in the community. Unfortunately, this type of classification continues today; even Sharon Draper has had to question the "normal person" as a term that has been ingrained in the minds of society in her book. When we look at the novel as a complete text, we see that Sharon Draper tries to find the answer to this alienation and exclusion in terminology, and questioning many times through Melody what the real meaning of "normal" and "disabled" are. For instance, she asks "where do they get those almost-pleasant-sounding phrases to describe kids like me?" (2010: 16) and continue to fight with terms and exclusion of mentally or physically limited children in language and daily parole. In the same way, Melody sarcastically questions people's opinions about disabilities while asking; "We all have disabilities. What's yours?" (2010: 79) or declares her point against wrong terms such as retarded; "It's no wonder everybody thinks I'm retarded. I hate that word, by the way, Retarded" (2010: 22).

Unfortunately, it was only after the philosophical and scientific developments of the 19th century that the disabled were accepted as a marginalised minority group by society and were found worthy of research within the framework of both physical and psychological sciences. Thereby they gained their academic study area as Disability Studies and in this respect, many different approaches and theories were established for them. Still, even today

their place in society is ambivalent because the epistemological heritage of humankind still accepts them as the other and the human mind can only develop ideas to integrate them into the majority group instead of accepting them with their conditions.

Epistemology describes cultural norms as an unconscious bulk of knowledge that appears in individuals' mind in a society at a particular time. However, Michel Foucault in his famous work "The Order of Things" shows us episteme is not only an unconscious bulk of knowledge but also a dictation of hegemony at the same time. When we look at the traces of epistemological knowledge on literary texts, it is clear that there is a link between written knowledge and human thoughts. Every age and period create its own binary oppositions, like self and the other or black and white, or, normal and disabled in this case, and constructs its own politics on these juxtapositions. Hegemonic groups and minorities like nobles and peasants, Western and Eastern cultures, white and coloured people have always stood different tips on the same stick. As a minority group, the people with disabilities have also had their share of this dictation and otherness. After defining themselves as healthy beings, humankind began to show their differences from unhealthy ones and put them in a secluded place away from society by alienating them. People lock up their children, society prevents them from having a job or getting married. All these wrong-doings could remain individual applications, but the power of language affected the masses and resulted in these attitudes easily spread among all communities. As the languages are developed, the unconscious bulk of knowledge found its place also in literature and spread with an increased degree in people's minds.

Every period in literary history represented its own disabilities in a different context and side meanings. In mythological ages, body defects were mostly represented as dark souls. For example, in Ancient Greek myths, they were presented in the shape of Cyclopes, who have one eye on their heads and described mostly brutal. Although it is a much closer example to the present day, in the text about the adventures of the famous

English legendary hero Beowulf, we see Grendel. Due to his large size and frightening appearance, he is ostracized by society and forced to live in a cave with his mother. As if this is not enough, he perceives the sounds at a higher level than they are due to a problem in his ears and is disturbed by the sounds people make in the name of entertainment. In the end, ignored by the people he suffered, Grendel is brutally killed by the "hero" Beowulf, with bare hands. However, mankind is not satisfied with this, and they send Beowulf to the cave where Grendel lives and have his mother also killed.

Although the ancient Greek philosophers gave a different meaning to blindness by giving the power of prophecy to the blind in many theatre texts and stories and paved the way for people to put themselves in the place of a blind person, disabled people in general, and not to exclude them from society; unfortunately, with great empires and socio-cultural transformations, this brilliant idea lost its place in society over time and disabilities once again became a representation of flaws in the souls such as greed, hatred or false virtue. This mentality can be seen in almost all kinds of works, from medieval stories to 19th-century novels. It is possible to find the kind of contempt we have mentioned in many works that have made their name among the world classics such as *The Hunchback of Notre Dame, of Mice and Men, Moby Dick, Peter Pan, Jane Eyre, Metamorphosis* etc.

It is possible that while all these examples are being written they may not have been indite with the interests of hegemonic groups in the foreground. For example, Victor Hugo, while describing Quasimodo's character in his world-famous work *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, drew attention to his deafness, one-eyed face, grotesque body, poverty and his social exclusion as a result. On the other hand, Hugo tells how Quasimodo is pure-hearted through his love for Esmeralda and his preference for death by lying beside the girl's grave, or Lennie Small, the mentally unstable character introduced to the reader in John Steinbeck's book *Of Mice and Men*, is shown to have a pure heart, but unintentionally harms people by not being able to control his nerves. Like Grendel, he is not accepted by society

and is forced to be killed by his best friend, George Milton, whose friendship has been emphasized since the beginning of the story.

In *Moby Dick* and *Peter Pan*, on the other hand, the authors preferred to choose the villains of their stories among disabled individuals. In his worldwide bestselling book, *Moby Dick*, Herman Melville describes Captain Ahab, whose leg was amputated by a giant white whale that he was hunting and shows us how he became obsessed with avenging his leg. However, the white whale Moby Dick did nothing but hunt as his nature required and defend himself when his life was in danger. Likewise, James Matthew Barrie in his work *Peter Pan* tells the story of a one-handed villain named Captain Hook, who seeks to avenge his hand amputated by the protagonist Peter Pan, and in return tries to take over the children's homes in "Neverland."

Besides these examples, by the effect of socio-cultural structure and newly developing mentalities of the Victorian Age, disability began to be used as a tool to guide different ideologies. For instance, Charlotte Brontë not only reflected the perspective of the culture of the period on the disabled but also used it as a way of reflecting her feminist ideology by featuring two different disabled characters in her much-loved work *Jane Eyre*. By presenting Mr Rochester's mentally disabled ex-wife as "the woman in the attic" who was locked down in the attic of Rochester Manor, she first criticizes Victorian England's view of both women and people with disabilities. Then, she cripples a nobleman like Mr Rochester in a housefire and seeks to emphasize gender equality by aligning him with Jane Eyre, who has been humiliated for being a woman from the beginning of the story.

Similarly, another example appears in *Metamorphosis*, the most well-known work of Franz Kafka, one of the leading names in German literature. Coming from a low-class family, Gregor Samsa, despite his young age, is responsible for his family's livelihood. But unfortunately, he wakes up one morning to find himself in the grip of a bedridden illness. After this point, he will not be able to work, so he will not be a useful individual for his

family and the society he lives in. Writing his story with a Marxist approach, Kafka sees no harm in portraying Gregor as if he has turned into a cockroach while describing this depressive state he has fallen into. Nevertheless, in one way or another, such definitions are often brought before individuals, even at an early age, and effects in the preservation of society's unconscious bulk of knowledge. And today, it is impossible to clear our language of these misused terms and definitions, and unfortunately, modern man is making this deviation deeper and deeper.

Unfortunately, conducting research on the care and rehabilitation of the disabled, as well as determining their social rights, did not occur to humans until the 1970s. In 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA), signed by Gerald Rudolph Ford Jr., who was then President of the United States, suddenly drew eyes on people with disabilities and their rights, thereby sparking academic studies known today as Disability Studies. On the other hand, the binary opposition thought system, which forms the basis of Western mentality, has also been effective in disability studies and caused the disabled minority, who should have been defended their needs and rights, differentiated within itself. Disabled individuals are divided into two main categories as physical and mental, and under these headings, they started to be distinguished according to whether they were disabled as a result of an accident or if they had some problems as a result of a congenital disease. As a result, dozens of different types of disability groups emerged.

