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**THE INFLUENCE OF TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE  
ON A CHILD'S IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT  
IN EMMA DONOGHUE'S *ROOM*  
BA thesis**

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## ABSTRACT

Emma Donoghue's *Room* deals with the problems associated with children's identity and development, as well as considerable life changes after living in captivity. The aim of this research is to find out how Jack, who has lived his entire life in a small shed, can cope in a new society larger than the one he has ever known and how his behaviour changes due to potential trauma. Jack has always imagined life outside of Room but only seen it through television and even then he never believed it had been real.

The thesis is divided into four parts: an introduction, a literature review, an empirical study and a conclusion. The introduction of the study consists of a comparison of the novel and the contemporary works alike, as well as the peculiarities of Jack, the main protagonist of *Room*. The aim of the literature review is to give an overview of the studies written prior to this, with an emphasis on the trauma theoretical approach to the novel and contemporary literature. Additionally, a short overview of the subcategories of identity will be given, which will be discussed in detail in this thesis. The empirical part of the thesis is divided into two subchapters. The first subchapter of the empirical study will present the phases of development in the narrator of the story while living in captivity and preparations for an escape. The second subchapter will mainly focus on life after the escape and hardships that can occur in the newly found social life. Whether or not the protagonist will have immediate trauma after escape will be discussed, as well as whether there is potential for it to develop in later life. The conclusion will summarize the main findings of the study.

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## INTRODUCTION

Emma Donoghue's *Room* (2010) is a complex story told through the eyes of a five-year-old boy in captivity with his mother. The young narrator Jack has never been outside of his confinement and seen the world and as with any child his age, he asks his mother everything there is to know. In the story, told both in captivity and in the aftermath, Jack finds out about a world that is drastically different from his own and he struggles with following his new knowledge.

While Jack has spent his entire five-year-long life in the shed he calls Room, his mother has lived in it for seven years. Although the book focuses on a fragment of their life, namely only a few months, it is important to understand what happens to Jack after escaping Room. The period of time spent outside is merely a month and Jack learns a lot about life and himself after captivity. He goes through many considerable changes that transform his life completely.

Emma Donoghue is an Irish author living in Canada, who primarily writes historical and contemporary novels as well as short stories and plays. She has published over twenty works over the past two decades. Much of her oeuvre focuses on sexuality, particularly on lesbian and bisexual relationships, as well as historical murder mysteries. Some of her other awarded books include *The Wonder* and *Slammerkin* in the historical fiction genre and contemporary novels *Hood* and *Room*. *Akin* is her latest published novel in 2019, her first contemporary work published after *Room*, the latter of which is her most critically acclaimed work (Donoghue N.d).

*Room* was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2010, as well as an Orange Prize for Fiction. It was adapted into a full-length feature film in 2015, and with Donoghue writing the screenplay for it, she was nominated for an Academy Award, a Golden Globe award as well as a British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) award for her

contribution to the film. A theatre production of the novel was brought to the stages in London and Dublin in 2017, followed by a release in Canada scheduled to premiere in 2020 (Donoghue N.d).

*Room* is different from today's contemporary novels in similar genres because of its narrator. Most contemporary survival and escape stories focus on an adult's difficulties of adapting to a new world and the traumatic outcome of the escape, or they may focus more on the time in captivity rather than the life after leaving. The characters tend to be alone, which is not the case in *Room*, as the two main characters are together at all times. Jack is young and naïve, willing to learn and do as his mother tells him. However, while we can see his mother's trauma through Jack's narrative, he himself does not show a considerable change in his behaviour before and after captivity. Many research papers have focused on the trauma of Ma and her struggles with motherhood in captivity as well as the unique narration (Jones 2010, Földvály 2014, Lorenzi 2016, O'Reilly 2017, Costello-Sullivan 2018), while few focus on Jack's mind-set and advancement (Hétu 2015, Rubik 2017). Some scholars argue that Jack might not be traumatized at all by being held captive (Lorenzi 2016, Costello-Sullivan 2018).

Jack's perception of the events that others might deem traumatic is different as he is a well-taught boy who has only been in the company of his mother. The coping mechanisms that Jack employs after escape are different to other victims of hostage situations and the small living space from which he escapes can double as a place of comfort rather than trauma (Costello-Sullivan 2018). As *Room* is the only home Jack has known, he sees everything outside of it as foreign and alien, and it takes him time to adjust to a new environment (Rubik 2017). It is important to study the development of a child in such circumstances to find out whether they are greatly affected by it immediately or the possibility of it becoming traumatizing later in life.

I have chosen this topic because of how I saw Jack's development as a character throughout the story. He has a different way of thinking compared to an adult storyteller, which gives a chance for the reader to imagine the future growth of the child. Jack's story is unusual for a child and this is what drew me to explore his advancement.

The current research will consist of two main chapters divided into an overview of previous research on the novel and the analysis of the development of Jack's identity in Room as well as after his escape from the confinement. This thesis will examine how a traumatic experience of life in a confined room can affect a child's life in the society afterwards.

# 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

## 1.1. Depiction of Trauma in Contemporary Literature

In the past few decades, more than ever, writers have started exploring mental health and traumatic experiences in their fictional works. Opening up about such issues has helped readers themselves be more accepting and open about their mental health. Therefore, recent contemporary fiction has been criticized upon more because of lack of research or misrepresentation.

Laurie Vickroy (2014: 131) describes trauma as “an individual’s response to events so intense that they impair emotional or cognitive functioning and may bring lasting psychological disruption”. Portrayal of trauma varies in novels and authors as every character’s and author’s experience with it is different. This can also be said about readers and their response to the representation of certain variations of trauma (Vickroy 2014: 130). Emma Donoghue’s *Room* belongs to the strand of contemporary fiction whose prime examples are the works of Margaret Atwood who often depicts characters that have to either go through or recover from trauma. The characters in novels such as *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985) and *Cat’s Eye* (1988) are modelled from Atwood’s own experience or what she sees around her in the society. There are cases in which her characters suffer from trauma and try to work it through in the new environment, such as Elaine who suffers from childhood trauma also in adulthood (*Cat’s Eye*). Additionally, there are characters whose trauma is not as severe, however, the society makes them feel unsafe, which is the case with Offred (*The Handmaid’s Tale*). (Vickroy 2014: 133-134) Similarly to the characters in these examples from Atwood’s novels, the characters of Jack and Ma in Emma Donoghue’s *Room* struggle to adjust to the new environment and the expectations of the society.

