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From Confinement to Liberation in Emma Donoghue's *Room*

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Dedication

To the most generous hearts I have ever known in my life, to my father and mother...

I dedicate this work.

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Abstract

Though it employs fictitious characters, literature had always been the repository of human experience. It opens our eyes on the unknown sides of the human being, who is constantly prone to change through life experiences. Confinement, for instance, is one experience which exerts a mighty influence on human's psychological well-being, identity and thoughts. Thus, it occupied a considerable space in literature and mainly in the novel. This research work is devoted to explore the multifaceted influence inflicted by captivity, through casting light on Emma Donoghue's characters "Jack" and "Ma" in *Room*. Relying on the psychoanalytic literary approach, this research seeks to scrutinize the ways in which the characters' physical confinement gave rise to psychological issues, which had mentally and psychologically imprisoned them and held them back from connecting properly to their free world upon their release. The second chapter of this work, particularly, examines some psychological mechanisms adopted by both characters to liberate themselves from their psychological and mental confinement. The work is also concerned with analyzing the characters' psychological adaptation to life of confinement and reveals what this can indicate about human nature.

Key words: Confinement, Identity, *Room*, Psychoanalytic theory, liberating the self, Psychological adaptation.

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General Introduction

Confinement is such a transformative experience that it is extensively discussed in various fields of study, such as psychology, sociology and literature. These studies attempt to explore the impact of confinement on the individual, who experiences a total isolation from human contact. They also shed light on the ways in which confinement is capable of reshaping self-perception, meaning of freedom and parameters of normalcy.

Room by the Irish-Canadian Emma Donoghue is a significant instance of confinement narrative, which casts light on the overwhelming experience of captivity that the characters "Jack" and "Ma" go through. The novel also exposes the ways in which their confinement affected their thinking and social skills and gave rise to crisis of identity, social alienation and paralysis which bubbled to the surface as soon as they found themselves in the free world; what indicates that their physical freedom did not end their mental and psychological confinement.

The reason behind writing this research is to examine the profound influence inflicted by confinement on the individual and the ways in which it alters his psychological well-being, identity and perception of freedom. It analyzes as well to what extent these effects can manifest in the individual's life outside the walls of prison.

Following a psychological approach in the form of Psychoanalytical literary criticism, this work attempts to explore the psychological and mental confinement which physical confinement leaves the prisoners with, and the struggles faced by the characters of *Room* to reach an accomplished liberation. For this, this work seeks to answer the following research questions:

In what ways can physical confinement cause the individual a mental and psychological confinement, and how can this hinder his adjustment to the free society?

General Introduction

How can people adapt to the worst situations in their lives, and how this is portrayed in *Room*?

Is it possible to detach and liberate one's self thoroughly from the psychological shackles which confinement left both characters with, and therefore integrate in society?

The first chapter of this research is an exposition of the profound impact of physical confinement on prisoners. It introduces the reader to psychological and sociological standpoints about isolation and its impact on the individual's psychological state, identity and thinking. Besides, the chapter examines the main psychological and social struggles faced by the individual after his release from captivity, such as alienation. The chapter also sheds light on one of the most stressful types of captivity which is solitary confinement.

The second chapter of this work is basically devoted to scrutinize the various effects inflicted on *Room*'s characters "Jack" and "Ma" after their transformative experience in confinement. It also explores how these effects accompanied them after their release to mentally and psychologically imprison them from connecting to their free world properly. This chapter closes up with the characters' process of liberating themselves from the embedded effects of their experience.

Chapter One: Psychological Aspects

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Chapter One: Psychological Aspects

1.1. Introduction

From the dawn of history, humans have experienced isolation either by or against their will. Considering the fact that humans are social creatures, an isolated life is more likely to exert a considerable influence on them. Captivity, in particular, is an extreme obligatory sort of isolation that has caught lots of interest amongst anthropologists and even novelists, who attempt to figure out to what extent the experience of confinement could be influential. This chapter explores the multifaceted impact of confinement on the individual.

1.2. From Physical Confinement to Psychological Confinement

In its broader sense, confinement means being physically separated and isolated from the human society, what deprives the individual from an appropriate social and even psychological growth, for "It is well-known in psychology, that humans need social contact in order to thrive" (Vella 1). In fact, the deprivation from social connection may lead to mental and psychological sufferings such as depression, anxiety and alienation; this is the reason why psychologists have always asserted human's need for social connection and "belongingness" (Haney 296). As well as they draw attention to the destructive effects of physical confinement and isolation.

1.2.1. Isolation:

Sociologists have always concerned themselves with studying the human communication and the influence of the social contact on the psychological and mental state of human beings. Therefore, hundreds of researches were conducted to figure out the effects of depriving people from human connection or what is known as Isolation.

According to so many researches, humans are social creatures who need to connect for their individual and psychological growth, thus living in isolation is difficult and can be even destructive; socially isolated people are in fact more likely to feel depressed, anxious and unstable (Cacioppo 18). Moreover, living in isolation raises one's feelings of estrangement and disconnectedness to others, which makes

him feel rejected by society. These negative feelings, however, deeply affect the individual's sense of self and well-being (Cacioppo 19).

Researchers constantly cast light on the ways in which prolonged isolation can ruin the individual and raise the possibility of developing mental and psychological illnesses. The experience of the solitary confinement, for instance, caught lots of interest between researchers concerned with examining the psychological influence of isolation. Indeed, prisoners who were put in prolonged solitary confinement develop over time depression, severe anxiety, the desire of self-harm, and others were even driven to sanity (Heiden 7), such as a prisoner from Northern California who states: "Sometimes I feel overwhelmed. I get trepidations, nervous, agitated; I go off the deep end... Here, I feel like I'm in a kennel, closed off from life itself. I feel like I live in a coffin, like a tomb" (Quoted by Heiden 7)

Another prisoner from Maine went on to describe life after experiencing solitary confinement:

> When I was finally released from the supermax into general population after almost two years, it was overwhelming. The mere sensation of human contact was harsh on my nerves .I would break into cold sweats and shake; I was overly stimulated and anxious all the time .It was very difficult to concentrate on one thing. Even to this day, I have a very difficult time focusing on one thing for very long, and I am very easily distracted .The effects of the supermax reach beyond the confines of its walls and fences (Quoted by Heiden 8)

Such commentaries reflect the high level of anxiety and psychological torture that total isolation brings about, and that this kind of punishment complicates prisoners' adjustment to the free society after their release, what urged some international institutions to call for preventing prolonged solitary confinement and reconsidering its use (Shalev 9).

Having a good social connection is regarded vital for people's development. Sociologists, however, consider "social relationships primarily a building stone for society" itself (Hortulanus, Machielse, and Meeuwesen 14). Thus, the problem of

social isolation should concern society as a whole, because it negatively affects "social cohesion and solidarity within society" (Quoted by Hortulanus, Machielse and Meeuwesen 7). This seems plausible because the growth of the individual means the growth of the overall community. In parallel, when individuals are dissociated from their societies, they will create different values, which will threaten their sense of harmony with their communities: "If people are no longer part of regular society, they can also lose contact with the norms and values prevailing in that society, values that are essential for social integration and societal stability" (7). Indeed, social isolation seems to create a dangerous gap between the individual and his community, it causes the individual feelings of 'exclusion'. In this respect, it is claimed that: "People who are isolated from society also experience a certain form of social exclusion. In fact, isolation from society and social exclusion are considered so interwoven as to be interchangeable" (Hortulanus, Machielse and Meeuwesen 155). Socially isolated people are put or putting themselves on the margin of society. As such, social isolation may be seen also "as a new form of social inequality" (7).

Having a normal social life is necessary for people's psychological well-being (Hortulanus, Machielse and Meeuwesen 14). This sense of well-being, however, cannot be attained without feelings of belonging to others. Generally, it is seen that social contacts in individual's life "increase self-respect and fulfill a key role in dealing with problems" (6) in the sense that as one is not alone, he will constantly find support in dealing with troubles.

From the other side, Social isolation brings about feelings of loneliness, which is defined as "the subjective unwelcome feeling of lack or loss of companionship" (Quoted by Pate 6). Loneliness is brought about by 'social isolation' or by 'emotional isolation' (Pate 6). The difference between the two resides in the fact that "Loneliness due to social isolation concerns a person's lack of social integration in social networks, while loneliness due to emotional isolation refers to the absence of a reliable attachment figure such as a partner" (Pate 6). Regarding this, confined people experience both types of loneliness; this is because they are cast aside from the broader community as well as from their own friends and families.

Chapter One : Psychological Aspects

Prolonged loneliness can totally destroy one's psychological health, it may generate a constant negative flow of thoughts and feelings what can be translated to irresponsible acts (Pate 7), and once someone is subjected to this kind of isolation he will find it challenging to return to social life and normal behavior. Pate clarifies: "Those who experience lifelong isolation tend to be men, with alcohol problems, and who describe themselves as loners with marginal lifestyles" (Pate 9). This seems to assert what was previously mentioned; as the individual is isolated, he is more likely to feel excluded or marginalized from his society.

Loneliness also generates anxiety, rage, vexation, negativity, emptiness, along with a sense of being meaningless and valueless. With this in mind, Loneliness is believed to raise dangerous habits such as drug addiction (Pate12). More importantly, a total isolation from people can bring a serious mental decay. In this regard, The UK report "Lonely Society" states:

> To some extent, all conversations with other people are mental health interventions. People who are completely isolated can risk losing their minds because they have no one to help them get a perspective. There is an interesting interplay between loneliness serious psychiatric conditions, such as paranoia, anxiety and depression (Quoted by Pate 13).

Studies on loneliness and isolation still demonstrate the necessity of human contact to the individual's mental and psychological growth and feelings of safety. This is what is also suggested by the attachment theory.