Although studies focusing on separate identifications such as Crippled, Queer, and Disabled yielded some positive results when examined separately, they never allowed disabled individuals to be examined under a single heading and prevented individuals with disabilities from being fully understood and accepted by the rest of the society. In this newly gained perspective, ensuring the participation of the disabled with the rest of the society was at the centre of the ideas and this created new problems under the name of "*Ableism*".

With ableism, societies and states aimed to cover the deficient or "different" aspects of people with "difference" who were considered to be mentally or physically disabled. However, the development of rehabilitation methods specific to each disabled group and the difference in the equipment and care tools required by each disability group created extra burdens for both the society and the states. Unfortunately, this meant returning to the point where they started for the disabled. Disabled people, who have been isolated from society for centuries, had difficulty accessing the equipment and health insurance support they needed because they did not have sufficient income levels, and governments also needed huge budgets to make investments that were inclusive of all people with disabilities. As if all of this were not enough, the equipment and medicines that helped the disabled to meet their most basic needs were very expensive, causing a new business line to be created in which malicious people tried to obtain these materials and sell them with more expensive prices than their values. For this reason, governments began to require the approval of more than one institution in the delivery of drugs and equipment, which are covered by the health insurance laws prepared for the disabled. Sharon Draper cannot help herself but talk about these woes too in "Out of My Mind".

In Chapter 15, while Catherine and Melody search for a talking device for her, Sharon Draper expresses this situation (2010 pp.60-61). Computers in class H-5, the class for disabled children, are clumsy because of the indifference of people to disabled kids. When they found a working computer and found a website which can list some apparatus for mute children like Melody, they also see that these kinds of equipment are really expensive and cannot be reached by them at the moment. In addition, laws and regulations for the disabled make it difficult to access these tools that enable them to meet their basic needs. She criticises this situation with these sentences: "...we have to ask my doctor to fax in a prescription. I've heard of prescriptions for antibiotics, but for machines? That seems crazy. Who'd ever want this machine unless they needed it?" (2010: 62).

By 2010, Merri Lisa Johnson from the University of South Carolina Upstate and Robert McRuer from the George Washington University, who were conducting studies on Disability Studies, realized that there was no term or theory that would allow examining the problems of all individuals with disabilities under a single heading. Thus, seeing the need for a new kind of epistemology, Merri Lisa Johnson coined the term "Cripistemology". This new type of epistemology would focus on what we know about people with disabilities and through what sources we obtain that information. Philosophers interested in cripistemology while looking for new definitions, also started to look for ways to protect the social rights of disabled individuals and thus paved the way for socially equal standards for disabled bodies.

At a conference held in 2013, there was an attempt to gather all disabled studies under a heading, but it was revealed that there are ongoing wrong thought patterns in the society against each individual with physical or mental problems. According to the results of the studies, although the knowledge of the society about the disabled was based only on hearsay at the beginning, today, it comes from more than one field that surrounds the individuals. This information, which later finds its way to literature and its extension theatre plays, by the development of technology reached individuals through scientific studies and classifications and cinema, and today has entered our homes through television broadcasting and advertising. All of these studies are made available to the public in *"the Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies 2014, Issue 2, Volume 8, and Issue 3, Volume 9 by Liverpool University Press."*

Looking from this new perspective, namely Cripistemology, Sharon Draper's "*Out of My Mind"* shows us a great diverse panorama of society and point out that false epistemes are settled on every person, without exception, even in educated minds. For example, Melody's doctor, even as a man who has a scientific point of view, accepts epistemes about Cerebral Palsy and suggest her family abandon their daughter to her fate and live their lives.

Doctor Hugely declares his epistemological beliefs about Melody even without making any scientific test on her and saying; "it is my opinion that Melody is severely brain-damaged and profoundly retarded" (2010: 15), however, on the same page, we can see that Melody has more potential than her peers, and that she could understand a fair amount of Spanish if spoken slowly enough, and that she knew the words and melodies of hundreds of songs, as well as all the colours, forms, and animals that children her age were expected to recognise.

Likewise, we see those educators responsible for the education of children with disabilities make the same mistake and try to educate children with mental and physical disabilities in the same class. They put them in a classroom for kindergarten-level children with big smiling faces and animal depictions on the walls, and they try to fill time for them by applying the same training from scratch every year. For Melody, as a sane 11-year-old girl, this kind of educational environment is far from what she had dreamed of.

Fortunately, in her second year in the H-5 class, their teacher, Mrs Tracey, realizes that Melody is not like the other kids, and decides to give her audiobooks where she can make the right use of her wasted time. However, this sweet touch in Melody's life will also be short-lived. Ms Billups, the third-year teacher of H-5 class, takes audiobooks given to Melody and tries to apply the same methods to her as she does for mentally retarded children. Sharon Draper shows us how Mrs Billups believes her epistemological knowledge about a disabled child and blindly defends this prescriptive information with such words; "But Melody does have mental and physical limitations…You have to learn to accept that." Even Mr Dimming, her inclusion class teacher, later on, without hesitation declares that he thinks that she could not answer the National Wiz-Kidz Tournament questions. Considering that even adult and educated individuals are so ignorant about the disabled, it is not difficult to predict that the thoughts and judgments of children at an early age can reach even more frightening levels. Unfortunately for her peers, Melody is seen as a pathetic creature who cannot even think. This can be seen in children's response to Melody's first talking through

Medi-Talker, and Claire speak loudly this thought as; "I'm not trying to be mean – honest – but it just never occurred to me that Melody had thoughts in her head." (2010: 68)

In this episode, before moving on to Melody's otherness, we tried to make an epistemological explanation of the main reason behind the flaws in society's view of the disabled. Before we move on to her social exclusion, in the next section, I will discuss the novel's structural features and how they can be considered as Post-Modern Bildungsroman. Later on, will continue to explain what challenges Melody has had to deal with as a congenitally disabled person, and these disabilities' effects on her otherness and the results of this otherness may have on her psychology.

MELODY'S STORY AS "*BILDUNG*"

Mikhail Bakhtin in his famous critical work *The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historical Typology of the   Novel)* identifies Bildungsroman as the novel of human emergence and the main theme as the "image of man in the process of becoming" (Bakhtin, 22). This type of novel is also called, "the novel of identity formation" in which protagonists come across different conditions and archetypal characters to find their own weak and strong points. They achieve or fail in the finding of their own identity formation.

Yet, before defining and explaining the rules of Bildungsroman and its own subgenres, he classifies traditional novel into three types which are consists of as the travel novel, the novel of ordeal and biographical or autobiographical novel. In the travel novel story developed under the same stillness of the world, time and hero.

> *"The travel novel typically involves a purely spatial and static conception of the world's diversity. The world is a spatial contiguity of differences and contrasts, and life is an alternation of various contrasting conditions: success/failure, happiness/unhappiness, victory/defeat, and so on." (*The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historical Typology of the Novel), M. Bakhtin, p.11)

According to him, in this type of novel "temporal categories are extremely poorly developed." Temporal conditions only develop on adventure time and "consists of the most immediate units." The emphasis of the reader is only placed on differences and this contrast does not include any wholeness between sociocultural aspects. Even hero's himself contains this stativity and while his status changes abruptly from one position to another (such as homeless wanderer to a nobleman), his character stays unchanged.