Characters who have had traumatic experiences show signs of feeling close to no

emotions towards either their own or the opposite sex, or certain situations as they have built a wall around them (Vickroy 2014: 134). Elaine in Atwood's *Cat's Eye* and Ma in Donoghue's *Room* (2010) do not want to appear vulnerable in the new environment, however, this makes them stand out and traumatizes them even further as they do not trust the people around them. On the other hand, there are characters who are depicted as becoming isolated from the world or so much on the brink of a complete emotional breakdown as wanting to commit suicide, as the examples from Donoghue (Ma in *Room*) and Atwood (Elaine in *Cat's Eye*) demonstrate (Vickroy 2014: 135).

## 1.2. Scholarship on the Novel

Among the literary critics and reviewers Emma Donoghue's *Room* has been discussed in the context of a prison narrative or a thriller novel, although the book has less elements of a classic novel about confinement. *Room* is narrated by a child rather than an adult character, which differs from the similar classic narration. (Földvary 2014: 212, Rubik 2017: 227, 234). Rubik compares the features of an "old prison" and a "modern prison" that have been used in the novel. A captor character keeping a woman in a shed and only visiting her at night to abuse her is characteristic of an "old", or a classic prison narrative, whereas *Room* has features of a "new" or "modern" prison where the prisoners are isolated from the outside world and have access to few means of technology. In fact, *Room* has some of the most extreme forms of both prisons represented. (Rubik 2017: 224-225) The novel's reception includes articles by representatives of different fields such as psychiatrists (Geller 2010) and literary scholars (Földvary 2014, Moss 2015, O'Neill 2017, Rubik 2017), who have discussed their doubts about the novel's authenticity.

The sources of research about *Room* I am using are interviews with the author, reviews as well as academic articles written on the book. The topics that have previously been discussed in her interviews and about the novel mainly include the narrative aspects



and motherhood, as well as Donoghue's inspirations for the story, which will be briefly addressed in the following.

A number of the articles and interviews (Ue 2012, Jones 2010, Moss 2015, Rubik 2017) mention the inspiration of the Elizabeth Fritzl case for *Room* which Donoghue confirms to be one of the main sources of motivation to write the book (Ue 2012: para. 15). Elizabeth Fritzl was an Austrian woman who was raped and kept in her father's basement for twenty-four years, and he fathered seven of their children, one of whom had died at his hands (Rubik 2017: 219). Donoghue did not use the full case to tell the story of *Room* as she left out the incest and changed the location of the Room (Ue 2012: para. 15). Although this is an event that has helped shape the narration of *Room*, it is not the main focus of the novel itself. Instead, *Room* is concerned with topics such as the narrative aspect and motherhood. In addition, the novel also deals with issues of trauma and identity that will be explored in this piece of research.

Psychiatrist Jeffrey L. Geller has criticized the narrative for being inconsistent, the characters being 'flat' and Jack's intelligence to appear as unrealistic (Geller 2010: para. 1-3). However, in her interview with Tom Ue, Donoghue mentions how she chose Jack to be the narrator because of the "originality, strangeness, innocence, [and] laughter" of a five-year-old (Ue 2012: para. 23). Jack's narrative provides uncertainty instead of clarity especially in morality and beliefs, giving the reader an experience of an unreliable young main character (ibid.: para. 13, 17).

Jack's mother has a prominent role in *Room* and many papers focus on her maternal practice and motherhood in Room since she has both the previous experience inside and outside of captivity. A *Time Magazine* review on *Room* discusses the protectiveness of Jack's mother (referred to as Ma) over the boy during their captivity (Jones 2010: para. 2). Ma does this by making the space as comfortable as she could for Jack, finding different

ways to keep him occupied with the limited supplies they have (O'Neill 2017: 56, Costello-Sullivan 2018: 94). Ma has great influence on Jack's growth and she teaches him everything she can from her own experience (Rubik 2017).

Trauma is a major theme of *Room* and Room's influence on Ma is often discussed in different articles because of her sexual abuse and suicide attempts (Földvály 2014, Lorenzi 2016, Moss 2015, O'Neill 2017, Rubik 2017). Literary scholars have pointed out that *Room*'s narrative shows more of the trauma of Ma rather than Jack since he is too young to know of his trauma (Jones 2012: para. 4, Costello-Sullivan 2018: 96, 99). The narration of Jack makes the trauma of his mother stand out more than his own as he does not have a clear sense of his trauma (Lorenzi 2016: 22). His vocabulary as a five-year-old is limited, so his descriptions of serious situations make them seem calmer and less graphic than they would be in an adult narrative, but it makes the situations no less traumatic (ibid.: 22; 24).

Ma had been in captivity for a longer time than Jack and the consequences of it being traumatizing for her were far more severe than her son's (Moss 2015: 15-16). Lucia Lorenzi (2016: 20) argues that the 'trauma' might not have been trauma at all in Jack's case, since he has little understanding of the world around him and the real post-traumatic symptoms may show only later in his life if at all. Jack's experience is different from his mother's so we cannot categorize Jack's trauma into specific spaces because there is no evidence of his time in Room being traumatic at all (Lorenzi 2016: 31-32). Jack has only spent time in Room and the place that caused his mother trauma is all he has had throughout his entire life (Costello-Sullivan 2018: 93). As he is very young, he does not realize that what he experiences could potentially be traumatic (Costello-Sullivan 2018: 108).

The trauma of Jack is not apparent in Room, but the experience might impact him

negatively in later life, however, it is not for certain (Lorenzi 2016: 32). At the same time, in Room Jack already has nightmares of Old Nick, Ma's kidnapper, and they may develop into more than that (Rubik 2017: 228). Multiple articles mention how Ma protects Jack from any experience that might be traumatizing for him and due to them always being together for Jack's entire life, he finds it difficult to be away from her in the "real" world (Földvály 2014: 212, Rubik 2017: 228, 229; Costello-Sullivan 2018: 95, 100-101).

A negative with Ma's protectiveness is her refusal to tell Jack about his father, which might become a hazard in the child-parent relationship (Földvály 2014: 217). Donoghue herself has described the relationship between Jack and Ma as "inherently unstable, bipolar, a constant push-and-pull to achieve on a lively balance". This becomes apparent in their frustration towards each other's actions in the book (Ue 2012: para. 37, Costello-Sullivan 2018: 103).

On the other hand, Geller mentions their experience after living in Room and being admitted into the psychiatric hospital for treatment and the trial to adjust to the society (Geller 2010: para. 4). As the latter part of the novel does deal with Jack and Ma's therapeutic process, it takes time for Ma to readjust and Jack to adjust to the "new" world (Moss 2015: 14, Costello-Sullivan 2018: 106).

The study that comes closest to my field of interest, the identity of Jack, is the one by Kathleen Costello-Sullivan (2018). A subtopic that is introduced in a few of the sources (O'Neill 2017, Ue 2012, Földvály 2014, Rubik 2017) is gender identity, which I will also be discussing in my research. The sources reflect the issues of gendering children's hairstyles and stereotypes that might make a child's later life difficult in finding themselves. Besides identity, I will be analysing Jack's emotional, cognitive, mental and social development, some of the aspects in and/or outside of Room.