This theory denotes that "Human beings are born with a psychological system (the attachment behavioral system) that motivates them to seek proximity to significant others (attachment figures) in times of need" (Mikulincer and Shaver 34). That is to say, humans have the innate need to search for their closest people in certain times. The purpose of this system though is to ensure the sufficient aid to the individual and maintain his feelings of safety and stability. This goal is made salient when people encounter actual or symbolic threats and notice that an attachment figure is not sufficiently near, interested or responsive (Mikulincer and Shaver 34). This system is active regardless of people's age (Mikulincer and Shaver 35). So, being around people

and especially the significant figures maintains a state of comfort and safety from which confined people are terribly deprived.

Psychologists write extensively about human's need to connect with others, therefore they find in cases of confinement such as 'solitary confinement' a captivating subject to highlight the everlasting impact on their psychological states and sense of self.

1.2.2. Solitary Confinement

Solitary confinement is "a form of confinement where prisoners spend 22 to 24 hours a day alone in their cell in separation from each other" (Shalev 2). As such, solitary confinement is synonymous with "isolation" and "segregation" (Shalev 2). This type of confinement was used from the Nineteenth century, and apart from execution, this confinement is seen to be "the most extreme penalty which be legally imposed on prisoners" (Shalev 2).

Solitary confinement was thought to rehabilitate prisoners and edify them, as they are left in the cell with their inner thoughts, but this extreme isolation proved to bring about a mental decay for most inmates (Shalev 2). For this, researchers consider solitary confinement as "a psychological torture" which equals the physical torment (9). Shalev describes prisoner's life in this kind of confinement:

> Being held in solitary confinement is, for most prisoners, a stressful experience with potentially harmful health effect. The prisoner is socially isolated from others, his human contacts is reduced to superficial transactions with staff and infrequent contact with family and friends .He is almost completely dependent on prison stuff for provision of all his basic needs , and his few moments are tightly controlled and closely observed. Confinement to a small sparsely furnished cell with little or no view of the outside world and with limited access to fresh air and natural light, he lives in an environment with little stimulation and few opportunities to occupy himself (Shalev 9).

A long-term isolation is dangerous to both physical and mental health, it can "predispose to hallucination" (Quoted by Shalev 10). It also gives rise to emotional damage, and to identity issues such as "depersonalization" and "delusion" (Quoted by Shalev 11). Over time, prisoners show "irrational anger and confused thought process,

chronic depression, hallucination and overall deterioration" (Shalev 11). These psychological difficulties sometimes lead to violent behavior and develop to become an overall insanity.

The overwhelming experience of solitary confinement caught the interest of numerous psychologists and sociologists; they devoted their studies to scrutinize the mental and psychological harm of isolation. They coined the word "confinement psychosis" to refer to "the psychotic reaction characterized frequently by hallucination and dilution, produced by prolonged physical isolation and inactivity in completely segregated areas" (Quoted by Shalev 11).

Seemingly, the more isolated a person is, the more he is subjected to psychological issues: "inmates housed in the most restrictive environment [punitive segregation] reported significantly higher levels of psychological distress symptoms such as anxiety and hostility, than inmates in the general population" (Quoted by Shalev 12). This asserts what was mentioned earlier about the human need to social contact. In the same vein, Hans Toch termed "isolation panic" to depict the tortures of isolated prisoners:

> A feeling of abandonment… dead-end desperation… helplessness, tension. It is a physical reaction, a demand for release or a need to escape at all costs… [Isolated prisoners] feel caged rather than confined, abandoned rather than alone, suffocated rather than isolated. They react to solitary confinement with surges of panic or rage. They lose control, break down, regress. (Quoted by Shalev 12).

In addition to this emotional and psychological deterioration experienced by prisoners, extreme isolation of solitary confinement is more capable of causing hallucination and blurring the line between reality and fantasy (Shalev 13). Prisoners became so vulnerable to stand the dreary reality, so that they invent their own fictitious world for the sake of alleviating the pain of isolation (Shalev 13). Shalev represented the testimony of a former female prisoner who described her 'travels': "The first four years of prison was such a fantasy world… I was in segregation. I could be in my cell

and shut everyone out and I would go travelling. I would go up and out of prison and fly over the beaches and mountains of Okinawa, where I used to live. Sometimes it was really, really hard to come back" (Quoted by Shalev 14). In view to the extreme boredom and emptiness prisoners undergo, daydreaming sounds a normal escape from pain. Yet, daydreaming can become pathological, in the sense that it gradually blurs the line between the prisoner's reality and fantasy (Salev 14).

Nevertheless, isolation proves to bring profound changes in the prisoner's habits and behavior. For instance, prisoners show abnormal "sensitivity to noise". One of the prisoners clearly describes this aspect: "you get sensitive to noise. The plumbing system... the water rushes through the pipes it's too loud, gets on your nerves. I can't stand it" (Quoted by Shalev 13)

Indeed, solitary confinement is a horrifying experience that causes considerable changes on people as clarified above, which may complicate returning to a normal social life. Ecclestone, Gendreau and Knox reported in 1974 that for eight volunteers over a period of 10 days "solitary confinement was not more stressful than normal institutional life" (Shalev 21). Being in a dark hole for too long before your release to society is such an overwhelming experience for so many prisoners. Shalev presents a testimony of a prisoner who has been released after a long period in solitary confinement:

> I mean there are still times where I may go to the walk-in and after the movie's over and, you know, it's like I've been in the dark and all of the sudden the light comes on and boom all these millions of people around me, I'm like, you know, looking around like, okay, okay... I mean, you feel real uncomfortable and then all of the sudden you start shaking, you know, you feel your heart beat... (Quoted by Shalev 22).

It seems that getting used to a life of isolation can deeply alter people's perception towards free society and to their previous free life. The solitary confinement as a state of isolation proves to exert a huge influence on individuals' habits and minds. It damages their social skills, and their psychological adaptation to this confined environment changes the free external world in their eyes from a comfortable, secure world to a challenging, irritating one. Besides, isolation

predisposes people to feel alienated to themselves and to their societies as demonstrated in the following part.

1.2.3. Alienation:

Alienation is an intriguing topic, which is largely discussed in psychology, sociology, philosophy and literature. Such a prevailing subject had a major influence upon the modern literature and more precisely the "the existential" one (Saleem 67), wherein "The alienated protagonist" (Saleem 67) is strongly existent particularly in "the American and European fiction" (Saleem 67).

The predicaments of the Twentieth Century like the first and second world wars were so powerful that they led Man to lose much faith in the meaning of life and prompted him to go on a journey of searching for the self: "the search for identity is a common place theme in modern fiction. Man fails to perceive today the very purpose behind life and the relevance of his existence in a hostile world" (Saleem 67). Man's disconnectedness with his existence has gradually developed his sense of alienation.

So, the tragic events that people go through may give rise to alienation. Yet, alienation according to Edmund Fuller is not born out only of "war, persecution, famine and ruin" but also from man's "inner problems...a conviction of isolation, randomness, meaninglessness in his way of existence" (Quoted by Saleem 67). What generally denotes that alienation emanates from the existential crisis or any kind of severe psychological conflicts that the individual cannot solve (Saleem 68).

Feelings of alienation emerge when Man experiences some social situations which impact his own "existence" (Saleem 70). For instance, Keniston remarked that Man may face alienation when "some relationship or connection that once existed, that is natural, desirable or good, has been lost" (Quoted by Saleem 70). So, one's relationship to others has a considerable impact on oneself.

Initially, alienation has two synonyms in the English language, which are "Anomie and Anomia". These words are originally Greek, wherein "Anomia" means "self-alienation" and "Anomie" is alienation from society (Saleem 70).

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It is believed that self-alienation is the most significant type of alienation. It indicates "the absence of self-awareness or a complete loss of it" (Saleem 71). Seemingly, as the individual loses his self-awareness, he will eventually live alienated from society (Saleem 71). Karen Horney, however, believes that a self-alienated is that whose "spontaneous individual self has been stunted, warped or chocked; he is said to be in condition of alienation from himself (or) alienated from himself" (Quoted by Saleem 71). In light of this, one can say that being self-alienated is lacking true recognition of one's identity, and failing to connect to one's self, or in Saleem's words, it implies estrangement to "the real self" (Saleem 71).

That said, imposing some social orders which lay at odds with people's beliefs push those to lose connection with themselves to fit the social requirements, the thing which ultimately gives rise to self -alienation according to Saleem (72). Concisely, as the individual loses his self-awareness and connection to his authentic self, he will eventually live alienated from society (Saleem 71).

It is seen that 'loneliness' is a type of alienation "which is found in the absence of intimacy with others" (Saleem 71). It indicates man's failure to relate to others, or facing barriers of any kind between himself and others, this is known as "social alienation" (Saleem 72).

Taviss defines social alienation as "the sense of estrangement brought out by the sudden discovery that the social system is either oppressive or incomplete with their desires and ideas" (Quoted by Saleem 72). For instance, people who are put in confinement are undergoing oppression which can ultimately give rise to their alienation, just like the characters of *Room*, the novel intended to be analyzed in this dissertation. As such, social oppression or any powerful social experience is capable of exerting a great influence on the individual's relationship to himself and to others.

It seems that experiencing confinement can result in feelings of alienation. In his research, Charles Thomas states that: "Prisonization has been linked to alienation" (Thomas 495). Basically, alienation is experiencing the self as "an alien" (Fromm 26).

It is born out of the detachment and "estrangement" from one's community and the self. It also results in feelings of paralysis and helplessness.

Living isolated in captivity especially for a prolonged period of time means a total separation from one's milieu and previous life, which results in the loss of connection to others, Richard E. Merwin explains some of the aspects of alienation: "The socially alienated individual in the extreme, is responding to feelings of disconnection and disengagement from his society, to the extent that he exists as an island, he is enable to relate his behavior to that of others" (Merwin 10).

As clarified above, the detachment from society creates for people psychological barriers which complicate a normal social integration, this leads them to be "enclosed in their own world" (Vella 43). As they are deprived from social contact, they are likely to become self-obsessed since they do not encounter anyone but themselves (Vella 5). This denotes that physical confinement in most cases gives rise to psychological confinement.