The second type of traditional novel; the novel of ordeal is constructed on the basis of ethical tests of hero. It does not give importance to spatial or temporal conditions. "The novel of ordeal, as distinct from the travel novel, concentrates on the hero; in the majority of cases the surrounding world and the secondary characters are transformed into a mere background for the hero, into a decoration, a setting" (The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historical Typology of the Novel), M. Bakhtin, p.15). The hero is mainly prepared as a ready-made character and his ethics are only tested and justified for his or her inner capabilities. In the history of literature, this type of novel developed from Ancient Greeks' ethical heroes to early Christian hagiographies; from Medieval chivalries to early modern Napoleonic heroes; Nietzschean immoralists to Russian type social fitness and general worthiness.

The last type of traditional novel, biographical or autobiographical novels focuses on the hero's journey of life his or her failures and success in this journey. While Bakhtin divides them into four subcategories such as naïve old form of success/failure, the confessional form, hagiographic and 18th-century18 family-biographical novels, all of them developed on the same construction methods. The plot is constructed precisely on the basic aspects of the life course, but the character of the hero remains unchanged even in changing status and conditions. The time and the world gain great importance and affects greatly hero's character and life conditions. Still, heroization merely left its place to character's creation of destiny.

Bakhtin defines and regroups also Bildungsroman novels under five different titles which represent the features of Bildungsroman with different aspects. The first group of Bildungsroman has a purely cyclical feature in which the main character's age changes from childhood to maturity. In this type of novel, the era or changing of time never gains importance. The writer's only focus is on the protagonist's inner changes regarding his or

her age. The second type of Bildungsroman appears as another kind of cycle that is similar to the first one, but it differs in some aspects. The mental development of the main character in the novel becomes even more important. The author approaches life as a school, in which it is never important whether there is a real school or not, but it is life and every experience in it has its own lessons. The writer pays attention to giving his or her protagonist new perspectives which are gained from experiences in the "school" to live in it purposefully. The third type of novel of identity formation appears as a biographical or autobiographical novel in which the main character develops his or her own destiny alongside his or her character formation. The fourth group of "the novel of emergence" is represented as "didactic-pedagogical" novels. In this kind of novel, moral didacticism gains a great role in character development and the writer mainly focuses on giving moral lessons to readers.

However, according to Bakhtin, all of those representatives, in this way or that way, cannot present real conditions of life. Therefore, he defines another group of novels of emergence which he calls "realist bildungsroman." The difference from the other types of "novels of character formations" appears from its simultaneous changes in both the character development of the protagonist and the world around him/her. In the other four types of bildungsroman, the writer leaves aside the change around the world in which the character is living and mainly focuses on the character's own formation. Whilst, in the realist bildungsroman, it is important to inspect the features of the era and their changes along time besides the protagonist's character formation because the protagonist's character changes mainly as a reflection of these periods' features and conditions.

In literary history, although, there are slight differences in different literary texts created in the imagination capacity of different periods, works of literature produced under the Bildungsroman title have some common features on both structures and thematic sides as a consolidated literary system. Among the structural features, the most common ones are

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can be defined as "the split focalisation between the narrator and the hero"; in which the chronotope presented in complexity with two temporal dimensions, one is the time of the story/narrative of identity formation and the other is the time of telling/narration. Apparently, the narrator is usually represented as an autodiegetic one and the mode of narration is mainly presented with "linear and retrospective formation". As a result of this split focalisation, the tone of the narrative presents usually ironic and interrelated, often, with the use of foreshadowing. The point of view is chosen mostly as omniscient, which reveals the main character's interior existence and social experience at full length. In the end, the text can be called "readerly", in that;

> *The reader perceives the textual material through the eyes of the protagonist-narrator, and both the narrator and the reader understand and know more than the protagonist who changes by the end of the novel; this should be so since the novel depicts the process of an immature, inexperienced, often naïve character reaching identity formation.* (Golban, 2018, p.26).

She presents us the story of Melody in an autobiographical form within a system developed by chapters and tells us only a few sequences of her life. These parts contain various ages but mostly focus on her eleventh year because the most important events of her life appear in that year and her identity formation is shaped around these events' results. This type of development creates the aforementioned split focalisation and ironic, autodiegetic, omniscient narrative because she tells us her own story from a different point of view than the time that events occur. Foreshadowing is also used to create links between symbolic thoughts and events supposed to happen in the next chapters; such as between buying "Medi-Talker" to speak for her in her daily routine and her daydreams about having talking bubbles on her head like a comic character (2010: 42). These kinds of features make the story a standard example of Bildungsroman on the structural side. However, in the

thematic perspective, there can be seen some differences and omitted rules from the traditional Bakhtinian Bildungsroman.

On the thematic side of the bildungs tradition, more features appear than the structure side of its examples. The common main thematic elements shared by the plot pattern of all novels can be given under Bildungsroman in which the subgenre begins with a child (sometimes an orphan or fatherless child) who lives in a village or provincial town. The child must be confronted with a trial by the older generation which reveals a conflict with his parental or non-parental figures. As a result of this trial, child has to leave his/her home to enter a larger society. Departure may be determined either by other external stimuli or by just a desire for an experience that the static atmosphere of home does not offer. Passing through institutionalised or self-education processes child becomes an adolescent and seeks social relationships. In this situation, his or her experience of life turns to a search for vocational and social accomplishment or a working philosophy of existence. Now s/he has to undergo the ordeal by society and occupational requirements (professional career) and s/he has to resist the trial by love (sentimental career). Inevitably it is not an easy period for him or her. S/he passes through moments of spiritual suffering and pain while reaching his or her early manhood or womanhood. These physical and psychological trials result in epiphanies that lead to his or her final spiritual (psychological/moral) change. In that way, the hero achieves formation as the concluding stage of the process of development. However, there are possibilities of different endings to his or her journey. It is possible to that formation might be complete or not; or can be seen any kind of partial success or failure in his or her different careers, such as vocational, sentimental or moral.

As well as many other examples of Bildungsroman traditions, Melody's story also begins in an unnamed provincial town. Yet, her first trial does not come from her parental figures but comes from her own handicapped body. Melody, as a congenitally apoplectic

girl, has to confront many defects and lack of abilities in her life. While born with cerebral palsy she has disadvantages. She cannot use her hands, walk, talk and even eat meals properly and she has to feed by others like a toddler all along with her life. In the first chapters of her story, we see a desperate, depressive girl who could not even roll on a carpet and mocks her own situation even in a rude way. However, her mother's support and meeting with Mrs V. completely change her life and perspective, and she decides to deal with any difficult situation she encounters. She begins to learn how to show things and how to communicate with others, and with the help of Catherine, who is appointed by the government and is tasked with taking care of her special needs during her time at school, she finds her rescue robot: Medi-Talker. It is a speaking device to help mute people to communicate with others. This device opens a big door in front of her and she participates in the National Whiz Kids knowledge tournament with her schoolmates. However, Sharon Draper while creating Melody with a complex character, she also adds two features that have great importance in her journey. She has *"Synaesthesia"* and *"Photographic Memory".*

While synaesthesia makes life more bearable, her photographic memory also helps her, in this case, to memorise many important cultural knowledge and help her school become a contestant in the national final tournament. However, unfortunately, neither her teacher nor schoolmates accept her situation as diversity in society and do not want to be seen beside her in media. Therefore, they leave her behind before going to Washington for the final tournament. This situation creates frustration in Melody's heart and as a consequence, an awful accident occurs which resulted in the injury of her sister. However, the result of these unfortunate events appears with the final development of her identity. She understands that it is not important to be accepted by people as a person with disabilities but to accept herself as she is. From the perspective of "Bakhtinian Bildungsroman," her long and difficult journey to the "National Whiz Kids" tournament can be accepted as a second

vocational career in the story besides her daily routine in school. It starts with a great success that requires another great effort but ends in a dramatic failure that is not tied to her actions or choices. On the other hand, her moral formation developed on her acceptance of her situation and adaptation to its consequences.