Another fascinating subtopic researched about Jack is his attachment to inanimate

objects, making them animate and them becoming his friends while he is in Room as well as after his escape. Dominique Héту (2015: 162) draws attention to the power of the child's imagination and their ability to affect his later identity development. Humanizing inanimate objects makes Jack develop empathy towards others, as well as be cautious of people in the world outside Room (Héту 2015: 160). However, there is overall little said about Jack's development as a person and his identity, which is why I decided to delve into this topic further.

The following empirical study will be devoted to an analysis of the development and identity of the child character Jack during his time in confinement together with his mother and the time after confinement following the mother arranging his escape, which leads to her own rescue as well.

## 2. EMPIRICAL STUDY

### 2.1. Development of Jack's Identity Inside the Room

Emma Donoghue's *Room* is a novel with the unique narrative of a five-year-old child who has yet to develop his identity into its fullest. *Room*, which is about captivity and life after escape, brings in a different approach to storytelling in which we see steady character advancement in a child. What makes the book innovative is Donoghue's decision to tell the story from a child's point of view. While the book's narrator Jack is kept in the garden shed with his mother, he shows sides of himself that can be seen as progressive in his development, as well as parts of him that can be perceived as regressive if we were to compare Jack's growth to a real-life child his age. In this subchapter I will be discussing the cognitive, emotional, physical and mental development of the character Jack as well as the setbacks that occur while they are in Room as these are the aspects of development that are the most prominent during his time in captivity.

The first paragraph of the book already makes the reader aware of a child's perspective: "Today, I'm five. I was four last night going to sleep in Wardrobe, but when I wake up in Bed in the dark I'm changed to five, abracadabra" (Donoghue 2010: 3). This indicates how Jack might appear as a naïve boy as he is in the process of learning. He has limited comprehension of the world as well as himself, so the reader has to put themselves into his mind-set, not to expect him to react to certain situations as an adult narrator would (Rubik 2017: 221). Jack, however, is knowledgeable for a five-year-old and his mother has taught him well despite her own young age. His mother, who he refers to as Ma, had been kidnapped at the age of nineteen, and had to figure out how to raise a child in captivity without much previous experience (Donoghue 2010, Lorenzi 2016: 19).

Jack's grasp of the world is purely based on his mother's knowledge prior to her kidnapping. Jack has developed linguistically the best he could in his circumstances and

Donoghue depicts the character as a critically thinking small person but brings in the fun of Jack's misinterpretation of ordinary happenings. (Rubik 2017: 237). The character of Jack is curious and this way he represents many children around his age. Early on, the boy knows about him 'happening in [his mother's] tummy' and he has great comprehension of the importance of cleanliness because of Ma's continuous orders and teaching, the latter of which the reader understands as Ma's measure of disease prevention (Donoghue 2010: 3-4, Costello-Sullivan 2018: 94). However, he understands some of Ma's sayings in a very literal sense, for example, when they are taking vitamins, she tells him she would become "hooked" on the tablets if she takes two of each of her supplements a day. Jack thinks the verb "hooked" only has to do with fishing, so Ma has to explain the meaning to him (ibid.: 9, Rubik 2017: 237). It is normal for children of Jack's age to ask about anything they do not know and Jack's mother does an excellent job at explaining concepts and terminology of different things to him. With the term "hooked", she explains it through fishing which is easy for Jack to understand because he had heard and known it previously (ibid.: 9). In spite of the fact that the figures of speech can be hard to understand for him, Jack's narrative shows that he has a wide vocabulary as he uses complicated words when he speaks (Rubik 2017: 230). Moreover, he is good at keeping a conversation, which is a fundamentally important skill that Ma has developed in him over the years. Having conversations allows the child to connect to his own feelings and thinking as he would start to understand himself and the world around him.

Another way Jack learns is through television. That way he knows difficult words, many of which Ma has to explain the meaning of (Donoghue 2010: 24). They play the game of Parrot where Jack repeats a phrase or sentence said on the screen and Ma explains the meaning of words that he does not know (ibid.: 34-35). Jack learns the complex sentence structures through listening to other people speak although he might not

understand what they are saying at all times.

In Room, he gives objects specific names, such as Bed and Wardrobe, as if the inanimate things had proper names, which signifies that his language use is in stable development. Jack sees them as friends which is unique for his character and he only has one of all of these things, so he becomes attached to them more than Ma does as she has previous experience of living in what Jack refers to as the 'Outside' in the novel (Rubik 2017: 221, Costello-Sullivan 2018: 104). Héту (2015: 160) explains his attachment as forming a 'caring and careful relationship' with the objects to come to terms with his reality. However, O'Neill (2017: 68) sees this as 'the possibility of new social forms' where the imaginary and the real are closer to each other. He refers to the sun and moon as God's 'yellow' and 'silver' faces, the latter of which comes out only on special occasions (ibid.: 30; 26). We can see that he can differentiate colours and the times of day, as well as Ma's practice of religion where Jack associates the sun and moon with God. Ma gives Jack hope of seeing the Outside as she creates imaginary worlds for him.

Alongside with his reading abilities, Jack knows numeracy well for his age and when they exercise, he writes down what he sees on the stopper and he can do simple mathematics (ibid.: 15, 78). We know he can already count to at least a hundred, perhaps even higher, when he eats his cereal by counting them in the morning (ibid.: 60). This, again, shows Ma's education and influence on Jack who is keen to learn everything she would teach him by repeating the steps each time they exercise or portion their food, which gives the reader an idea of their limited food supplies but it remains unknown to Jack (Costello-Sullivan 2018: 94). The reader sees that Jack does not recognize the seriousness of the situation, which is why it may not be a traumatic experience for him.

As part of cognitive development, Jack is creative with what he does to pass time on average days. He builds forts and labyrinths, plays with objects his Ma has managed to

get for ‘Sundaytreats’ and this way he makes his mother’s days interesting as well (ibid.: 14; Rubik 2017: 223, Costello-Sullivan 2018: 94). He uses her clothes and makes them into characters for himself to play with since he does not have many real toys to play with (Donoghue 2010: 29, Héту 2015: 163). The character Jack perfectly shows how children across the world are provided with many toys and activities, and they still might not be enough for them while the children with less opportunities use what they have.