1.3 The Impact of Confinement on Identity:

Identity is in an essential issue that is largely discussed in literature, it seems that people shape their perception towards themselves in relation to the different situations and life experiences, and being isolated from human connection has its influence on one's identity.

Identity is about answering the question: who we are? The question of which we are all concerned. However, identity is seen to be forged in relation to society as Burke and Tully mentioned in 1977:

> Burke and Tully (1977) define 'Identity' as a set of internalized meanings applied to the self in a social role, The internalized meanings associated with roles define one's identity within The social role, and this set of meanings serves as a standard or reference for Who one is
>
> (Quoted by Dyer 204).

So, identity is shaped when engaging in social roles, which give meaningful existence to the individual and a sense of who he is. This is the reason why it is

believed that social interaction and engagement is not required for pleasure, but rather for "the individual's very sense of self" (Shalev 18) which is basically forged when having a normal social life (Shalev 18). Amongst the sociologists who shed light on this issue is the American philosopher George Herbert Mead, who claimed in his book *Mind, Self, and Society* that the self cannot thrive in isolation from society:

> The self is essentially a social structure and it arises in social experience. After a self has arisen, it in a certain sense provides for itself its social experiences, and so we can conceive of an absolutely solitary self. But it is impossible to conceive of a self-arising outside social experience (Quoted by Shalev 18).

As Mead suggests, the lack of social interaction undermines the growth of the self which is likely to cause identity issues. As such, the prison which represents an extreme sense of isolation is an excellent space for examining the ways in which a prisoner's identity is affected. For instance, W. Justin Dyer clarifies in his research "Prison, Fathers, and Identity" the prison's impact on men's parental identities.

Initially, Dyer claimed that the specific conditions of confinement break familial relationship (Dyer 204). This is mainly due to the psychological transformation which fathers experience in confinement; this transformation includes their "perception of themselves as fathers". Throughout their captivity, fathers show an unstable and fractured identity (Dyer 204).

Imprisonment seems to "Interrupt the individual's relationship patterns and processes" (Dyer 12). That is to say, as a father, he will no more maintain his role which gives him a sense of self: "A man may hold (In relation to his child) the role of provider, nurturer and friend. The extent to which the man feels these roles are meaningful in making up 'who he is' as a father defines the man's identity as a father" (Dyer 204).

So, as confinement forces different kind of existence in which man's roles change, he may eventually experience "a crisis in his sense of self" (Dyer 207). This

crisis may exist even in his life after prison, because his experience of confinement is likely to alter his interaction and relationship with his child (Dyer 207).

Confinement's distractive impact on one's identity and well-being is still extensively discussed amongst researchers, who are still surveying the profound influence of social isolation on prisoners. Solitary confinement, for instance, is taken as an instance to study prisoners' responses to this extremely isolated environment, which proves that it does not rehabilitate prisoners, but it rather exacerbates their psychological conflicts and hinders their adjustment to the free society after their release (Haney 292). This is mainly because people find social interaction very uncomfortable and stressful after their overwhelming experience in solitary cells where they get accustomed to loneliness, so they are more likely to retreat from social contacts outside prison.

In view of all these negative effects of isolation, Haney and others believe in reconsidering the use of confinement and especially solitary confinement which seems to exert a devastating influence on individuals. It can deteriorate and "distort their social identities and destabilizing their sense of self" (Haney 292). This seems plausible if we consider that the person's social connection is crucial for constructing his values and sense of self.

In order to know more about the factors which destroy the prisoner's ability to adapt to free social life, researchers tried to figure out some of the psychological processes which prisoners undergo to survive in prison.

1.4 Prisonization: Adjustment to Prison Life

Prisonizaion is a word coined by Donald Clemmer in his book *The Prison Community*, where He defines prisonization as "The taking on in greater or lesser degree, of the folkways, mores, customs, and general culture of the penitentiary by inmates" (Clemmer 299).

Prisoners experience several psychological alterations to cope with prison life; they embrace certain mechanisms which enable them to adapt to the unfamiliar

environment of prison (Travis, Western, Redburn 176). In fact, the process of prisonization occurs due to different factors according to Edward Zamble:

> Two notable characteristics of the prison environment contribute to the process of prisonization: The necessary structure and routines. Maintaining Order and safety within prisoners often requires that routines and safeguards be established .As a result, daily decisions-such as when they get up; when, what ,Or where they eat, and when phone calls are allowed- are made for prisoners .Over long periods, such routines can become increasingly natural (Quoted by Travis, Bruce, Redburn 177).

Apparently, the prison is such a routinized and limited life so that prisoners increasingly lose their capacity to take decisions and control their lives (Irwin 154). As they are under the power of the habits and demands that prison entails, they will gradually be accustomed to "a deeply embedded set of unconscious habits and automatic responses" (Irwin 166) which may accompany them even in their free life.

In his interesting article "The Psychological Impact of Incarceration: Implications for Post-Prison Adjustment.", Craig Haney elaborates on this point arguing that prisoners subconsciously get used to the nature of prison through "psychological mechanisms" (Haney 80) which become progressively "natural, second nature, to a degree internalized" (Haney 80). This process, however, is hard to detect as it happens because prisoners do not consciously opt for it. Therefore, the majority of prisoners are being unaware as they undergo it (Haney 80).

Considering this, prisoners who have profoundly 'internalized' these sorts of manners and life patterns caused by prisonization are expected to have hardships when released in the community (Travis, Western, Redburn 178).

> Where the prisoner does become more docile and apparently conforming to the rules, it may in fact be a pathological reaction in the form of withdrawal, emotional numbing and apathy. Further, the 'totality of control' means that some prisoners become so reliant on the prison to organize their lives and daily routines that they lose the capacity to exercise personal autonomy. This, again, may render them dysfunctional in society upon their release and some will seek to return to prison (Shalev 20).

Relying on prison deprives the prisoner from a normal life, as his ability to take simple decisions is taken away. This, as the quote suggests, will complicate his integration to society, because prison becomes for him a natural world, or in a sense 'a comfort zone', since he unconsciously adapts to it.

1.5 The Comfort Zone

The comfort zone was first coined in 2009 by Alasdair White, a business management theorist, as Elaine Mead mentioned. In his book *The Warrior Within*, Caesar Rondina identified this concept when he said: "A comfort zone is a psychological state in which things feel familiar to a person, and they are at ease, and in control of their environment, experiencing low level of anxiety and stress" (Rondina 42).

In the same vein, Abigail Brenner M.D argued in her article "5 Benefits of Stepping Outside Your Comfort Zone", that the comfort zone is synonymous with familiarity and safety (Brenner). However, feeling secure and comfortable in a certain situation does not necessarily mean being "happy" (Roundina 42), but this is mainly because "you are accustomed to it" (42). Roundina further argues that the concept 'comfort zone' is often misunderstood, because people link it to happiness, however it is not. Indeed, people stay in their comfort zone as a psychological "protective mechanism" (Roundina43) to adapt to a certain situation, because they cannot "face the truth about their situation" (43) especially if this situation is associated with fear (43). As such, people prefer to stay in their comfort zone rather than confronting change outside this zone.

Psychologists have written extensively about this topic, wherein so many view that humans have to step out of their comfort zone for self-discovery and growth; it is believed that it is necessary to push the boundaries of one's comfort zone. Yet, this does not seem such an easy task to do. This is basically because humans quickly adapt to routines and usual habits, so that they find it difficult to experience something new even if good. Adapting to familiar habits and routines maintains safety, stability and a

steady level of happiness; this adaptation is the psychological mechanism which prisoners unconsciously develop to avoid pain in their confinement.

1.5.1 Optimal Performing Zone

It is believed that staying in the comfort zone will maintain a stable level of performance. In this respect, Alasdair White states: "The comfort zone is a behavioral state within which a person operates in an anxiety-neutral condition, using a limited set of behaviors to deliver a steady level of performance. Usually without a sense of risk" (Quoted by White 2).

In fact, the first researchers who draw the link between 'anxiety' and 'performance' are Yerkes and Doson in their experiment "The Dancing Mouse, A Study in Animal Behavior" (White 2). They claimed that "Anxiety improves performance until a certain optimum level of arousal has been reached. Beyond that point, performance deteriorates as higher levels of anxiety are attained" (Quoted by White 2).

This indicates that stepping outside one's comfort zone can raise anxiety and feelings of insecurity, the thing which improves performance accordingly (White 3). Yet, too much anxiety "which is far away from the comfort zone" (White 3) will decrease performance. White refers to the state where anxiety and performance rise outside the comfort zone as "optimal performance" (3). That said, as much as being out of the comfort zone is difficult, humans have the ability to adapt, therefore staying in the "optimal performance zone" (White 4) for a long time would be enough for them to attain a "new and expanded comfort zone"(4).

Prof Colin Carnall has also agreed on this point; he points out to the relationship between "how people feel about themselves (self-esteem) and their performance" (Quoted by White 3). He believes that any change which occurs to individuals will influence their self-esteem. He claimed that "Linked to this impact on self-esteem will be an impact on performance" (Quoted by White 6). So, when any change occurs, it is important "to rebuild self-esteem in order" to "rebuild performance" (White 6).

Human's psychological adaptation to any kind of situation, be it good or bad, is often used as a psychological mechanism to maintain psychological comfort and safety, and in order to embrace any change out of this comfort zone, people go through some phases that are well depicted by the coping process theory.

1.5.2. Coping Process

White represents what is known as 'The coping cycle', which is put forward by Carnall, who formulated five-stage coping cycle that humans experience as they undergo change (white 6).

The first step is denial; Carnall claims that "When significant changes are first mooted, the initial response may be to deny the need for change" (Quoted by White 6). Since people find in their comfort zone a steady level of happiness and security, any change triggers tension and anxiety (White 6), which lead people to deny and not accept change at first.