However, when we examine the story from the perspective of sentimental career which is implied by Mikhail Bakhtin as another Bildungsroman feature, we cannot see whether Melody has a sentimental career as a disabled person. However, it is obvious that this is deliberately excluded from the story, but this will be criticized in more detail under another heading.

Since Renaissance's arrival to British soil in 16th-century, the philosophical and literary minds of English people tide between classical and innovative motivations and movements. The discovery of Ancient Greek philosophies leads Englishmen to remember ethical values hidden in the human soul and paved the way to develop their ideas around idealism. Still, the pure Puritan approach to 17th-century literature and philosophy suffocates the literary minds of English men, forcing them to express their deeper fantasies and feelings in a new way, and opening the door to Romanticism at the end of the 18th-century. Influenced by developments in technics and many other sociological and cultural studies in European counterparts, however, in the 19th-century they feel deprivation to ethical methodologies again and, one more time turns their eyes to Ancient Greeks' ethical philosophies. This time more than a century, they seek salvation in literature and philosophy by trying to express their deepest problems in a mixture of different methods.

However, after two great wars; World War I and World War II, the literary and sophisticated world of humanity also has undergone major changes and left their old ethical based philosophies to post-Modernist thoughts which are constructed on Deconstruction and Re-construction of old systems within different mixtures. The old, traditional,

systematic and unshakeable pieces of knowledge left their places to new, innovative but uncertain and unsystematic and fragile thoughts and beliefs. New philosophers like Derrida, Lacan, Lyotard, Hutchinson or Foucault separated the hero (or the subject) from the old systematic narratives and focused on his or her fragile, weak, alienated soul in this new world with existential problems. In these new stories (or narratives), events are dealt with within fragments, and readers are faced with only a small part of heroes' lives. This new world is dystopic, shaken and harsher than before. Subjects of the stories also lost themselves in this broken world, feeling like the other, alone and alienated. Especially after the Post-Colonial Era, the subject's identity crisis appears more vivid in the stories. In these conditions, they have to confront all problems in their lives alone and must find a way to resolve them without losing their identities.

While Sharon Draper presents Melody as a successful character who finds her ways to resolve many problems in her life and appear as a complete identity, it is inevitable to approach her story as a Post-Modern Bildungsroman, in which she has to confront with her lack of abilities just as another puzzle in life that must be solved by a good effort, and must find her positive features. As a post-modern writer, Draper represents our contemporary cultural background, but she neither attempts to give any significance to that background nor its development in the era. She mainly focuses on her protagonist Melody's inner world, as a mute person it has more crucial importance than ever, and her personal character development in many different, difficult events and choices. In the first lines of the novel, Sharon Draper introduces us to Melody's muteness with this inner monologue: "Words have always swirled around me like snowflakes- each one delicate and different, each one melting untouched in my hands." (2010: 6). She has many thoughts in her mind, but she could not reflect them to others and she feels sadness in her heart. From this point of view, it is possible to say that Melody has the anxiety of loneliness and inability to express herself peculiar to Post-Modern period heroes and heroines.

In the next chapter and page, we learn also she *"can't walk... can't feed (herself) or take (herself) to the bathroom"* (2010: 7) and pity her own self, but hiding it by doing some simple wordplays like calling herself as a *"Big bummer"* (ibid). Her paraplegic situation does not give her a chance to roll on a carpet, even under a humiliating position like vomiting on it and unfortunately falling down on her own mess. Draper describes this desperateness with very good ironic language like;

> *I had lots of chances to figure out how the threads of a rug are woven as*
> *I lay there waiting for someone to pick me up. I couldn't roll over, so it was just an*
> *irritated me, the shag rug, and the smell of spilled sour soy milk in my face until I*
> *got rescued* (2010: 10).

However, while she attempts to live under these harsh conditions, there is always somebody who stands beside her and believe her capacity; her mother which is the actual idealistic parental figure in the story and Mrs V., one of their neighbours, which apparently an idealistic non-parental figure in the story. Despite having a disabled daughter, it is understandable and natural that her mother fights for her and believes Melody can someday recover, yet Mrs V's interest and involvement are admirable. As a retired nurse, Mrs V. sees the light in Melody's eyes and dedicates herself to teach her how to live without any support from her family. She is one of the first visitors when Melody was born, and the first person to treat her like any other baby. As a disabled kid, Melody's existential confusion and the emotional reflections of it on Melody is explained by her *mouth* as follows in this situation: "A lot of my parents' friends had been scared to even touch me, but not Mrs V!" (2010: 23). Months later a great friendship develops between them, and Mrs V. decides to support her self-confidence in different ways. In one of these ways, she lets her fall down from her wheelchair onto pillows to lets her learn how she could fall down without injuring herself and roll on to rug without any help. These little supports help her to improve her self-esteem, but it is not enough to learn about the outside-world. The real support for this kind of lack

of knowledge comes from her parents, especially from her mother. She never gives up her hopes about her and insists to sign her to a local elementary school instead of sending her to a special treatment centre. This unexpected progress opens new ways and doors in front of Melody and leads her to argue her position in society. Still, there are some problems to be got over it such as her eating and bladder issues and communication with others. To the first ones, until the state appoints an assistant for personal care, her mother commits herself and comes to school every day; and the latter one resolved by a "large Plexiglas tray that fastens to the arms of (her) chair. It serves as a food tray as well as a communication board…There are also a few necessary phrases" (2010: 22).

While she is trying to adapt to the school routine and gain acceptance among children, she attempts to prove herself worthy to be trusted and loved by others with the help of her intellectual capacity, but it does not reach a successful end for her. In the beginning, she finds some friends who appear to be helpful for her personal development, namely Catherine, who is her aide in her school days, and Rose who is one of her schoolmates. She is also the only person who values her among her classmates. There are few other minor characters who also pays attention to her intellectual capacities and makes more acceptable daily routines for her, but their influence not appears important for that section of our assertion. However, Melody mainly encounters apathy and alienation. In particular, two of her classmates, Molly and Claire, bully her and ignore that she has her own thoughts and feelings as an individual. As a result of being rejected by "normal" people, she turns her eyes to her disabled friends and begins to see their positive aspects. As a result, she realizes that she must accept herself as an individual with certain disorders, rather than being accepted by others. The author and narrator of the story, Sharon Draper, explains this understanding with these carefully chosen sentences;

"…I look at my friends there through different eyes.