Jack has never been outside, so the only experience of the ‘Outside’ he has is through the skylight window in the roof of the shed and through television, since these are the only ways he can be introduced to it (Donoghue 2010: 3, 10, O’Neill 2017: 68). Jack sees the world outside of the shed as a fictional place whereas to him, the only reality is what and who are inside Room (Földváry 2014: 216). Children his age usually use their imagination to come up with fictional places outside of their world, which is also the case with Jack, however the reality he lives in is much different from others. He also calls the Outside “Outer Space” which resembles nature, people and animals which makes his imagination much different from children as he has no contact with anyone but Ma in the Room (ibid.: 14, Costello-Sullivan 2018: 97, Földváry 2014: 217). For Jack, everything is ‘crammed out there’, such as trucks and skyscrapers as he perceives the Outside to be smaller than where he is (Donoghue 2010: 62). Children see the Outer Space as something infinite and enormous while Jack’s perception is the opposite. Jack has a vivid imagination and behaves like a normal five-year-old; one of the few elements making him different from other children his age is his life in captivity, which Donoghue mentions in her interview with Tom Ue (2012: para. 25).

Since the boy has only seen life in a small space, he does not realize that he is his own person. Children Jack’s age tend to become much more independent than he is. Early on in the story, Jack refers to himself as part of his mother. He feels strange when he keeps



secrets or does not tell her immediately. He thinks that all of his and Ma's thoughts match since he believes they tell each other everything of which there is no proof of in Ma's case. Jack imagines that the both of them share bodies since he is 'made out of her cells' (Donoghue 2010: 10; Rubik 2017: 229). Since Jack has only had Ma and limited space to move around, he cannot do much of what being a five-year-old would usually imply. The boy has never spent time with any other person other than Ma and he has only the experience of exposing himself fully to his mother.

Jack compares and identifies all of his thoughts and movements to Ma's. He compares his teeth to hers, when his are healthy and hers are rotten because she had the tendency not to brush them as a child (Donoghue 2010: 8). Hygiene is one of the first things that is generally taught to children so Jack learning how to take care of himself even in their tight conditions shows Ma's concern for mostly his health and pushing behind her own. Jack also sees that Old Nick is bad because of what Ma feels around him or when she is talking about him, so he naturally feels the same detestation towards him. He feels grateful when the man does not visit them in the night of Jack's birthday because of the potential that he could hurt Ma (ibid.: 29). Children Jack's age usually fear the dark and going to sleep because of scary monsters, in which the narrator reflects the behaviour of a normal child and the 'scary monster' in this case is Old Nick. However, his fears run deeper as he has concerns for his mother in the dark with their captor rather than himself as he is hidden from their sight. Jack thinks Ma knows everything in the world as she is the one who has taught him the most, which is what most children feel before starting to individualize from their parents as five-year-olds generally start to become more independent (ibid.: 59).

A clear indicator of his regression is that at the age of five Jack is still being breastfed by his mother (ibid.: 6, 18; Rubik 2017: 222, 226). This could be because he is

lacking nutrients from the little food the two get from their captor (Donoghue 2010: 4). As a baby, Jack had to feed on his mother's chewed-up food because of the limited food supplies Ma had (Donoghue 2010: 16). Normally, mothers stop breastfeeding their children around the age of two and it is only common for children to breastfeed at Jack's age in other countries other than the United States where *Room* takes place. However, in captivity, breastfeeding contributes to Jack's survival in more than one way as it both sustains his physical wellbeing and also provides emotional nurturance (O'Reilly 2017: 92). Donoghue's character Jack, however, is malnourished in the shed, but exercises to his best ability and eats everything they are offered by Old Nick (ibid.: 15). The Physical Education Ma makes Jack practice is a way to prepare the boy for running away and climbing when he would need to in an escape situation (ibid.: 81, 86, 90). This way he has at least some muscle in his body, and he is aware that Ma is smaller than him in size: he cannot sit comfortably on her lap and she has 'pointy bits' since Ma is considerably skinnier as she usually gives majority of her food portions to Jack (ibid.: 10, Costello-Sullivan 2018: 94).

Another setback in Jack's emotional development and behaviour is him having no perception of the severity of the abuse and violence his mother endures and he has always lived with, which shows his immaturity (Rubik 2017: 220, 225, 228). The character Jack himself has not been the victim of the abuse since his mother hides him away in a cupboard during the night when Old Nick visits them. He is simply instructed to be quiet not to anger the man and this way Ma protects her son, although it serves as an easily breakable safety measure (Donoghue 2010: 27, Lorenzi 2016: 22, Costello-Sullivan 2018: 98, Földváry 2014: 212). Due to Ma's behaviour around Old Nick, Jack knows that he is not a good person. Jack only realizes the severity of the reoccurring situation when he sees bruises on Ma's throat that had been caused by Old Nick and his rage (Donoghue 2010: 53,

Rubik 2017: 228). Lorenzi (2016: 23) notes that Jack's interpretation of Old Nick differs greatly from the readers' as "the ways his [Old Nick's] crimes square with our [the readers'] ideas about perpetrators and what it means to be 'humane' while Jack only sees him as a 'non-human human'. Jack expresses his loathing towards Old Nick by wanting to 'kick him until he breaks his butt' (Donoghue 2010: 63).

In *Room*, Jack does not realize why they are 'doing Scream' every day but he knows they have to do it together because it is important to Ma (ibid.: 40; Rubik 2017: 225). In a way, he sees it as a game. Jack gets tired easily but Ma's ongoing behaviour and the supposed 'playtime' encourages him to continue alongside her (Donoghue 2010: 56). It is easy for parents to involve children in the activities they need their help in when they associate them with games. Another way Ma tries to let anyone know that they are locked in is Morse coding with a torch through the Skylight. Jack is usually bothered by the bright light since he is asleep when Ma does it (Donoghue 2010: 27, 66). As Costello-Sullivan (2010: 95, 98) mentions, this gives Jack a feeling of having a normal childhood although Ma intends to notify people outside the shed of their captivity.

Jack has an exceptional sense of emotions in *Room*. He is well-tempered and overall happy in his imprisonment because he is with his mother and does not feel the need for anyone else in his life (Rubik 2017: 228). As mentioned in a previous section, his happiness also might be due to him being hidden away from the horrors in the night. Jack knows how and when to comfort Ma when she does not feel well and knows how to occupy himself, as well as feed himself when one of her "Gone" days occurs and Ma distances herself from the reality (ibid.: 224). Jack does not see it as a severely worrying occurrence. She gets depressed and barely interacts with Jack, so he has learned to take care of himself as well as his mother during that time (Donoghue 2010: 60). Jack plays multiple games with the items in Room and things he has created with Ma and he does so

by trying to stay quiet not to disturb her (ibid.: 56-57, 62, 105). Jack apparently sympathizes with Ma and does try to make best of what he can while also being worried for Ma when she is, as Jack describes, ‘Gone’.