The second stage is that of defense; after denial, people adopt "Defensive behaviour and try to force the new reality into the old model that has allowed them to continue to perform in the current comfort zone" (White 7). So as the individual resists change by opting for some mechanisms in this stage, performance will decrease (White 7).

The third phase is discarding; In this phase, "people discard and abandon the old ways of doing things, and either commit to new work methods or invent new ways of acting" (White 7). That is to say, people return gradually to choose new actions and being more opened to change. In parallel, with abandoning their old habits, their self-esteem rises again, and their performance improves accordingly (White 7).

As soon as people adjust to "the new realities of their situation" (White 7), they try to explore some ways to cope with their new realities (White 7). In this adaptation phase, they look forward on the ways in which they can conduct a successful change, and as people show adaptation to change, performance will boost (White 8).

Finally, internalization is the last stage. As Carnall noted, people reach a high level of adaptation to the change, so that the steps undertaken in coping to change will be internalized. In this phase, anxiety will decrease, which indicates turning steadily towards a "new comfort zone" (White 8).

Understanding the comfort zone is necessary to figure out the ways in which human beings can grow and discover themselves. As clarified above, stepping outside one's comfort zone is not an easy task, it requires time to adapt to the unknown even if good, and this was the challenge faced by 'Jack' and 'Ma' in *Room,* which is an instance of confinement literature.

1.6. Confinement Literature

Confinement literature "refers to any work of fiction or non-fiction" (Hill 19) which is concerned with the stories of human confinement. Broadly, confinement literature includes different areas like "Slave plantation and concentration camps, as well as allegorical fictive spaces such as Jonah's whale and Plato's cave" (Hill 19). Indeed, confinement literature in its various spots tends to discuss all sorts of existential and social predicaments that are born out of forcible confinement (Hill 19). Besides, it addresses the human issues and challenges which people face in captivity (Hill 19).

That said, 'personal confinement literature' is particularly considered a popular narrative which provides a critical space for analyzing the human experience under captivity. In this respect, *De Profundis* the text written by Oscar Wild about his own experience of imprisonment provides a very insightful analysis to the multifaceted torments he underwent in prison along with his journey of personal growth (Hill 22). Similarly, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* introduces the reader to the profound influence of prison on Malcolm X's character, as it was a space of transformation and self-discovery (Hill 22). As such, confinement literature serves as a rich literary field for its endeavor in surveying the far-reaching consequences of captivity on human's perception of freedom, identity, psychology and even mental health.

Besides, confinement narrative rests heavily on the setting, which seems to have a great significance in shaping the character's development and the whole plot in confinement literature. In this respect, Jasmine Vella drew this conclusion:

> In all of the literary texts which have been studied, the setting does become the primary inflictor of fear, since it is because of the confines of the setting that the characters start experiencing horrifying occurrences. If one were to remove the setting or completely change it to another one, the entire experience of the character in discussion would be distinctly different. It can therefore be argued that the setting is the most essential element in the development of the human condition when faced with confinement (Vella 43).

The setting in confinement literature is a focal factor in determining the ways in which characters change, evolve and discover themselves. Living in a space as suffocating as the prison is such an overwhelming experience with which literature had always been concerned. It reveals to which extent the human self is influenced by isolation and absence of human connection. Emma Donoghue's *Room* is a confinement narrative since it comprises aspects of prison, yet it is perceived as a psychological thriller as it manifests several features of this genre.

1.7. The Psychological Thriller Genre:

The psychological thriller is a modern genre that has particularly invaded the contemporary American literature. Three streams are seen to give rise to this genre, "Gothic fiction, Freudian Psychoanalysis and psychological realism in fiction" (Mecholsky 2). The psychological thriller evolves fundamentally around the mysteries of the human mind and its intricacies. This genre is also featured by characters that seem to experience psychological sufferings and torments. It also includes characters with "psychological illness" and "trauma or memory loss" (Mecholsky 1).

1.7.1. History and Aspects of the Genre:

Writers of the psychological thriller tend to dive deep into the human psyche, and survey the dark side of the subconscious, this is why the reader is more likely to

confront "psychotic protagonists" or "psychotic antagonists" (Mecholsky1). The reader may also confront main characters with "past traumas" and discover the ways in which these traumas resurface and affect their lives (Mecholsky 1). This genre may include "Children in danger" (Mecholsky 1) just like in Emma Donoghue's *Room*, the novel analyzed in this memoir, which narrates the story of the five-years-old child "Jack" who is locked with his mother in 11square-feet room. Besides, the psychological thriller is known by "unreliable narrators whose unreliability comes from some kind of psychosis" (Mecholsky 3). Since it is called a thriller, it is characterized by the elements of surprise and suspense in plots and characters. For instance, it represents "presumed innocents who turn out to be psychotic" (Mecholsky 3).

Some psychological thrillers however display more than one of the mentioned aspects; the reader can find most of these aspects in one work. For instance, S.J. *Before I Go to Sleep* incorporates "psychotic parents /spouses who seem good" (Mecholsky 1) besides the presence of a "main character with severe psychological illness or trauma" (Mecholsky 1). James Patterson's *Alex Cross, Run* is a novel which displays numerous features of the genre such as mentally ill characters, criminals, "children in danger", "revenge plots", "psychotic spouses who seem good, crucial scenes that depict psychological torture , severe psychological illness, and past traumas that revisit" (Mecholsky 2). The psychological thriller is such a contemporary genre which characterizes "the most modern and the most postmodern of literary forms" (Mecholsky 2). It is thought to be a landmark which set the modern era apart from the old one (2).

The psychological thriller can be particularly traced to Gothic fiction. It is seen that nineteenth-century writers such as Edgar Allan Poe gave way to the psychological thriller as it is nowadays (Mecholsky 2). Poe is a prominent forefather of this genre in regards to the nature of his characters and the psychological aspects of his stories: "Poe's prescient work within what would become many of the various genres that proceeded from Gothic fiction also helps demonstrate how the psychological thriller developed particularly from Gothic fiction" (Mecholsky 5-6). It is seen that both

genres share lots of similarities so that Gothic fiction is the genre which parallel today's psychological thriller (Mecholsky 2). Like the psychological thriller, Gothic writings revolve around the human's self, the mysteries which surround his nature, and endeavor to reveal the ambiguities and intricacies of this nature (Mecholsky 5).

Along with the Gothic genre, the sensation novel contributed in the development of the psychological thriller. To illustrate, Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* or Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secrets* manifest enigmas in familiar relationship which are discovered in terrifying and "supernatural" event (Mecholsky 6).

Moreover, the psychological thriller is born out of modern man's anxieties and tribulations, and it is concerned therefore with highlighting the limits of human's knowledge especially that of himself (Mecholsky 3-4).

> The psychological thriller comes then from peculiarly modern dynamics: it confronts modern anxiety about the nature of the mind and the Self through the Enlightenment struggle to subjugate myth and superstition to the forms of science and rationality. But it simultaneously seeks to reveal the limits of knowledge of the individual self: humanity might be ultimately unknowable and uncontrollable. The mind may even be unknown to itself (Mecholsky 3-4).

Freudian's theories, on the other side, had a considerable influence in shaping the psychological thriller genre. While Gothic fiction depicts the mysteries and the 'unknown' in the human nature, Freud's theories dared to lay the unknown for all bare to see, and this is through providing detailed reading for the mysterious subconscious side (Mecholsky 7). With the emergence of Freud's psychoanalytic school, Gothic tendency experienced its decay.

Influenced by these new theories, the era witnessed a new literary depiction of human issues. Writers by the turn of the Nineteenth Century tended to "more accurately describe the fractured sense of self and community that many people felt in the post-industrial age" (Mecholsky 7). Henry James the avant gardist of the modernist

novel "developed and popularized an approach to fiction firmly rooted in an unflinchingly realistic look at the psychological mechanics of living without reference to mythology, melodrama, or religion" (Mecholsky 7). As such, the psychological thriller arose and broke free from Gothic fiction. Whereas Gothic literature thrilled the reader through making an aura of mystery around the human self, the psychological thriller represented a more accurate depiction of human self and mind. Yet, none can overlook the fact that psychological thriller is basically a blend of gothic fiction and psychoanalytic representation (Mecholsky 8).

1.7.2. Writers of Psychological Thriller

The psychological thriller did not start with novels, but with "shorter, serialized thrills in cheap magazines, including *Black Mask* rather than in novels" (Mecholsky 9). This fiction at the time was known as "the hard-boiled fiction" (Mecholsky 9). Its stories were featured by unsound and profoundly imperfect protagonists and killers who are dragged to crime. It is noteworthy to mention that writers like Dashiell Harmmett, Horace McCoy and Paul Caine were the most prominent writers of *Black Mask* (Mecholsky 9).

It was by the 1950s approximately that the psychological thriller enjoyed a wide appeal, and this is thanks to several writers, namely: William Faulkner and James M Cain who helped largely in promoting the genre (Mecholsky 9). Faulkner, for instance, is well- known for his novel *Sanctuary*, an example which demonstrates to what extent the Freudian's theories influenced this genre. It is seen that it was "an exploration of evil because of its exploration of Freudian psychosexual behavior and attitudes, particularly in its depiction of the extreme violence that stems from repression and systemic psychosexual paternalism" (Mecholsky 10). Freud's theory has then such a great impact on the psychological thriller. Similarly, James M Cain's *Postman Always Rings Twice* contributed into setting the psychological thriller as a distinguishable, unique genre (Mecholsky 10). His writings tend to dig deep into hidden psychological forces which determine human actions, and this is what was overlooked in Enlightenment (Mecholsky 11).

Cain's *Serenade* addresses some psychological issues mainly "the psychological struggle" experienced in order to "repress" the character's sexual desires (Mecholsky 11). Indeed, the book is considered so brilliant that it was taken as a reference for psychological courses (Mecholsky 11).