Freddy, who wants to zoom to the moon.

Ashley, our fashion model.

Willy, the baseball expert.

Maria, who has no enemies.

Gloria, the music lover.

Carl, our resident gourmet.

Jill, who might have once been like Penny.

Not one of them even knows how to be mean

And me, the dreamer who tries to escape room H-5, a kid with a computer named Elvira. I don't even know where I belong anymore" (2010: 134).

Sharon Draper in her book entitled *Out of My Mind* writes Melody's story as a Post-Modern Bildungsroman by fragmentariness feature comes from her contemporary period's customs, and use traditional Bildungsroman rules we mentioned above within her mixed method. There is no compulsoriness among Bildungs traditional writers to follow these rules strictly. They are free to choose a few of them and mix them in different combinations. Without hesitation, we may include Sharon Draper among those examples.

As it is understood from those detailed narrative choices in the story, the author Sharon Draper develops her narration around a traditional Bildungs structure, which contains split focalisation in the setting and the point of view which is an omniscient narrative, besides Post-Modern fragmentariness and alienated character who seeks own place in a strange world and has own existential dilemmas. The writer uses literary devices

such as foreshadowing, irony and autodiegetic features. In addition, besides the general Bildungs thematic features, there are also some simple changes, such as ignoring the emotional career, to illustrate her otherness. In the following chapter, I will consider otherness as a term that refers to Michel Foucault's treatment of otherness within his Episteme theory. Then, I will discuss the otherness of the disabled body in society, examining Melody's personal journey towards a completely alien world, and illustrate the position of a disabled body in contemporary society and the psychological situations created by it.

MELODY AS THE OTHER

Although Sharon Draper does not openly admit that she is writing a story about "what kind of reality disabled bodies have to live in", and insists that she is focused on telling the story of a young lady who tries to keep up with social norms; the novel "Out of My Mind" contains many significant examples of what kind of problems may occur in the daily routine of a person with a disability and other issues that shape their lives in one way or another, such as disability terminologies, political correctness, approaches to physical education for the disabled, or the health insurance system and rehabilitation practices. However, before looking at these problematic issues' reflections on the story I have to understand Melody's physiological inabilities and their negative effects on her psychological status. Sharon Draper, in "Out of My Mind", as I mentioned above, introduces us to a young lady, Melody, who was born with Cerebral Palsy. Yet, what are Cerebral Palsy and the limitations that come with it?

According to Kid's Health Organisation;

> *Cerebral palsy (CP) is a problem that affects muscle tone, movement, and motor skills. It hinders the body's ability to move in a coordinated and purposeful way. It also can affect other body functions that involve motor skills and muscles, like breathing, bladder and bowel control, eating, and talking. CP often is caused by brain damage that happens before or during a baby's birth, or during the first 3-to-5 years of a child's life.* 21/09/2021, (https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/cerebral-palsy.html)

Unfortunately, Melody's situation contains all of these impairments except brain damage. As a girl with cerebral palsy, Melody is unable to use her hands and feet, and she needs help with eating and going to the bathroom and cannot even talk enough to tell her what's wrong, but her brain is full of thoughts and ideas on many important issues. Sharon

Draper never mentions Melody's preschool childhood memories in which she has happy moments and surrounded by her beloved friends. Instead, as a quadriplegic girl, we confront her as someone with existential problems such as the inability to communicate with others, even with her beloved ones, or an inability to eat a meal properly, or just sit tight in her chair. While every inability in her life has its own dramatic consequences, lack of communication and inability to share her thoughts might appear as the most problematic one of them for her. Sharon Draper describes this longing to communicate and comprehensibility with this dramatic inner monologue through Melody's own "mouth";

> "Not that it does me a lot of good. Nobody knows it's there but me. Not even my mother, although she has this "Mom sense" that knows I understand stuff. But even that has its limits. Nobody gets it. Nobody. Drives me crazy" (2010: 12).

She wants to share her thoughts, emotions and ideas with her beloved ones, but she does not have any control over her speaking organs. This incomprehensibility really drives her crazy, and at times results in what she calls "tornado explosions." In these hysterical moments of crises, she loses her body's control completely and "(her) arms and legs get all tight and lash out like tree limbs in a storm. Even (her) face draws up" and she "sometimes can't breathe real well when this happens…" (2010: 12).

The sense of helplessness caused by not being able to communicate has reached such a level that Melody involuntarily begins to see herself as having a similar life with her pets Ollie the Goldfish and the dog Butterscotch. Especially these two symbolic representations are important because both of them compares disabled lives with animals that never have a chance to share their feelings or thoughts.

> "Out of My Mind (2010) by Sharon Draper details the adolescent journey of a girl named Melody who previously felt stuck in the "goldfish bowl" but

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discovers that, when she becomes a "fish out of water," she needs to learn who she is all over again" (Brown, M.R. "Swimming Against the Tide": Disability Represented Through Fish Symbolism in (and on) Middle Grade and Young Adult Novels. Child Lit Educ 50, 193–209 (2019).

Since she leads a life in isolation from her peers at home, her family buys Melody a goldfish they call Ollie and begins to feed it in a glass bowl. However, one day it just "…dove down to the bottom of his bowl, rushed to the top, and hurled himself right out of the bowl" (2010: 32) and he suddenly dies. Melody makes a real effort to save him, but this only results in her mother's misunderstanding as if she was the one who killed the fish. Although no one understands her, Melody approaches this event from a different angle and thinks that maybe Ollie has chosen to commit suicide because he is now overwhelmed with the life that he is living. According to her "*…maybe Ollie wasn't so happy after all. Maybe he was sick and tired of that bowl and that log and that circle. Maybe he just couldn't take it anymore*" and she confesses that she also "feel like that sometimes" (10: 33). This is apparently a clear symbolic reference to her thoughts about the life she had to live and to her reservations about what she might find when she stepped out into the outside world because she, too, is fed up with her enclosed life and trying to find a way out and she is also worried about what the outside life will bring, about which she knows nothing. Running away can open new doors in her life or it can kill her.

"Unlike her goldfish, Melody does not die when she explores the world outside of her "fishbowl." She does, however, encounter fake friends who don't fully accept her or her disability and she struggles with the challenge to understand her role in society." (Brown, M.R. "Swimming Against the Tide": Disability Represented Through Fish Symbolism in (and on) Middle Grade and Young Adult Novels. Child Lit Educ 50, 193–209 (2019).

Butterscotch also represents a good example in expressing Melody's situation as an animal that cannot talk to humans. For instance, as we saw in an incident in Chapter 8, she, like Melody, cannot say what she wants and has to consent to what people give her. Draper presents Melody's frustrations in this situation with these words; "I'm sure Butterscotch would have preferred a nice thick bone instead, but she can't talk either, so both my dog and I get what they give us." (2010: 35)

Unfortunately, Melody's longings do not only end with speaking. Another ability loss appears on her arms and hands prevents her to touch something she loves or doing simple daily actions such as drinking water from a glass or just petting an animal. Melody also recounts this unfortunate desperation with a fine example of her parents' attempts to hand over a toy animal that she cannot quite grasp. Draper describes those moments in Melody's words:

> "But I loved the soft coolness of the little cat's fur. Then it fell on the floor. Dad placed it in my hands the second time. I really wanted to hold it and hug it. But it fell on the floor once more. I remember I got mad and started to cry… My parents placed the cat in my hands again and again. But every single time my little fingers could not hold it, and it tumbled back down to the carpet" (2010: 10).

