



Imagining Autism: Fiction and Stereotypes on the Spectrum

By Sonya Freeman Loftis



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A disorder that is only just beginning to find a place in disability studies and activism, autism remains in large part a mystery, giving rise to both fear and fascination. Sonya Freeman Loftis's groundbreaking study examines literary representations of autism or autistic behavior to discover what impact they have had on cultural stereotypes, autistic culture, and the identity politics of autism. *Imagining Autism* looks at fictional characters (and an author or two) widely understood as autistic, ranging from Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes and Harper Lee's Boo Radley to Mark Haddon's boy detective Christopher Boone and Steig Larsson's Lisbeth Salander. The silent figure trapped inside himself, the savant made famous by his other-worldly intellect, the brilliant detective linked to the criminal mastermind by their common neurology?these characters become protean symbols, stand-ins for the chaotic forces of inspiration, contagion, and disorder. They are also part of the imagined lives of the autistic, argues Loftis, sometimes for good, sometimes threatening to undermine self-identity and the activism of the autistic community.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Very useful for those interested in disability studies, cultural studies, and literature.... Recommended."
?Choice

"An important and necessary early step in bringing the study of autism into the field of literary studies."
?Disability Studies Quarterly

"In examining the concerns and misconceptions that drive depictions of people with ASD, Loftis sheds light on the representations that can lead to discrimination against those who have related conditions."
?Library Journal

"This pioneering and groundbreaking study inaugurates new lines of inquiry within English and Disability Studies, situating fictional characters and texts in conversation with trends in public discourse."
?Christopher Wixson, Eastern Illinois University

"Sonya Loftis's book is a valuable contribution to the growing critical literature on representations of autism in literature and popular media. She brings new perspectives to works we thought we knew and attention to works we might have missed. An extremely intelligent book."
?Bruce E. Henderson, Ithaca College

"A groundbreaking examination of autism."
?Disability & Society

About the Author

Sonya Freeman Loftis is Assistant Professor of English at Morehouse College, where she specializes in Shakespeare and disability studies. Her work has appeared in Disability Studies Quarterly, Shakespeare Bulletin, SHAW: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies, and South Atlantic Review.

Users Review

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Patricia Joyner:

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