Cain's writings exerted a considerable influence on other writers. For instance, Cornell Woolrich and Horace McCoy "owe a major debt to Cain thematically, but each explored noire themes in stylistically individual ways" (Mecholsky12). Woolrich's stories are evolved around "psychological terror" which is evoked of "the reader and/or character's foreknowledge of a fatal situation" (Mecholsky 12). In the same line, McCoy interestingly described in his novels characters "on the precipice of sanity" (Mecholsky 12). His 1948 novel, *Kiss Tomorrow Goodbye*, in particular, was one of the most appreciable psychological thrillers at the time, as it was the first of its kind to "really explore the psychology behind a psychopathic killer" (Mecholsky 12). The book also drew the attention to the everlasting impact of "trauma" as it demonstrates how it is capable of ruining the victim (Mecholsky 12). Arguably, the psychological thriller reaches its height with McCoy, Woolich, Patricia Highsmith and Jim Thompson because "their writings epitomize the most postmodern aspects of the psychological thriller" (Mecholsky 13).

The psychological thriller succeeded to be a unique genre, through keeping the fictitious glamour of Gothic fiction and embedding a realistic psychological dimension. It developed also various elements which gave it a distinguishable aspect and captivated the reader such as mystery, suspense, psychological depth and horror.

1.8. The Psychological Approach:

The psychoanalytic theory arose by the Nineteenth Century, based heavily on the thoughts of the Austrian thinker Sigmund Freud (Bondi 3). It represents a different way in analyzing the human psychology and "psychological distress" (Bondi 3). The psychoanalytic approach witnesses a wide spread and flourishment, it was even adopted in various fields of study, especially in "the humanities" (Bondi 3).

Freud distinguishes between three forces within the human psyche, the "id, ego, superego" (Lapsley and Stey 1). These forces are important to understand human behavior and actions. The id, according to Freud, represents the instincts or "the biological foundation of personality" (Lapsley and Stey 1). It is the force which depicts human primitive desires such as the sexual one or sensual desires which "motivate the organism to seek pleasure" (Lapsley and Stey 1). The ego, however, is the medium between the id and the realistic world; it is concerned with realizing the id's desires in proportion to "reality" and "commonsense" and this is because the ego is "the center of reason" (Lapsley and Stey 1). Since it tends to approach reality, the ego changes the expression of the "unrealistic or forbidden" drives, or "represses" (Lapsley and Stey 1) them. On the other side, the superego is the supreme part of the psyche. It represents moral authority and a "source of conscience" (Lapsley and Stey 1). Freud believes that the understanding of these forces is crucial to understand the human being.

In addition, psychoanalysis is tremendously concerned with the unconscious, which represents a "defining idea" of the school (Bondi 3). According to the approach, humans are hard to understand and predict, since most of their actions stem from the unconscious mind rather than the conscious one. In this respect, Liz Bondi states: "For Freud only a small proportion of the human mind is knowable through rational thought. The greater part is outside conscious awareness and full of hidden dangers" (Bondi 3) Even though the unconscious is hidden, it still finds its way through, for instance, "dreams" and "slips of the tongue" (Bondi 3).

According to Bondi, the unconscious seems to certain extent at odds with conscious tendencies:

> The psychoanalytic unconscious acts as the repository for experiences, thoughts and feelings that are unacceptable to, and are repressed by, the conscious mind. The unconscious therefore exemplifies a means by which rational HUMAN AGENCY is 'de-centred' in the sense of not being the driving force of human action (Bondi 3).

Chapter One : Psychological Aspects

Freud's school seems to rely on the unconscious part of the human being, as it believes that it is a powerful force, which can provide explanation to human contradictions, ambiguities, actions and feelings.

As mentioned earlier, psychoanalytic thoughts exerted a great influence on numerous fields of study amongst which literature. It was established and employed by literary criticism (Hossain 41). It is employed to figure out "the hidden meaning" of a literary text. "The psychoanalysis has been one of the most controversial and for many readers the least appreciated. In spite of that it has been regarded one of the fascinating and rewarding approach in the application of interpretative analysis" (Hossain 43).

This seems plausible if we know that the approach is fundamentally concerned with the unconscious as a source of extracting explanation to the individual's thoughts and actions. Therefore, psychoanalytic criticism in literature attempts to discover the "motives" of the writer to produce a certain literary text, and this is through drawing the relationship between the writer's background and his text (Hossain 43).

Hossain clarifies the ways in which Psychological criticism interacts with a literary work: "Psychological criticism deals with the work of literature primarily as an expression, in fictional form, of the state of mind and the structure of personality of individual author" (Hossain 41). Along with being an expression of the author's character, mood and thoughts, Freud regards the literary work as compensatory to an "unsatisfactory reality" of the writer's desires and hopes, in other words, it is the "the fulfillment of an unsatisfied wish" (Hossain 43).

Psychoanalytic literary criticism attempts to reach psychological interpretation to the character's behavior in a certain work (Hossain 41). It also explores the relationship between character's "identity" to the cultural and psychological side (Hossain 41). Indeed, the theory proves to be such a powerful one, it is even concerned with surveying the ways in which the reader responds to the literary work (Hossain 41).

In short, psychoanalytic notions contributed to literature and added a new dimension to reading literature. It gave us "profound insight into the unconscious of the writer" (Hossain 46), as well as other possibilities in understanding and analyzing the characters of the work.

1.9. Conclusion

Humans cannot thrive and experience a real sense of self outside the social connection. As such, the extremely isolated environment imposed on prisoners has a totally opposite consequence of the supposed aim which is rehabilitation. Confinement badly disfigures the individual's identity and destroys his social skills. Because of this, the individual's transition from such a silent, limited, routinized environment to the noisy, big free world can be overwhelming and paralyzing. This is mainly because of his intricate psychological adaptation to life of confinement. As a psychological thriller, *Room* explores these aspects of confinement; besides, it surveys some unknown sides of human nature through some psychological mechanisms adopted by both characters "Jack" and "Ma". To explore such effects and mechanisms, psychoanalytic notions are needed to be applied on Emma Donoghue's *Room.*

Chapter Two: Liberating the Self in *Room*

Contents of Chapter Two

Chapter Two: Liberating the Self in *Room*

2.1. Introduction:

This chapter purports to analyze the psychological impact which confinement left on the characters of Emma Donoghue's *Room*: Jack and Ma, and the ways in which it profoundly altered their vision and perspective to different concepts such as their perception to themselves, reality, normalcy, meaning of freedom and the social order. Applying some psychological theories concerned with imprisonment, this chapter also scrutinizes the difficulties faced by Jack and Ma to adjust to their new world after a prolonged captivity, and their challenge to mentally liberate themselves from the sediments of their previous experience.

2.2. Emma Donoghue's Biography:

Emma Donoghue is a contemporary figure in Canadian literature; she is a novelist and a film scriptwriter. Donoghue was born on 24 October 1969 in Dublin, to a literary Catholic family, which has fostered her literary talent from her early years. Emma Donoghue graduated from University College Dublin in English literature and French in 1990, and later on obtained her PhD from the university of Cambridge in 1997 (Mulvihill).

Donoghue started her literary career as a poet to progressively forge her literary name, but it was in Canada particularly that her talent flourished, as she was extremely inspired and influenced by the Canadian literature. She succeeded to step outside her regional narrow view and dig into global themes in her fiction. The author is skilled in laying her stories in different parts of the world like the USA, UK, and Ireland. She is also famous for her ability to set characters in different periods of time and centuries (González-Arias 84).

The writer considered her residence in different countries like Ireland, UK and Canada a main reason for her literary growth and intellectual breadth. In her words, she expressed that her experiences in different countries "had basically weakened my rationalities, giving me a more free-floating imagination" (Quoted by González-Arias 84). Her novel *Room*, for instance, which was adapted to the screen in 2015 took place

in the USA and it is perceived as an international literary achievement, which reveals Donoghue's embracement of a universal view in her writing (González-Arias 85).

Although she left a brilliant mark on the Irish literature, she is recently labeled as "Irish-Canadian" author (González-Arias 85), but she seems opened up to embrace a more universal belonging, for she emphasizes:

> I am seen as Irish sometimes, Canadian sometimes, even vaguely British sometimes and I'm probably assumed to be American by the Americans who make up the majority of my readership. But that's how it is, I grew up reading books from just anywhere and I still do; I believe a writer's imagination carries no passport.

(Quoted by González-Arias 85)

Besides her wide horizon, Donoghue's literary writing often involves gender issues and historical fiction (Molea 85). Like so many female writers, Emma Donoghue is known by embracing the historical fiction genre, and this is to shape stories from a female point of view, and also to dive deeper in order to explore the details overlooked or ignored by male writing. As such, historical fiction helped Donoghue and other women writers to establish a literary female canon (Molea 88).

The Irish-Canadian writer is widely known for novels such as *Life Mask* (2004), *Slammerkin* (2000) and *Landing* (2007). Donoghue has also published two short stories collections: *The Woman Who Gave Birth to Rabbits* and *Touchy Subjects* (2006) (Molea 89).

Through her writing, Donoghue shows a particular interest in lesbian subjects; her fairy tales *Kissing the Witch*, 1977, were basically old tales that were reimagined and rewritten from "lesbian perspective" (Molea89). She also digged deep in history and wrote about lesbian characters in non-fiction works such as *Passion between Women: Four Centuries of Love, Romantic Friendship, and Desire* (1997), besides her celebrated book *Michael Field* (1998) wherein 'Michael Field' is the penname under which the two authors and lovers "Katherine Bradley" and "Edith Cooper" wrote. (Molea 89)

Donoghue's fiction largely involves the genre of historical fiction, because the writer needed to go back to history to extract some characters to write about and reinforce her lesbian literary point of view (Molea 89).