In the first part of her life, Melody has to accept her desperate situation and live with it in melancholic, frustrated psychological quarrels. Of course, she had her own desires, dreams and ideas, but her physical inadequacies prevented her from fulfilling even her simple daily needs and disappointed her more deeply. She explains this deep sorrow within Chapter 7, like "*When I sleep, I dream. And in my dreams I can do anything…When I wake up in the morning, it's always sort of a let-down as reality hits me.*" (2010: 28)

At home, her daily routine entails only watching TV programs and learning everything she can get from it. While she complains about her photographic memory because it prevents her to forget awful moments of her life; *"It's like I have a camera in my head, and if I see or hear something, I click it, and it stays… Sometimes I wish I had a delete button in my head"* (2010: pp. 11-12), it also helps her to obtain different and useful information from these pleasurable activities. Thanks to this ability, she has reached the level of understanding even of basic Spanish words and grammar. Unfortunately, she cannot show this mental capacity due to her inability to speak. As a girl with Cerebral Palsy, nobody thinks that she has some "magical" understanding capacity. Even the doctors have given up on her mental capacity and treat her like a retarded child. Interestingly, as a response to that incomprehensibility, she also behaves like a retarded child to support that idea. But she never thinks that she would be a burden to her family until she is diagnosed by a doctor and declared as a retarded kid who might be left to a rehabilitation centre. Sharon Draper presents these moments and Melody's thoughts in a very good sense. The doctor explains her mental incapacity and suggests to her mother that they "…can choose to keep her at home, or (they) can send her to a special school for the developmentally disabled" (2010: 16). This suggestion absolutely harms both Melody and her mother's hearts and leads to another frustration. For the first time in her short life, Melody begins to wonder if she is a burden to her family. We can see her despair and frustrated soul in these sentences clearly; *"I stared at Mom frantically…Was I a burden? I never thought about it like that. Maybe it would be easier for them if I weren't around"* (ibid.). This sense of burden becomes more evident after her younger sister joins the family.

While Melody's mother becomes pregnant, both Melody and her mother worry about the baby's health and feel guilty. Parents are concerned about the health of the new child. Even it is very weak, there is a possibility to be born another disabled child. Yet, they are dedicated to nursing them with their heart. However, in Melody's mind, there is another

sorrow about the situation, and a question appears about her mother's thoughts; *"Life sure would be easier if they had only one child-one with working parts...I wonder if she ever wished she could get a refund for me"*(2010, pp.36-38). After a few months of some very painful waiting, thanks to God, the second child of the family was born with "a full-body control." This miraculous baby brings some peace and happiness to the family and changes every routine in the house. From the day she takes her first step into the house, she collects all the attention in the house and becomes a priority. It makes things very complicated as there is still a child in need of special care at home, but the family also has an obligation to take care of a baby. Moreover, as parents, Brooks family having a healthy child for the first time and wants to record every step in her development. Unfortunately for a girl in Melody's situation, some jealousy towards that little baby is inevitable. She is jealous that the baby is getting all kinds of attention, and at least she admits it to herself: *"I admit it, sometimes I got kinda sick of watching a new video every time she learned something new. It sorta sucks to watch a baby do what you wish you could do."* (2010, pp. 36-38).

However, even in these doubtful, yearning and sorrowful years which she had to live in a home without any friend or cannot play with a toy, except her family and Mrs V's love, still, she has some miraculous features that help her to stand against all of these problems; Synaesthesia. This feature appears to be a useful thing that helps Melody recognize life as a colourful thing and adapt to the terrifyingly bad conditions she's been in since her birth, and it also helps her remember some bits of information by associating it with her emotional memories.

According to United Kingdom Synaesthesia Association:

> Synaesthesia is where a percept or concept (such as words, sounds or touch) automatically triggers an experience in another modality (such as colour, space or taste). The triggering experience is called the inducer, and the triggered

experience is known as the concurrent. For someone who experiences colours when reading letters, the letters would be the inducer and the colours the concurrent. Most types of synaesthesia are named using the format "inducer" – "concurrent", such as grapheme-colour synesthesia (Grossenbacher & Lovelace, 2001). The inducer and concurrent are often in different modalities (for example vision-sound synaesthesia) though they can be in the same modality (for example grapheme-colour where both the inducer and concurrent are visual). 21/09/2021 (uksynaesthesia.com/faq)

In such a colourful world, her perspective on life is changing day by day. When something happens that cheers her up, her emotions begin to stir, and she begins to see pleasing colours before her eyes, taste pleasurable flavours on the tip of her tongue, or smell good odours. However, she could not find herself during all these lost years and had no idea how she was received by the society. She still has a lot to learn and this understanding of her place in society will emerge after her mother's decision to send her to an ordinary school.

In her first years of life, Melody feels sad from nobody interest in her inner qualities and feeling awkward from people's looks to her or just feeling like a burden for her family. She wants to gain someone's interest and show them that she also has some great features in her soul but that never happens. They only interest in her physical problems, not in her character. She explains this disappointment with these carefully chosen words;

> "After folks got finished making a list of my problems, they might take time to notice that I have a fairly nice smile and deep dimples… Sometimes people never even ask my name, like it's not important or something. It is. My name is Melody" (2010: 7).

Still, it is not enough for her to understand the real matter of being "the other" in society.

After years of being lonely, frustrated, melancholy and suspicious with her family, she has to enter a large community with a school and adapt to its different social conditions. In this different world may be the most important problem in her life appears as acceptance by the others, "normal" people in this case. Like she experienced before and never understands the real meaning of "otherness", both children and adult ones in this new society alienate her besides the other disabled children and never thoughts they could have any capacity to think or behave properly. When her mother decided to assign her to an ordinary school instead of a rehabilitation centre, she finds herself in special class H-5 which is designed for disabled children's education. Unfortunately, this classroom is decorated like a kindergarten and the behaviour of the teachers is as if those children all have the same intellectual incapacity. She has to study with children who have different types of disabilities and is forced to do the same exercises every year. She sings the same children's songs every day and plays exactly the same children's games as if she has mental incapacity. Even, she is forced to learn the alphabet as if she could not understand and memorise it. Years pass but nothing changes. Even their classroom stays still with the same dumb, meaningless activities in it. In these circumstances, she begins to feel and understand her alienation and "otherness" concretely. When she leaves Class H-5 at breaks, she finds a great opportunity to observe "normal" children and their activities, behaviours against "normal" children and against the children like her. These observations do not let her feel so good because they contain complete indifference and alienation let alone acceptance. People, especially children, behave as if they, disabled children, never appeared in the garden or corridor, or cantina. Other people act as if they don't exist. As if they were invisible. This invisibility also breaks Melody's heart and she describes this disappointment from a disabled person's eyes many times, but one of them is very important to understand that that indifference how affects a soul with a disabled body;

"Kids who shoot baskets in the gym. Their conversation fills the halls as they make plans, make jokes, make friends. Kids who, for the most part, ignore kids like me…They ask one another to play, but no one's ever asked any of us. Not that we could, anyway, but it would be nice if somebody would say 'Hi" (2010: 18).