There are moments of anger when Jack shouts at his mother for little things such as the missing candles on his cake (ibid. 22) and when he does not understand where their kidnapper, Old Nick: a name similar to the devil, gets their pills when the boy sees them on television (ibid. 59, O’Neill 2017: 65, Rubik 2017: 234, Costello-Sullivan 2018: 98). He cares about the small things that adults would not care for and gets upset when he does not recognize something or get what he would have wanted (Donoghue 2010: 23, 30). Jack is not a spoiled child and he knows the value of his things well. At times, Jack does not sense Ma’s emotions well or does not understand why she is not agreeing with him. When Jack wants to read a book, he does not realize that Ma is tired of reading the same book over and over again that Jack loves, although they have only a few to choose from (ibid.: 17, 55). Jealousy is another feeling Jack expresses, especially towards Old Nick, and thinks he is having the breastmilk from Ma which the boy sees as only his to have, and this is a new emotion for him (ibid.: 47). He tends to overthink and feels rage over the situation, almost exposing himself to the man but he is quick to realize it would upset his Ma, which is the last thing he would want to do. Knowing Jack’s circumstances, it is normal for him to only learn emotions at his own rate.

The escape from Room is necessary for both Ma and Jack because it could become damaging for their mental health (Rubik 2017: 228). Through the eyes of Jack, the reader can tell that there already are consequences of Ma having mental health problems but Jack himself does not seem to have any clear trauma, however, he shows signs of anxiety (Donoghue 2010: 113, 127; Costello-Sullivan 2018: 93, Földvary 2014: 212). When a situation is tense with either Ma or Old Nick, Jack starts nervously counting his teeth to

stop thinking about it (Donoghue 2010: 69). Another thought that makes him react similarly is when he thinks of what could fall into Room and crash it with them inside (ibid.: 62). Oftentimes he stays awake to check up on Ma, in a way, when she has her ‘Gone’ days or when Old Nick spends the night with her as Jack is often more scared for his mother rather than himself (ibid.: 60, 70). We can see that Jack is unaware of their life being peculiar compared to normal children and this is normalcy for him, so inside Room some of the only reasons that could cause him trauma are the abuse and constant worry for his Ma.

While Jack is curious about the possibility of seeing the Outside, he is terrified of trying to escape by himself because he will be alone for the first time (Donoghue 2010: 108; Rubik 2017: 227). He doubts the plans but goes through with the idea of playing dead in a rug because he trusts Ma and does not want to be touched by Old Nick due to the fear of him hurting Jack in any way (Donoghue 2010: 111). Ma cleverly teaches Jack the order of places to go to and what to do (ibid.: 110) and convinces him by retelling him stories he is familiar with to fit their plan, such as the 1963 film *The Great Escape* and Alexandre Dumas’ novel *The Count of Monte Cristo* (ibid.: 108, 123). The prison narrative similarities to the Jack’s life are noticeable for the character only in the prison aspect as Rubik (2017: 22) describes these stories as ‘the idea[s] of unjust captivity at the hands of a tyrant’ but Jack does not see that they are held captive.

Ma starts preparing Jack for the escape already after the incident of Jack’s toy car falling on Old Nick during the night (Rubik 2017: 226, Costello-Sullivan 2018: 98). Due to Ma’s frustration, Jack learns that most of which he sees on TV are ‘pictures of real things’ which Ma explains to him although before that she had led him to believe that nothing on television is real (ibid.: 59, Lorenzi 2016: 22, Costello-Sullivan 2018: 97-99). Through Jack’s narrative we cannot see the extent of the lies Ma told him but he himself has proven

to tell the truth rather than lie. After Ma reveals that the people and animals on television are real, he comes to the conclusion that the children in books resemble real children in the world (Donoghue 2010: 65). The imagination of a child is colourful and Jack perfectly demonstrates it in *Room*.

Ma tells Jack about her own family and how she ended up in Room, which are both understandably big surprises to him. Jack had thought that only he had a mother and thinks it is another new game Ma is teaching him instead because to deal with tough situations, Ma has played educational games with him (ibid.: 82, 93, Rubik 2017: 226, Lorenzi 2016: 30, Costello-Sullivan 2018: 95, 99). The information is all a lot for Jack to remember and take in, so he wishes he were 'still four' so that he would not have to escape (ibid.: 131). Oftentimes children do wish to go back to their regular life when a situation becomes overwhelming for them and they need a sense of security as well as routine. Ma does realize that, which is why she gradually eases him into her old life (ibid.: 84). Eventually, the boy does start to wonder about her family and wants to get to know them (ibid.: 89). Jack starts to believe everything is real more and more when he first sees a leaf on the Skylight and an airplane in the sky for the first time, as well as when Ma tells him about buildings and the nature. The things he had always only thought of as imaginary really exist now, which is essentially a turning point for their escape plan (ibid.: 86, 89, 91).

Overall if we were to conclude Jack's development and identity inside Room, we can see that first-hand, Ma has done everything she could to advance her son's knowledge and skills in the best way she knows how. The shortcomings in Jack's development are inevitable due to the restrictions of the space. Ma supports his physical, mental and emotional growth so that they could stay alive in Room, although it is harder than it first may seem.

## **2.2. Progress of Jack's Identity in the Society**

The intricate escape and life after captivity are two of the most focal points of the story in the novel. Jack is greatly affected by everything that he is thrust into – the new people and society which he had no idea of for his entire life. Within a month he has to individualize from Ma, adjust and learn how to truly live outside a confined space he referred to as his entire world. After escape, Jack deals with multiple issues of development he had not encountered during his life in the Room, such as his social growth and discovering his gender identity, which besides the aspects of development from the previous chapter, will be analysed in the following. He does, however, learn quickly and lets go of the past although a lot has happened in his life during that time (Rubik 2017: 231).

The first major task Jack now has to tackle is identity development. Even before Ma puts the escape plan into action, Jack questions their existence. Everything outside is real, and he now doubts that him and Ma are actual beings, asking himself “I’m not there though, me and Ma, we’re the only ones not there. Are we still real?” (Donoghue 2010: 71). Before he had seen the Outside as a fictional Outer Space-like world he was familiar with through literature and television, but after learning about the real world he starts to think it is the opposite – what if he and Ma are fictional but everything outside is real. The character of Jack has proven to be bright for his age so this is no surprise to the reader that he questions himself much earlier than the average child.

Soon after Jack is in the new environment by himself, he has a short identity crisis when he asks himself “I’m not in Room. Am I still me?” (Donoghue 2010: 138; Rubik 2017: 227). Costello-Sullivan (2018: 102) has aptly put it that before escape “Jack has trouble scaling his grasp of reality to the larger world abstractly” and now that he is out, he sees the size of the actual world which immediately enhances his confusion. He is in a

state of shock where he is unable to speak and call for help, thinking he is failing his mother after not getting to some of the tasks given to him (Donoghue 2010: 140-141, Rubik 2017: 230, Héту 2015: 164, Földváry 2014: 212). The only thing that is motivating him to talk to the new people around him, including the police, is that he needs to free Ma from the Room (Donoghue 2010: 143-149). He fears for Ma when people talk to her and worries about her wellbeing, because he thinks there is always potential for someone to hurt her. (ibid.: 186, 195, 224, Lorenzi 2016: 27, Moss 2015: 17). Jack has close to no social and life skills as all of his knowledge originates from books, television and Ma, which is why being thrust into the new world naturally scares him. Emotionally, he has developed well because of Ma's upbringing, however, this is one of the prime examples where the reader can assess the character's mental state and question whether or not Jack has symptoms of trauma or anxiety which is one of the most controversial topics discussed about the novel.