Though Donoghue seemed to excel in the historical fiction genre, she pushed the boundaries of her comfort zone as a writer as she explored other multiple genres (González-Arias 84). From the historical fiction and fairy tales, she returned in 2010 to experience the psychological thriller with her groundbreaking novel and 2010 bestseller *Room,* which is the story inspired from the case of Joseph Fritzl, who locked his daughter Elizabeth in the basement of his apartment for approximately 24 years, abusing her sexually so that Elizabeth fathered seven children as the result of rape. Donoghue believes that being a mother who can understand kids is an additional inspiration to write such a story (Chi 37).

2.3. Summary of *Room*

Room is a story narrated thoroughly from the perspective of the five-years-old "Jack", who tells the reader about his daily routine in "Room" which he considers as his home and only reality. Jack seems to spend joyful time with his mother "Ma" with whom he plays, reads stories and watches TV.

Jack narrates also about Old Nick who comes repeatedly at night to visit Ma. Simultaneously, Jack has to hide in the Wardrobe till Old Nick leaves. Throughout his innocent narration, the reader can reach the conclusion that Old Nick's visits to Ma are in fact for sexual rape, the trauma of which the little boy is unaware. The reader can also deduce that Old Nick is their captor, and that Room is not a home but in fact a prison wherein Ma is kept against her will.

Jack's unawareness of his confinement and the trauma they are living is a proof of Ma's dedication to protect her son and make the eleven-foot square room a suitable environment for his growth and wellbeing even at the expense of her own. Jack, for instance, is still being breastfed though he is five years old, and this is mainly for providing the necessary nutrition elements, since food is insufficient in Room. At the result of her daily breastfeeding, Ma occasionally suffers a severe toothache.

Jack is ignorant of his mother's struggle to get sufficient meals from their captor; these are meals which they get from what Jack calls "Sunday treat". In their horrific conditions, Ma additionally endeavors to enhance Jack's literacy and vocabulary through reading stories and watching sessions on TV, but at times Ma get overcome by the stressful life of captivity so she falls in days of depression where she cannot wake up. Jack is ignorant of what is happening to his mother so he refers to this state as "Ma is gone" (Donoghue 49).

Jack's naiveté and unawareness of his captivity is constantly revealed to the reader. For instance, one of Jack's habits is to play with his mother different "games" such as "scream" which is in fact nothing but sending SOS to the outside world: "after nap we do scream everyday but not Saturday or Sundays. We clear out our throats and climb up on table to be nearer skylight…we open wide our teeth and shout holler howl yowl shriek screech screams the loudest possible" (Donoghue 48). Ma made up these disguised games so that Jack would have no idea of the trauma they are living; her decision to conceal truth from Jack is made solely for his comfort and wellbeing.

But as soon as he reached five years old, Ma decided to reveal the truth to her son. In the third chapter called "Unlying", Ma told Jack how she was kidnapped by Old Nick at the age of seventeen and held in Room which is in fact a soundproof cell. Ma who convinced Jack since his birth that all what he watches on TV is unreal returned to explain to him that all things and people on TV are real things existing on the outside world. Ma's concessions cause a revolution in Jack's little mind who used to perceive Room as his only reality. Jack expresses his surprise saying: "that's the most astonishing I ever heard" (Donoghue 71). Though the little boy could not digest the truth, he agreed to carry out the escape plan suggested by Ma, who made Jack pretend to be severely sick so that her captor will take him to hospital, but Old Nick ultimately refused. Ma had no choice then but to move to another plan and this is to make Jack pretend being dead and wrap a rug around him so that Old Nick will take him on the outside to bury him.

Ma spent days training Jack to unroll himself from the rug and run off from Old Nick's truck so he can tell people about their confinement. Hopefully, the plan was a

success, Jack could run off from Old Nick and reached the police that eventually found Room and rescued Ma.

While their escape is expected to be the end of the story, the reader figures out that it is indeed the beginning of their journey in adjusting to their new world, where they felt occasionally alienated and estranged. Throughout the fourth chapter "After", the reader accompanies both Jack in his conflicts to understand the rules of the outside world and Ma in her journey to recover from her trauma. Ma and Jack are held after their escape in a psychiatric clinic where Ma met her family again and Jack encountered them for the first time. Though the family members empathised with the victims, Ma's father seems to reject Jack's presence because he considers him an outcome of rape. Overwhelmed by alienation and the paparazzi that chased them, Jack and Ma yearn to return to Room again.

Over the only Interview she made, Ma was asked about the reason why she did not ask her captor to take Jack to a hospital so he could have lived free. Such criticism along with her paralysis to adjust to real life pushed Ma to commit suicide, but fortunately she survived and was taken to hospital. In the meantime, Jack showed an unexpected willingness to learn about his new world and cope with it.

Under his constant requests, Ma took Jack to visit Room for the last time. As soon as he beheld Room, Jack realized that he got rid of his attachment to it. They said goodbye to their shed and returned to their life again.

Undoubtedly, telling such a thrilling story from the point of view of a five-years-old boy is seen to be an authentic yet a risky strategy adopted by Emma Donoghue. Jack's naïve and innocent narrative voice is capable of catching the attention of the reader who gets to know Jack's life more than the narrator himself. Besides, Jack's narration transforms the supposedly traumatic story into a "celebration of resilience and love between parents and child" (Quoted by Chi 37). In fact, relying on Jack's narrative voice made the story both original and even endurable to the reader (Chi 38). It mediates the psychological issues of the novel.

2.4. The Influence of Confinement on Ma and Jack's Identities:

Through her novel *Room*, Donoghue addresses the psychological, social and existential crises raised in people's lives during and after confinement, and discusses the ways in which walls of confinement can transform their identity and self-perception. Indeed, the relationship between the inner state of the individual and space caught the interest of numerous researchers. Mikhail Bakhtin, for instance, asserts the importance of space in novels, as well as puts emphasis on the correlation between one's internal world and the external world (Berbar 46). Ma and her son Jack lived in an extreme isolated environment, a room which resembles a solitary cell, where they have no one to communicate with except each other, so that over time, their relationship reshaped their identities which became gradually interwoven.

Jasmin Vella conducted a research on fictitious characters who undergo some sorts of isolation, arguing that they predispose to be "self-obsessed" (Vella 5) since they have no other human to interact with but themselves. This notion can be projected on the case of Jack and Ma. But instead of being self-obsessed, the mother and son became rather obsessed with each other, as they were the only ones who share the small space of Room over five years, not to mention the unique bond between Jack and Ma, which seems to transcend the normal relationship between a mother and her child.

2.4.1. Ma:

The prolonged isolation experienced by Ma fragmented her identity and sense of self. She was kidnapped, repeatedly raped to find herself in few months a mother, obliged to take care of a child in horrible conditions. Ma devoted her life over the five years of confinement in Room for motherhood; she lived thoroughly the role of jack's 'Ma', as she was aware of the heavy responsibility which rests on her shoulders, that which dictates on her to raise 'a normal' child in 'abnormal' circumstances by making a 'home' for Jack out of the horrible walls of Room. Through Jack's narration, the reader can get an idea about Ma's extreme devotion to her child. This devotion though, restricted and imprisoned her in the role of the mother so that she became nothing but Jack's Ma. In other words, Ma was identified thoroughly and solely by her son Jack.

Yet, it was not until she got out of Room that her crisis of identity bubbled to the surface.

On the first days that Ma and Jack spent together in the Clinic after the escape, the reader can figure out through Jack's narration the struggle faced by Ma. Once, Ma admits to jack: "I'm a bit strange this week, aren't I? I know you need to be your Ma, but I'm having to remember how to be me as well at the same time and it's …" (Donoghue 275). This statement reveals the state of paralysis experienced by Ma, who was caught in the role of Jack's mother over years of confinement, finding herself unable to return to herself again. She finds it even difficult to describe how confusing it is to be Jack's Ma and herself simultaneously; the thing which makes Jack wonder in a confused tone: "But I thought the her and the Ma were the same" (Donoghue 275). Jack's innocent narration further asserts the crisis of identity which Ma seems to face: "Ma shows Dr Clay her homework, they talk more about not very interesting stuff, like depersonalization..." (Donoghue 239). Ma's Doctor raised the possibility of Ma having depersonalization, which is about having an unstable and vague personality.

As Room undermined Ma's identity to Jack's mother, she found herself in the free world caught up in a space between two selves. One which is created by Room and the one she once had in the free world and which she yearns to return to.

2.4.2. Jack

Jack's experience in Room was even more thrilling, considering the fact that he lived in Room perceiving it his home; it was for him the only space existing in the world or rather his universe. He grew up attached to its details, walls and objects. Jack's belongingness and attachment to Room grew wild with years, so it was the space from which he derives his sense of self; the thing which worried Ma, and prompted her to expose the truth to Jack about their confinement and the necessity to escape Room. The unique situation of Jack keeps the reader curious to figure out in what way Jack will perceive himself in the free world.

As Jack escaped Room, he asked the first existential question ever on himself "I am not in Room. Am I still me?" (Donoghue 204). Jack's confusion reveals that Room

was the space which identifies him and reminds him of who he is, to the point that being outside of it prompts his doubts of whether he is still himself or not.

The long period of confinement faced by Ma and Jack turned out their relationship to an extremely special one. Jack's connection to Ma was nothing like other children, he found his mother the only human being with whom he interacts, plays and communicates. This special attachment develops a strong sense of belongingness to her, which caused Jack a sense of alienation as he found himself obliged to alleviate his attachment to his Ma in the free world. Dr. Clay who took care of Jack and Ma in the first days after their confinement seems to predict Jack's crisis of identity as he asks: "You know who you belong to Jack? Yourself" (Donoghue 259). But Jack seems not predisposed to this independency of character, he murmured to himself in confusion: "He's wrong; actually, I belong to Ma" (Donoghue 259). This expression uncovers the predicament caused by confinement; Room creates a cracked identity for jack, an identity which is melted with his mother's, what makes it hard for him to have an independency of character after confinement.