She wants to be accepted by others, talk or make gossip with her schoolmates or just play some games, but nobody comes to say even "hello" to them. While she knows every detail about them, they never bother to meet and understand her. This alienation and indifference to disabled bodies never change even she has accepted to a special students' class. The class was decorated as if a preschool class with colourful walls and pictures, and filled with childish games and decorations. Teachers pretend as if every child has the same limits of understandings and repeats the same activities in everyday routine. As an eleven-year-old girl with the same level of understanding as her age, these decorations and activities bother Melody. Unfortunately, the school administration never pays attention to special education class and activities in it, so the same activities repeat every year. In the second year of special students' class, teacher Mrs Tracey notices Melody's mental capacity over the other children and gives her audiobooks to listen to. However, this treatment only continues for one year, and the next semester with the change of their lecturer, newly assigned teacher Mrs Billups leaves aside these audiobooks and tries to teach them the alphabet again as if they are mentally disabled and would not recognise even the alphabet. This moment is important because it really made Melody feel sick, and her desperation because of her muteness led her to an endless cry in class which resulted in her mother's summon into the school. Fortunately, her mother's defence against Mrs Billups' approach against children results in regaining her audiobooks in her last year in the special students' class. The next year will be a milestone in her life with acceptance to inclusion class.

Next year, Melody attends an inclusion class in which she will be educated with the other "normal" children for one hour a day, but communication problems create more

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diverse problems than special students' classes. While, for the first time in her life, she will gain education with the other children in the same class with equal standards, she worries to do silly things like farting beside children or living one of her crisis moments. Thankfully, such things do not happen on the first day of the inclusion class, but the behaviours of the other children and teacher foreshadow the events of future months. The first time she enters the classroom, as a disabled student, she is left at the back of the classroom and is not wanted to be among the others. Luckily, she finds a friend, Rose, and earn her the first warning "to be quiet" in the class. She tells this moment in a quite exciting stance with these sentences: *"Never in my life have I had a teacher tell me to be quiet because I was talking to somebody in class! It was the best feeling in the world! I felt like the rest of the kids"* (2010, pp. 48-49). Melody only finds one friend for herself in the inclusion class which is important that represents her alienation in the class. Instead of a friendship she "earns" two enemies in a day: Molly and Claire who is approached by her with a cold attitude and behave as if she is a retarded.

In a month Melody's capabilities noticed by teachers, especially by Mrs Shannon, and her success speaks out loud for the first time in a parent conference and opens a way to assign an aide for her to help her in a school day for both her personal needs and participation to class. Catherine, her new aide beside her mother, and Rose's friendship augment Melody's successes in studentship and she begins to participate and pass thrivingly tests in class. However, this successful studentship is met with jealousy by Molly and Claire and causes a conflict between the children. Especially those two girls look at Melody from above and see themselves superior against her because of her limitations. While she finds a way to communicate with the other by the help of Catherine, and earn her independence in school, their first reaction to that was accepting that they never thought that she has own ideas in her mind. Even Rose declares that she never realises Melody's conditions; "I can't imagine what it must be like to have all my words stuck inside" (2010: 68). Yet, even this

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progress change nothing in response to the girls against Melody and only makes worse the situation between them. Because Melody gains her self-confidence and decides to participate National Quiz-Kids Tournament's pre-selection tests. This decision would not respond with acceptance by Molly and Claire, and even their responsible teacher Mr Dimming doubts Melody's presence in a quiz team but accepts her attendance to elimination tour just for not to lose his prestige against children. He surprises by Melody's participation in the quiz, and reflects his doubts by saying: "Melody participated?" while he is taking the printout. Even Melody noticed the doubt in Mr Dimming's voice and says: *"He glanced from me to the paper in his hand. 'How nice'....I didn't like the sound of his voice."* (2010: 71). When she gave correct answers to all questions on the test, nobody, except Catherine, believes that Melody earned quiz prize by her own effort and it hurts her heart. This heartbroken Melody believes that Mr Dimming gave her the prize only to shut Molly and Claire's mouths up. While he giving the prize of the quiz to Melody, even he does not hesitate to humiliate Melody with these words in front of the classmates: "If Melody Brooks can win the first round, then my questions must not be difficult enough!" (2010: 73). Fortunately, Melody's frustrations with her teacher and friends' reactions to her success result in hard work for the competition. In her preparations, Mrs V. and Catherine helps her to study and she decides to skip inclusion classes and listen to old education tapes to learn more things for the national tournament. Still, she assumes that no one worries about her absence from the classroom all this time, even to focus on her studies:

> "Evidently, I wasn't missed. Nobody sent a frantic message to room H-5, wondering why Melody wasn't in class today. Nobody peeked their head in the door to see if I was absent or sick or maybe having a convulsion in the middle of the floor. Nobody seemed to notice at all" (2010: 78).

Hard days bear fruit and the official selection day for the tournament team arrives. While Melody hesitates about unwanted possibilities, she decides to participate official

election of the quiz team, but neither Mr. Dimming nor Rose believes her capabilities. Worst of all, they never hesitate to control their reactions against her choices. They look up in surprise when Catherine wheels her into the class. Even Rose, her best friend in class, asks abruptly; "What are you doing here?" (2010, pp. 83-84). Her voice doesn't sound as friendly as usual to Melody, and she still can hear Claire whisper to Jessica by wrinkling up her nose while the others pointing at her; *"She can't be on the team, ...She's from the retard room!"* (ibid.) Even Mr Dimming frowns slightly when he sees her. Melody describes that moment as follows: "*He stops and stares. Everyone looks around to see what has interrupted him. It's me"* (ibid.). And, might be the most embarrassing attitude comes from him. He addresses his eyes and words to Catherine instead of her and tries to explain that she cannot participate in this pre-election test. *"You know, I don't think it's appropriate for Melody to be here. This is not a recreational activity just for fun. The purpose of this meeting is to choose our official team"* (ibid.). While Mr Dimming defends his stance by explaining that the questions will be difficult and not wanting to make her feel bad, which gives Claire leverage over Melody and insists that Melody will cheat with Catherine's help. But all the insistence is fruitless and Catherine shows her trust in Melody by leaving the classroom. Melody, on the other hand, finishes the exam first without anyone's help. Fortunately, as a mature person, these results forces Mr Dimming to apologise to her for underestimating her. However, interestingly, even Rose disappoints in the results besides Claire and the others.

After passing the qualifying exam with first place Melody is eventually accepted into the competition team, but that makes things worse because she doesn't feel as a part of the team. She could not speak and depending on the abilities of the machine in front of her to communicate. There were moments when she had to struggle with the keyboard in front of her for minutes just to say a word that came out of the mouths of others. This made her feel that she was different from the others and could never be a part of that group. She was

just there and never be a part of the team. She tries to explain this awkwardness with these sentences;

> "I still couldn't get over the fact I was part of the team. Okay. Truth. There was the team, and there was me, and we were in the same room. But we weren't quite a team. They appreciated the fact that I usually got the answers right, but…" (2010: 90).

That is, it.