Some of the changes Jack encounters outside of the Room are related to his health, specifically in his mental and cognitive development. Since Jack has more "book" knowledge than skills that he would have to use in the new social life, such as going up the stairs or down a slide, he finds it hard to adjust to the new tasks (Donoghue 2010: 176, 278, Rubik 2017: 230, Héту 2017: 164). His first experience of going down the stairs scares him as he simply does not know how to use them. Ma has taught him to climb on top of things in Room but they did not have multiple levels as the stairs do (Donoghue 2010: 176). Some of the physical tasks are easier to learn for him, such as blowing his nose, as he has practice with it (ibid.: 196). At this age, children learn new skills fast and Donoghue, as she based the book partially on the experience of her own son's growth, could use her observations to develop the character of Jack (Ue 2012: para. 25).

Jack's cognitive development reveals a setback where is hard for him to understand



why the people in the world do not behave the way he and Ma did in the Room, such as why his grandmother does not want to bathe naked with him as his mother had always done (Donoghue 2010: 282, Rubik 2017: 231). Important rules in the new society that Jack has to become accustomed to are respecting other people's privacy and learning to behave in certain ways in public (Donoghue 2010: 285, Rubik 2017: 231). Sex and gender roles are another concept that Jack has to absorb. While Jack does not like other people touching him, he needs to learn that that he cannot touch or refer to someone's private parts who he has no association with or who does not want him to do it (Donoghue 2010 245, Rubik 2017: 231).

Jack is often surprised and anxious due to new experiences outside of Room. He gets a cold for the first time because in the Room he had not been exposed to as much bacteria and germs as in "the Outer Space". Jack is hypersensitive to it all, so it is only natural for him to get ill soon after leaving (Donoghue 2010: 195). His fear of the new world shows when he experiences a breeze and the bright daylight (*ibid.*: 197, Costello-Sullivan 2018: 105). He is also sensitive to smells and the things he physically feels in the world, such as the grass, flowers and ants (Donoghue 2010: 211). Kinga Földvary (2014: 217) refers to the change as "Jack's post-Room life [being] illustrative of how the body does not forget or shed its history overnight", as he had never encountered anything he is now sensitive to. As he was used to Ma ridding the Room of any insects in fear of spreading germs, Jack feels the same fear for the small beings in the Outside. All of the new information is tiring and complicated for him (Donoghue 2010: 166-167). The fear in Jack's case is enhanced as he has experienced Ma's fear of germs and this makes him himself be extra careful of his surroundings.

Ma and Jack get out of their confinement before it becomes apparent that Jack is traumatized by it (Rubik 2017: 228, Costello-Sullivan 2018: 105-106). Costello-Sullivan

(2018:108) also points out that Jack has never lived outside traumatic conditions, so he shows no sign of it and at the same time, we cannot “interpret their [Jack and Ma’s] experience in the same way”. Rather than having trauma, he is scared and anxious as everything progresses very fast for him to comprehend because he is in the space completely new to him (Donoghue 2010: 173, Costello-Sullivan 2018: 100). Lorenzi (2016: 20, 32) points out Donoghue’s take on the story as she is “not asking her readers to determine whether Jack *is* or *is not* traumatized, but rather, to consider that traumatization /.../ is merely one possible outcome of his experience”. In order for the experience to become traumatic for him he would have to have everything he has known so far thrown upside down. The existing meanings of what he has known would have to change completely for him to the point where nothing can be explained to him anymore. Jack has nightmares and frequent thoughts of their captor after the escape (Donoghue 2010: 217, 258, 263, 275, Rubik 2017: 228). He fears that Old Nick might come back and hurt them and finds it hard to accept that he is not in their lives any longer, which, on the other hand, is a sign of him being traumatized (Donoghue 2010: 175). Due to this, he has a fear of being stuck in the psychiatric facility forever and later a fear of the doorman they have in their new apartment building (ibid.: 191, 301, Moss 2015: 17).

The doctors and psychiatrists want to label his trauma although there is no certainty of him having it at all. He is simply not used to the attention he is getting and things happening suddenly, both of which scare him more than anything (Donoghue 2010: 179, 194, 231). Bigger crowds of people and noise are a new concept for him but as the days pass he gets more used to it, although he fears that people might touch him (ibid.: 183, 203, 214). He does learn that when they do it with him knowing, he does not mind it and as he gets to know them, he gets used to the attention they give them, which is common with children being in new conditions (ibid.: 239).

Everything is fresh and new to learn for him, and he adjusts quickly as he has many people around him to help him (ibid.: 268, 271, 309, 313). Slowly, he sees that there are little things that excite him that are familiar from the Room, such as the *Dora the Explorer* Band-Aids one of their doctors puts on him, essentially gaining Jack's trust this way (ibid.: 168). Some of the new things he gets and experiences excite him such as sunglasses and moving through a revolving door which he had only seen on television (ibid.: 181, 197, Héту 2015: 164).

Differently from his advancements, break of routine greatly affects his life outside the Room. He is used to doing things as if they were on a schedule – such as eating before taking a bath together with Ma and the time of eating lunch differing from the one in the Room (Donoghue 2010: 171, 184). Jack's disorientation while Ma is 'Gone' in the Outside is explained by his not having the same things he did in the Room he could occupy himself with (ibid.: 238).

Having escaped, Jack quickly finds himself missing the materialistic things and feelings associated to the Room: the warmth of Bed, his electric toy car and wanting to go back to safety (ibid.: 144, 155, 190, 247). Even before leaving the Room, Jack defends it since it is his safe space – a place he can call home (Rubik 2017: 224, 227). He wonders about the personified version of the Rug he was born on and the books they had as he feels immense attachment to the objects (ibid.: 193, 199, Moss 2015: 17, O'Neill 2017: 56). As he had seen them as friends, he feels like he has lost his closest companions. Old habits from the Room are hard to break for Jack, although after some time he starts to part from it. He does not like it when Ma calls it a "tiny stinky piece" of the world and immediately comes to the shed's defence when Ma hates it, which causes conflicts between the two (ibid.: 84, Costello-Sullivan 2018: 103).