Isolation, as clarified before, is such a powerful experience which leaves a considerable influence on people. Due to their suffocating, isolated environment which bears resemblance to a solitary cell, Jack and Ma shared everything and got obsessed with each other. For Jack in particular, it was impossible to experience something without his mother, because he perceives Ma as his possession. As he narrates his life in Room, he states: "It's weird to have something that's mine not Ma's, everything is both of ours" (Donoghue 10). This pattern of life entailed by confinement shaped his perception towards himself, he said: "My cells are made out of her cells, so I am kind of hers" (Donoghue 10). In fact, Jack's belief in the fact that he belongs to his mother thoroughly led him to confuse the concept of privacy and distorted his ability to forge an independent identity from his mother.

Jack's unhealthy attachment gave rise to his false understanding of his identity, which became even clearer as he left Room to live in free society. In one significant moment after their escapes, Ma receives an old present "a machine" to listen to music from her brother, as Jack yanks it out. Ma requests him to be careful with it: "Be

gentle with it Jack, it's my present from Paul" (Donoghue 275). Jack then wonders: "I didn't know it was hers not mine, in Room everything was ours" (Donoghue 275). The boy's prolonged isolation made him shape a totally distorted perception to the concept of privacy, who he is, and complicates his task to identify himself as an autonomous existence.

Emma Donoghue sheds light on the mental confinement the characters undergo after their release from captivity. It is this kind of confinement which relates their sense of being to their prison and paralyzed them to recognize who they are outside Room. The novel demonstrates the challenge faced by the two characters to redefine themselves after confinement, to be able to belong and find familiarity in the free world. While Ma finds herself living disconnectedness and estrangement from her former self, Jack is unable to recognize himself outside Room as he feels as an alien. They face the challenge of splitting painfully from the past selves shaped by walls of confinement and liberate themselves as free entities.

2.5. Confinement and Freedom in *Room*:

Prisonization theory suggests that prisoners gradually get used and even adapt to life of prison, and since their confined limited life does not allow them to practice lots of activities, they unconsciously assimilate to the few habits entailed by confinement. In so many ways, Ma and Jack unconsciously adopted this psychological mechanism in order to survive in Room. But their adjustment to confinement dangerously changed their perception of freedom and complicated their adjustment to the outside world.

2.5.1. Ma's Mental Confinement:

Over Jack's narration, the reader can see how much Ma craved freedom, and as Jack grew up, she planned with him the escape from Room, but Ma escaped just to find herself in another kind of psychological and mental confinement. Unlike what she expected, Ma found herself unable to adjust to the free world and often alienated, self-estranged and unable to connect to society properly. Throughout seven years of isolation, Ma has developed the habits of interacting to Jack only, so that

communicating with other people outside Room was such a strange task to her. She expresses this sense of alienation to Dr. Clay as she says: "It's perverse, all those years, I was craving company, but now I don't seem up to it… Most days Jack's enough for me…It's not how I remember myself" (Donoghue 390). Indeed, this expression reveals that Ma's prolonged isolation and subconscious adaptation to confinement caused her a social paralysis and a psychological barrier to communicate with others. Her lack of communication was internalized as a habit, so she found it difficult to break in the external world.

Though Ma tried to turn to her normal life after a life of captivity, she did not seem capable of it; her trauma was embedded in her unconscious mind so that it overshadowed her new life. The novel casts light on the aspects of her trauma through Jack's narration. He seems to miss his mother as he went to the zoo: "Grandma says why doesn't Ma take me to the zoo but Ma says she couldn't stand the cages" (Donoghue 388). The fact that Ma cannot stand the cages is mainly because the cage is a reminder of prison or rather of Room. That is to say, Ma's psychological state was so vulnerable so that she wants to stay far away from anything which can trigger her memories about Room.

As suggested by prisonization theory, since prisoners internalized habits and patterns of confinement, their integration to free society upon their release is complicated (Shalev 20). That is to say, prolonged confinement gradually distorts one's desire and perception of freedom since their prison becomes the 'normal' place to be in. Indeed, this is exactly what occurs to Ma and Jack; their long confinement in Room seems to transform their perception of freedom, as it became something unfamiliar and scary. Ma expressed this as she stated: "when our world was eleven foot square it was easier to control" (Donoghue 293). As clarified in Chapter One, people who experienced a long-term solitary confinement find it wearisome to handle the noisy ordinary life since they got used to their silent environment. This may be the reason why Ma seems to miss Room as well.

Besides, people in confinement are deprived of taking lots of decisions and responsibilities, which makes their existence in free society such a scary challenge, so

freedom for them becomes a burden or rather a curse in disguise. This aspect is depicted in the character of Ma, who finds herself in a state of psychological paralysis as she was still struggling to recover from her trauma, as well as in social paralysis as she failed to connect to others. Ma also seems unable to help her child to find a way to adjust to his new life. In light of all these ordeals she experiences in the outside world, Ma attempted to suicide in a very significant moment of the novel.

Though she craved freedom, Ma was unaware of what Room did to her. It transformed her, made her unconsciously adjusted to walls of confinement, and therefore shattered her normal perception of freedom. According to M. Ryan: "The content of the unconscious usually gains expression indirectly in our behavior" (Ryan 45) and Ma's attempt of suicide exposes the psychological conflicts which lay underneath her consciousness, which eventually found expression through her desire to take her life. In this respect, Hanson points out: "Ma's attempted suicide is a striking deviation from the structure of traditional captivity narratives in that Jack's most traumatic moment in the novel comes after his release from captivity" (Quoted by Chi 46).

Ma's behavior holds so much significance; it shows the reader that escaping captivity was not the end of the characters' struggle, but rather the beginning of their journey of searching for the self, and rebuilding some fundamental human concepts which were seemingly shattered by years of confinement such as: identity, meaning of freedom and the relationship with the other. It also shows that human's psychological adaptation is such a powerful ability, since it enables people to adjust to the worst places and numb their feelings, just like what happened to both characters.

2.5.2. Jack's Existential Crisis:

The outside was even more terrifying to Jack. It was noisy, big, unknown and scary to the little boy who knew Room as his only reality: "In Room I was safe and Outside is the scary!" (Donoghue 271). Jack's words communicate to the reader the anxiety and strangeness he feels in his new world where rules and routines are different from those of his little room. As Jack got used to his isolated environment and most importantly to his relationship with his mother, freedom represents for him a

threat because it deprives him from his previous style of life and obliges him to alleviate his attachment to his mother, especially that it was the only relationship which gives him his sense of self. The outside world then, was nothing but a new prison, since it makes him feel as an alien and alters his connection to himself and to the only human he thought as real: his mother.

Confinement shapes Jack's shattered perception and false consciousness towards the world, so he lived in deception thinking that no one is real except himself, Ma and their captor Old Nick, while everything else he watches in TV belongs to other planets:

> Women aren't real like Ma is, and girls and boys not either. Men aren't real except Old Nick, and I'm not actually sure if he's real for real. Maybe half? He brings groceries and Sundaytreat and disappears the trash, but he's not human like us. He only happens in the night, like bats (Donoghue 20).

Jack used to believe his mother who concealed the truth about their confinement from him, and convinced him that Room is the only space which exists in order to spare him the trauma of their captivity. Ma, therefore, was his only source of knowledge. As such, Jack grew up unable to distinguish between what is real and what it not. Considering the peculiarity of his conditions, Jack found himself on the outside world questioning the core of his being, reality, and life.

Jack's captivity has shaped his distorted beliefs and knowledge that were terribly turned upside down as soon as he stepped inside the outside world. He faced the challenge to redefine himself and his environment and correct his perception towards what is real and what is not, since he ended up doubting his own reality and existence as he saw the outside for the first time: "I am not in Room. Am I still me?" (Donoghue 204). Jacks' understanding of things was tremendously misled by his confinement, what complicates his adjustment to the world. The novel highlights Jack's attempt to explore the world and his paralysis in adjusting his narrow consciousness to it: " Lots and lots of hes and shes on the sidewalks, I never saw so many, I wonder if they're real for real or just some" (Donoghue 276). With his broken English, the little boy

questions the actuality of men and women to whom he referred as "hes" and "shes". This is because he lived over his five years confusing reality with 'TV' since he believed that except himself and his mother, everything else is just TV or fictitious, so his mother's revelation of truth about the existence of a bigger world caused him a revolution in his beliefs and knowledge. The boy then falls into an existentialist predicament which was triggered prior to their escape:

> Whenever I think of a thing now like skis or fireworks or islands or elevators or yoyos, I have to remember they're real, they're actually happening in Outside all together. It makes my head tired. And people too, firefighters teachers burglars babies saints soccer players and all sorts, they're all really in Outside. I'm not there, though, me and Ma, we're the only ones not there. Are we still real? (Donoghue 86).

With such a shattered perception, Jack's transition to the outside world was overwhelming and revolutionary. He was like an alien who came up from another planet to discover things; so, he kept questioning in innocence social conventions, mores and manners that govern society, what gives the novel an existential dimension. For instance, Jack once wondered: "Some of the women grow long hair like us, but the men don't" (Donoghue 276). Jack's familiarity and psychological adaptation to his confined environment can tell how one's adaptation to a certain pattern of life numbs his feelings and distorts his vision. That is to say, as Jack's perspective of the world shrank to his little room, any other space even if free seems to be scary, uncomfortable and strange since it got him out of his comfort zone. Jack expresses this confusion when he said: "Why is it better out than in? Ma said we'd be free but this doesn't feel like free" (Donoghue 318). According to prisonization theory, those who undergo confinement for a long time are more likely to adjust to their small environment so that living in the large, free world would be challenging for them. Jack's rejection of freedom accordingly seems plausible considering the years he spent in captivity in his shed, where he internalized his own habits and shaped his beliefs.