When the local competition day has come and their team has won the competition, Melody feels joy for the first time in her life being in a group activity besides her schoolmates. Everyone in the studio is interested in her, and reporters want to interview her. Even Claire pretends to be her best friend at school. This two-faced attitude shocks Melody at the beginning, but this exciting change passed in a short time. Influenced by her happiness, Cerebral Palsy victim Melody's tornado moments come back, and everyone on the team starts to show their true faces as she loses control. When she squealed and kicked, and her arms begin to jerk crazily she also hears Claire complains and screaming as; "Shut her up!" (2010: 104). And the problems don't end here either.

After the success at the local step of the competition, the team decides to go to a meal for dinner at a restaurant together, but even in a restaurant with her teammates, Melody doesn't feel happy. *"I sat and watched my teammates do such ordinary things. Drawing. Laughing. Teasing. Joking. I really tried hard to look like I was having fun too, but all I wanted to do was go home"* (2010: 110). She thinks this way because she knows that in a few minutes she has to eat her dinner for the first time in front of her schoolmates and it will only make her feel like an alien again. Unfortunately, when the time has come knowing what was coming does not help to pass the moment easily. While her mother feeding

Melody, she sees the strange behaviour of people and describes those moments as follows: *"I saw Molly poke Claire, and they exchanged looks...Nobody said anything, but I saw them look down at their plates with way too much attention. It is so quiet. Even Connor stopped talking"* (2010: 111).

After the success at the local competition, newspapers printed only pictures of Melody and this results in children's gossips about "the disabled girl's success." However, she was expecting that, and nothing surprised her. Still, some of the reactions she got were triggering that old, familiar, strange feeling of otherness.:

> "The reaction at school today is just what I expected. Words float out of lips that say nice things to me, but eyes tell the truth. The eyes are cold, as if I had beat the reporter over the head and forced her to print that picture of me. Even Rose acts distant...I can't do anything right. I don't want to be all that – I just want to be like everybody else." (2010: 114)

By the final stage of the competition, Melody's concerns about joining the quiz team begin to surface and she considers not making it to the national finals. *"My presence was cute at first, maybe okey for a local competition, but for the big game – on national television – that's different...I make them look...weird"* (2010: 116). Yet, her team, her beloved schoolmates and teachers "saves her" from these thoughts and leaves her behind and goes to the finals without even informing her. This result reflects on her as devastation and she begins to question her place in society. Her strange birth-gifts synaesthesia and photographic memory help her to gain a place in society for a brief time by aiding her to achieve great success in a national competition, but she realised, in the end, she is only a disabled kid and never be a part of the society. People only use her talents while they need them, and easily disposes of her when they think that she only harms their image in society. When the competition is over, Spaulding Street Elementary School comes back in ninth

place and they want to present the trophy to Melody to make up for their mistake. But all Melody wants is to be a "normal" student like the others. Not a trophy or a medal. For this reason, she pushes the cup left on the tray in front of her, breaks it and leaves the classroom. From that day on, Melody realizes that life is not fair to anyone and is just a puzzle where we do not see the big picture. What we need to do is not to push all the conditions and try to have something, but to try to live our life to the full by solving the puzzles that come our way.

CONCLUSION

In his famous book "The Order of Things", Michel Foucault explores how the western mind identifies the self and the other in a binary opposition system and examines how relationships are affected by those identifications between different groups in social structures. Disabled people, as one of those differentiated groups, were also influenced by that juxtaposition and forced into otherness in society for centuries. In this study, a comprehensive review of Sharon Draper's latest and bestseller book "Out of My Mind" is made to show how disabilities are alienated by society even nowadays.

Our review consists of two parts, contextual and structural analysis of the text. In the contextual part of the research, the concept of Episteme is explained under the border of the traditional understanding. Then, a new perspective brought to the concept of episteme by Michel Foucault in his work titled "The Order of Things", which he wrote in 1966, is revealed by showing that how he based his hypothesis on the theory of "the self and the other". According to the traditional understanding, Episteme is a term to explain cumulative experiences of a society that is accepted as reality in time. However, Foucault gives Episteme a new meaning which consists of a mixture of unconscious bulk of knowledge of a particular society in a particular time period with political discourse. In this new type of Episteme, hegemonical groups use classical epistemes to justify their political discourses by using the self and the other theory of understanding. Again, Foucault explains that, since the beginning of history, humankind defines things and events that occurred around them by comparing their features with their own.

After all of these explanations, Cripistemology as a new discipline of epistemology study highlighted by noting the insufficiency of epistemology in distinguishing the disability and the disabled bodies. The advantages of Cripistemology are also discussed while redefining the place of the disabled bodies in the society.

In the structural part of our analysis, the traditional realistic novel and its features are discussed and, the Russian critic Mikhail Bakhtin's novelty to the definition of "Bildungsroman" is introduced. In classical understanding, novels can be grouped under three different sections. Travel novels mainly focus on the hero's journey to discover all around his world. In this type of novel, both hero and the world are prepared as ready-made and the hero only meet single aspects of people as representations of different sociocultural archetypes. These meetings never change his character formation, but only explains different aspects of the world. In the novel of the ordeal, however, the character's journey appears mostly through to his own inner world. All events in his life result in his own understanding of his own vices and virtues and he must make a choice between them. In this type of novel also world and characters appear as ready-made but this time hero reveals his identity as a result of his choices. The last type of classical novel appears as a biographical or autobiographical novel. This type of novel presents the hero's life in its natural course. World and time mostly affect the hero's features, but character development left its place in the development of destiny. After these explanations, Bakhtin describes his own Bildungsroman understanding and declares that must-have features of a Bildungsroman. According to him, in a realistic Bildungsroman, the protagonist must be affected by time, the world, his own choices and other people's decisions.

Later of these Bildungs explanations, the compatibility of the narrative techniques used by Sharon Draper within the novel "*Out of My Mind*" is examined. It is seen that the author generally acts within the Bildungsroman rules in both structural and thematic sides of the story. On the structural side of the story, Draper represents Melody's story as a retrospective, autodiegetic narrative and within a split focalisation format with symbolic decorations. On the thematic side of the story, we see Melody Brook's story begins in an unnamed provincial town with some physical limitations and mainly focuses on her adaptation to society and its normative forms. Despite all the wearing experiences, the

protagonist of the story, Melody, accepts herself as a part of social diversity and successfully completes her identity formation at the end of the story.

However, Sharon Draper also made some little changes in her own way. It is understood that, like the other contemporary post-Modernist writers, Draper obeyed the rule of fragmentariness while presenting her own story, and at the same time she did not represent any sentimental career for Melody to refer to the isolation and exclusion of the disabled bodies from the emotional part of life.

In the last part of this dissertation, how Sharon Draper in her work "*Out of My Mind*" show that even contemporary societies marginalise disabled groups and put them into narrow templates as a result of unconscious bulk of knowledge proved with various examples from different parts of Melody's life.

Abled, disabled, retarded, queer etc. There are many terms to use for people with mental or physical limitations. But the important thing is not to categorize them, but to understand them properly and get the acceptance they need. In order to better understand the millions of disabled people around us, we need to reconsider the episteme and doctrines we have developed for them and try to correct the mistakes we have made for thousands of years one by one.

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