In addition to missing it, Jack wants to keep items from the Room, such as the Rug

which he was born on and Ma's fallen out Tooth, which are the only things he has left from it and brought him comfort (ibid.: 225, Héту 2015: 162, 170, Rubik 2017: 233). In a way, the Tooth helps him deal with his anxious moments as it reminds him of Ma and he feels one with her while sucking on a 'piece of her' (Donoghue 2010: 253, Costello-Sullivan 2018: 101). Ma associates the Rug Jack wants to keep with bad memories and uncleanliness but Jack keeps his ground because of his attachment to all of the items as he did not have many materialistic things in the Room (Donoghue 2010: 289, 300, 305, Héту 2017: 163, 171, Costello-Sullivan 2018: 107). Moss (2015:17) mentions in her article that Jack did not have negative memories from the Room, which is the opposite from Ma, and thus she does not understand Jack's attachment to it as well as the items.

Jack's scariest experience in the Outside is Ma being 'Gone' and not waking up after a significant amount of time passes. While Jack knows Ma's regular dose of pills and he realizes that she had taken more than she should have, he fails to understand that Ma being mentally ill is not the same as his needs when he gets a cold (Donoghue 2010: 249, 275). We can see this as another example of the difference in his schedule as they had to count everything before consumption in the Room. Surprisingly, this experience does not seem to have an immediate negative effect on him as long as he knows that Ma is coming back to him.

Only minutes after Jack's escape, he has to deal with the issues of gender identity which he did not have in the Room. In the Outside, Jack is different from other boys since he has longer hair than even girls his age and he has a smaller build, which makes the 'Outsiders' refer to him as a girl (Donoghue 2010: 141, 215, 244, Rubik 2017: 231, Földvary 2014: 217). Through the character of Jack, Donoghue shows the problem of gender being a social construct as well as the mainstream society's understanding of what a 'normal' boy should look like and how he should behave. In the Room, he is the only

child and due to there not being any other children from a gender different from his own, he does not think that other children besides him really exist. Instead of helping Jack, the societal norms scare and confuse him, even as far as slightly traumatize him. There is an issue of Jack's Uncle Paul not understanding why Jack would pick a pink *Dora [the Explorer]* backpack from a store instead of a *Spiderman* one meant for boys (O'Neill 2017: 63). Jack's Uncle is used to seeing small boys play with stereotypical 'boy' toys and wear blue and green, but since Jack does not have any experience with other boys or men, he would not know what the stereotypes are. Grownups tend to overreact and not think about the different associations children may have with characters or items. Ma has never put Jack in a specific box where he would have to watch television shows meant strictly for boys or girls, but he got to choose his own favourites. Jack cutting off his hair with kitchen scissors can be seen as a 'rebirth' of him after he gets feedback about his appearance and behaviour which makes him realize that there is something wrong (Donoghue 2010: 284). It is important for children to experience a variety of things before they settle on a decision while they are on their search of identity, which Jack has definitely done successfully with the help of Ma.

In one month after the escape, Jack adapts to the new world and the changes in his societal growth are drastic. One of the hardest changes he has to go through is separating himself from Ma. Jack has to understand that Ma has other roles besides being his mother, that she is someone's daughter and her own person (ibid.: 221-222, Costello-Sullivan 2018: 100, 106). Rubik (2017: 232) rightfully points out that due to him not being aware of role distribution in the society, the readers do not learn Ma's name and Jack 'refuses to accept' the roles.

The boy does not understand why Ma would not want to be with him as much as before and needs a separate room apart from him (ibid.: 229, Donoghue 2010: 185, 304).

Most of the things in the Outside are easy for Jack to learn when they are explained to him well enough and he can try them out, including living in rooms of their own (ibid.: 304, 311, Costello-Sullivan 2018: 106). However, he does not like it when he does not know where she is besides her room labelled as “MA’S ROOM” because he fears that she might disappear (Donoghue 2010: 306, Rubik 2017: 230). It is essential at Jack’s age to form new relationships but the concept of the world is too fresh for him. However, another separation issue he has is that he has to become accustomed to not having to share everything with Ma. He feels like he belongs to Ma and not himself at all (Donoghue 2010: 209). He thinks that just as in the Room, in the Outside they also share their possessions and he compares the situation of Ma having her own things to how they lived in the Room (ibid.: 220).

The change of scenery is a significant turning point in Jack’s social development. He does not comprehend how everything can suddenly be so big, bright and changing constantly. In the hospital he is surprised that people have different rooms for doing various things, such as the dining room and corridors leading to all sorts of places (ibid.: 192-193). His first encounter with a mall revitalizes his anxiety because of the sheer size of the building (ibid.: 242). The rooms in his Grandma’s house confuse him as there are rooms they do not use and there are many rules in the different rooms he has to remember. This also applies to his behaviour in the world as he needs to learn the skills he did not know before (ibid.: 254, 263, 274, 312-313).

The problem that was clear in his regression, is also present in the Outside when Jack feels stress and wants to have breastmilk, he makes other people around them uncomfortable (ibid.: 161). It happens when Jack meets many new people in the same day and as he is used to asking for it any time, he does not know that it makes others feel strange, as well as that he is not supposed to have breastmilk at his age anymore (ibid.:

215). As brought to attention in the preceding chapter, Donoghue refers to the societal issue of mothers not being able to breastfeed their children in public due to constant judgment from the outsiders. She also raises the problem of the public looking down upon older children who are being breastfed after the 'socially accepted' age to be doing it. What shows good progress for Jack from this is that it is easy to part from the need to have it as Ma explains how it is produced and that Ma does not have any milk in her breasts after being apart from him for some time (ibid.: 303).

When at first he is hesitant to leave Ma even as she showers and has check-ups by the doctor, he needs to become more trusting towards the world and the people around him if he wants to do well in the new society (ibid.: 164, 172). After being separated from Ma, Jack learns to trust his grandmother as he has no choice but spend more and more time with her and accepts that he does not need to be in his relatives' sight at all times (ibid.: 256, 294).

Jack's first time in the Outside alone with other people is also a major development on his road to separate himself from his Ma (ibid.: 239). He tells Ma everything he has done and learned during the time he was apart from her and feels pride in learning more than he did in captivity and doing so without Ma (ibid.: 292, O'Neill 2017: 59-60). At the age of five children want to please their loved ones while also learning to control their emotions and express their feelings, which can be seen in Jack's case. Jack has to come to terms with his own traumatic experience as well as Ma's, which makes him different from a happy and healthy child's development.

Tentative closure is important for Jack to lessen his potential trauma and for him to further develop his personality; therefore, he needs to revisit the Room. This way he gets to leave this part of his life behind to live a fulfilling one in the future. He has become accepting towards the Outside and sees the Room as a small space which he is unable to

believe that this is really where they were (Donoghue 2010: 317, Lorenzi 2016: 19). It feels small and suffocating for him even with most of their things and furniture out of it. Even outside of the shed, he does not see the Room as the place they were living in (Donoghue 2010: 318). When he inspects the place, he sees the little things such as their height markings that only then make him believe it used to be the Room (ibid.: 319). The way he sees the Room now shows a change in his identity and he needed to experience it again to realize that he does not want to live there. He finds closure seeing it now after living in the other side of the spectrum for a month and he can confidently say ‘good-bye’ to the place that brought his Ma pain (ibid.: 320, Rubik 2017: 223, Costello-Sullivan 2018: 107). It takes time as he finds himself thinking of the Room less and less, although he has the items and memories from it (Földváry 2014: 217). He does free the thought of wanting to constantly go back to the Room and he is able to move on to a new step in developing his identity.

In a relatively short period of time, Jack is able to change into a new person. He realizes that there is more to the world than just the Room, him and Ma. The changes he experiences touch upon most of the aspects of development. The new complicated society confuses him and makes him anxious but as he forms relationships with other people and the environment, he is accepting to it. We can say that while Jack does not have trauma due to life in the Room in particular, there is a possibility of his anxiety and nightmares turning into trauma. He is a fun-loving, good-hearted boy who needs support in all levels of life as well as around him and Ma’s teaching has helped him become the person he is in the Outside. Sometimes his development is slow, but it is understandable because of the restrictions they had prior to escape. Jack goes through incredible changes that would be hard for an adult narrator to endure. He quickly learns to trust people around him, thus making him confident in himself and his surroundings.



## CONCLUSION

In this research we saw the growth of Jack in the different types of self-identity such as gender identity, cognitive and emotional development. At the same time, Jack is both mature and naïve. In some aspects, the boy has developed ahead of other children in his age and in others he has fallen behind. This can be seen in both the reactions and reviews of the book, as well as the narrative itself. Jack's mother is his biggest influence as she is the only source of direct interaction he has ever had up until the point of escape, and this does not change in the new environment but rather he then has new people around him he can trust.

In Room, Jack shows his excellent advancement in vocabulary and he has a good perception of everything that he is able to do and accomplish. He can spend a day on his own if needed which backfires in the new society as nothing is in its specific place and for some time he does not have possessions from Room. One of the concerns that appears with his growth in Room is that he is being breastfed at the age of five, which changes into him not ending up needing it after spending time apart from Ma after escape. As there are parts of Room that are hard to let go of, he lets go of the thought of the place itself which is an important task for him to continue part from his past life in order to move into the next stage of growing in freedom.

The main point that I brought out in the literature review is the contradicting opinions of scholars who either think Jack's character has trauma or he does not. The analysis showed that in Jack's case we most likely have mild symptoms of trauma and severe separation anxiety. The escape is necessary to minimize the probability of trauma, especially on Jack. Ma preventing Jack's trauma by making him escape without her in his delicate age is a drastic but important decision she had to make. There are things that scare him, such as new animals and the big world, but it is not certain that it is traumatic to him.

In Room he had not realized that the place could be traumatic to him but he saw the effect it had on his mother. Jack shows symptoms of anxiety in crowded and loud spaces, or when he worries for his mother but to say that it is strictly “trauma” is not appropriate in Jack’s case. As he grows accustomed to the new society, the anxious feeling lessens although it may heighten depending on a situation as well. While in captivity, Jack does not realize how severely he could be traumatized by the situation but as he revisits the place, he is able to see the difference living in the bigger society makes.

After escape, the skills he learned in Room are heightened and the social skills take time to advance but already within a month he is able to come to terms with his new life. Jack learns through living and he expands his horizon through his mother in Room and the society teaches him immensely how to behave after escaping. While it is hard for him to separate from his mother, he learns to trust people around him relatively fast. Jack is able to learn easily when he is taught enough and in a slow manner.

The boy has habits that are difficult to part from but with the help of his new family and Ma, he can change into a new version of himself that he had not known of before. He needs the right people and environment around him to advance into a better person. The Jack that he was in Room remains and his reception to the new world only develops as he lives a fulfilling life in the society.

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## RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL  
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

**Eke Pernik**

### **The Influence of Traumatic Experience on a Child's Identity Development in Emma Donoghue's *Room***

**Traumaatilise kogemuse mõju lapse identiteedi kujunemisele Emma Donoghue *Toas***  
Bakalaureusetöö

2020

Lehekülgede arv: 36

Annotatsioon:

Romaaniga *Tuba* käsitleb Emma Donoghue läbi viieaastase peategelase Jack'i laste identiteedi ja arengu problemaatikat ning suuri elumuutusi pärast vangistuses olemist. Käesoleva töö eesmärgiks on arutleda, kuidas Jack, kes on elanud kogu oma elu väikeses kuuris, saab hakkama uues suures ühiskonnas ning kuidas ta käitumine muutub potentsiaalse trauma tagajärjel. Jack on alati kujutanud elu väljaspool Tuba ette, aga näinud seda vaid läbi teleekraani, kuid ka siis ei uskunud ta, et see on päriselt olemas.

Bakalaureusetöö jaotub neljaks osaks: sissejuhatuseks, kirjandusülevaateks, empiiriliseks osaks ning kokkuvõtteks. Töö sissejuhatuses on toodud välja romaani võrdlus tänapäeva sarnaste teostega ning *Toa* peategelase Jack'i eripärasused. Lisaks on mainitud autori erinevaid romaane ning saavutusi nii kirjandus- kui ka filmindusmaailmas. Kirjandusülevaate eesmärk on anda lugejale ülevaade varasemalt romaani kohta tehtud uurimustest, rõhutades eelkõige traumateoreetilist lähenemist romaanile ning tänapäeva kirjandusele. Lisaks antakse lühülevaade identiteedi alaliikidest, mida arutatakse antud töös detailsemalt. Töö empiiriline osa on jaotatud kaheks alapeatükiks. Empiirilise osa esimene pool toob välja peategelase vaatepunktist ilmnevad arenguetapid, kui ta elab vangistuses kuuris ning ettevalmistamise põgenemiseks. Teine alapeatükk keskendub põhiliselt elule pärast pääsemist ja raskustele, mis uudses sotsiaalelus võivad tekkida, näiteks probleemid sooidentiteedi ja soorollidega. Arutletakse ka selle üle, kas tegelasel võib olla pärast põgenemist tekkinud kohene trauma ja kas sellel on potentsiaali hilisemas elus tekkida. Kokkuvõtteks saab öelda, et põgenemine on lapse edasiseks arenguks tähtis, et tal ei tekiks traumasid. Kuigi Jack on läbinud arenguetapid, mis on tema vanusele normaalsed ja kohati on ta kõrgemalt arenenud kui teised viieaastased lapsed, siis erinevates uutes etappides on tal arengus pikk tee ees.

Märksõnad: Identiteet, trauma, liri kirjandus, vangistus, põgenemine, sotsialiseerumine

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