In so many ways, Jack's physical confinement in Room left him with a psychological confinement in the outside, he was still enclosed in his nutshell as he was unable to connect to the outside world properly and adjust his narrow structure of

knowledge to those of the outside world. Dr. Clay who provides the psychological point of view in the novel states some of the issues which hinder Jack's process of coping: "like a newborn in many ways... There are likely to be challenges in the areas of, let's see, social adjustment, obviously, sensory modulation— filtering and sorting all the stimuli barraging him— plus difficulties with spatial perception" (Donoghue 224). With all these challenges which hinder his adaptation to the outside world, the reader can understand and even sympathize with jack's persistent hunger to return to his intimate prison. Jack's yearning to Room was exposed in so many parts of the novel; for instance, once Deana requests him to make a wish as he throws the coin:

> "Did you make a wish?"
>
> "For what?"
>
> "Whatever you'd like best in the world" Says Deana
>
> "What I'd like best in the world is to be in Room, but I don't think that's in the world" (Donoghue 308).

Along with his social paralysis, Jack's existential crisis emanates from his failure to recognize himself beyond the walls of Room. As mentioned before, Jack's attachment to his little shed as well as to his mother provides him with sense of self and security. Once on the outside, Jack experienced self-alienation since his new life altered his relationship with his mother, who was overwhelmed by the need to return to herself on the period of recovery, which means alleviating the attachment to Jack, who could not accept separating himself from his mother as an independent entity, especially in his first serious attempt to explore the world. In this regard, the attachment theorist Mary Ainsworth considers that children's intense attachment to a significant caregiver is totally normal as they are in the phase of discovering their environment, children seek their keeper "as a safe haven when in a strange situation" as well as "a secure base to depart from and return to in their explorations of the world" (Quoted by Chi 47). As Jack went on his first attempt to explore the world out of his eleven-foot square room, he experiences anxiety and instability as his relationship with his mother seems to change. Considering this, Jack faced the

challenge to liberate himself from his attachment to Ma and search for his own independent being and sense of existence in a world which exacerbated his alienation as it treated him as the other.

2.6. Aspects of Otherness and Alienation:

The "Other" is often used as an opposition to the "Self". Initially, the Self is used as an epitome of selected norms and claims to depict righteousness, morality and uprightness. However, all what does not belong to the selected norms fall down in the category of the Other. The Self, thus, is esteemed and idealized whereas the Other is stigmatized as inaccurate and deficient. Eventually, what is deemed as the Other is more liable to segregation, marginalization and prejudices (Staszak 1). It is believed as well that the Other is condemned with "lack of identity" (Staszak 2) in order to give the Self a sense of superiority.

Room highlights the judgmental attitude of society which erects itself as "the Self" and therefore takes the agency of judging all those who do not align with its code and categorizes them as the Other. Ma and Jack's horrific and unique experience in isolation shaped their own culture, habits and style of life which did not appeal to society's convenience, the thing that hinders a seamless integration in society after their escape.

Jack, in particular, who grew up ignorant of social codes is often looked upon with much mystery and sometimes degradation. For his deprivation from a normal education, Jack was described by media as an "idiot savage" and a "freak" (Donoghue 293) as well as the boy who "goes up and down stairs on all fours like a monkey" (Donoghue 267). The boy's unhealthy nutrition in confinement gave him a very weak physical appearance, which was seen as odd by the newspaper which called Jack as the "bonsai boy" (Donoghue 267) and "Pint-sized hero" (Donoghue 267). Besides considering him as a mysterious freak, Jack is "dehumanized" (González-Arias 89) as he was referred to with the impersonal pronoun "It" (Donoghue 225) by his

grandfather, who seems not able to accept him since he considers him as the product of sexual assault.

Just as her son, Ma is treated in the novel as "The Other" by her surrounding after her trauma. Being marked as mysterious and weird by the media increased Ma's vexation towards her community; she expressed this through the only interview she made after her escape: "I wish people would stop treating us like we're the only ones who ever lived through something terrible" (Donoghue 292). Ma asserts as well that "Slavery is not a new invention" (Donoghue 293) and that "people are locked up in all sorts of ways" (Donoghue 293). This expression holds a shrewd criticism to society which deems them as eccentric while most of people are living different kinds of confinement.

In fact, Ma's attempt to generalize her experience and project her confinement on others can also be read as a psychological mechanism used to alleviate the discomfort she feels as a result of being misjudged with her child and perceived as monsters.

Throughout the interview Ma made, the interviewer's discourse is filled with blame and indirect judgment. This was shown through the questions addressed to Ma regarding her methods and choices in raising Jack while in confinement, like concealing the truth of their captivity from him for several years: "Did you feel bad about deceiving him?" (Donoghue 291), but Ma irritably defended her choice "What was I meant to tell him. Hey, there's a world of fun out there and you can't have any of it?" (Donoghue29). Moreover, Ma and Jack's habits and life styles were depicted as mysterious, like the fact that Jack was still being breastfed; which is according to the media can "startle" (Donoghue 290) people. Ma was even blamed by the interviewer for not letting her captor Old Nick take Jack somewhere else where he could have lived free.

Such misjudgments and attempts to depict Ma's choices as abnormal and faulty exacerbated Ma's psychological ordeal and feelings of estrangement and alienation, which was surprisingly one of the main reasons why she attempted to suicide just after her interview.

Emma Donoghue casts light on society's judgmental tendencies which marks the other as a repository of imperfections, and therefore gives itself the agency to judge, use and reproach. Deemed as others, Jack and Ma experienced a deep alienation from the social order; which was a chief reason why they could not easily cope with their new life and felt constantly estranged.

2.7. The Journey of Liberating the Self in *Room*

Confinement is such a powerful experience which changes the characters' ways of thinking and psychologically dominates them. This is mainly because they subconsciously adapt to it over time, which damages their proper sense of freedom and pushes them to resist change while in the outside world. Psychological adaptation then seems to be scary as it enables the individual to cope with both the best and the worst situations. In this respect, Fyodor Dostoevsky once said "Man is a creature that can get accustomed to anything, and I think that is the best definition of him" (Dostoevsky 6). Psychological adaptation thus is a mechanism used by Jack and Ma to survive captivity and it is more likely be the very capacity which helped them to progressively find familiarity in their free world; what can put an end to their psychological attachment to Room and set them completely free.

2.7.1. Resisting Change

Both Jack and Ma resisted change differently because Room became part of their identity and comfort zone. Even in the outside world, they were still psychologically attached to it, so it enclosed them even when they were beyond its physical walls.

This psychological confinement caused Jack to perceive the world as scary and overwhelming, and caused Ma a severe anxiety which prompted her suicide attempt. According to Freud "we describe as 'traumatic' any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break the protective shield" (Quoted by Vella 3). The great transition from an eleven-foot square room where they lived for years to the immense outside world where they were constantly questioned and judged was overwhelming to

the point that it prolonged their trauma, and it pushed both characters out of their comfort zone which is their protective shield.

Freud further explained that "the brain always wants to remain in a consistent state, and therefore any trigger will have a psychological side-effect" (Vella 4). Indeed, Jack and Ma's isolated life in Room was gradually internalized as a habit so being exposed to the world all of a sudden after their escape irritated them and triggered their anxiety and fear; this intense discomfort indeed found expression in Ma's suicide attempt. In this regard, Vella explains that stress is most often depicted in some unfamiliar behaviors. "Neurosis shows symptoms of a sort of stress to the brain and this is reflected by unconventional behavior" (Vella 4). Ma's anxiety in the outside world led her to an unusual behavior which is her desire to take her life which proved that Ma herself was attached to her confined environment. However, Jack went through existential crisis since the real world triggered his stress and turned his previous beliefs upside down.

2.7.2. Embracing Change

Even though they resist change at first, human beings are endowed with psychological resilience which helps them as they undergo a certain change in their life, either negative or positive. It is such "a psychological construct that explains how under traumatic circumstances of distress, human being might develop an unexpected capacity to cope with pain and suffering (González-Arias 83). It was this psychological resilience which helped Ma and Jack to survive in Room for more than five years till it became almost their comfort zone. In parallel, it is the very ability which helped them to gradually cope with the outside world.

As discussed before in Chapter One, people usually resist change especially at the beginning, because it pushes them out of their comfort zone and increases their anxiety. According to Prof Colin Carnall, as their comfort zone changes, people's feelings of safety decrease, so they rather deny and resist change. Jack accordingly fell under the phase of denial as his mother revealed to him the truth about their confinement and the existence of a real life outside Room. Overwhelmed by the truth which he could not even digest, Jack got mad at his mother and accused her of lying:

> I am staring and staring but all what I see is sky. There's nothing in it like ships or trains or horses or girls or sky scrapers zooming by…liar, liar, pants on fire, there's no Outside. She starts explain more but I put my fingers in my ears and shout 'blah blah blah blah blah' (Donoghue 106).

Jack's denial of his new reality accompanied him even after his escape from Room. He found himself unable to understand the world's different rules and assumptions which seem to sweep away all the old concepts he shaped in confinement; for instance, Jack questions the concept of reality and wonders if people he sees there are real "for real or just some" (Donoghue 329). In light of all the new thoughts and changes he needs to deal with throughout the first week after his escape, Jack craved returning to his calm womb: Room. But as a child who is featured by an enthusiastic curiosity and psychological resilience, the outside world triggered his sense of discovery and exploration, what paved the way for his journey of finding connection with his new world and liberating himself from his attachment to his previous prison. As the coping process theory suggests, people move on from denial and resisting change to "discarding the old ways of doing things" (White 7) and instead adopting new habits and methods for the sake of adapting to change.

Related to the novel, the process of growing and coping was painful yet necessary to the five-years-old boy whose resilience unexpectedly helped him better even than his mother to adjust to real life. This is what Dr. Clay clarifies as he addresses Ma: "the very best thing you did was, you got him out early… At first they're still plastic... Probably young enough to forget, which will be a mercy" (Donoghue 258). Based on this analysis, Jack's age and flexibility is seen to alleviate the trauma of confinement and gives him privilege to find connection to real life.

In their struggle to liberate themselves from the psychological shackles of Room and acclaim their lost identity, Jack and Ma's intimate bond is a major factor which helped largely. While everything in the outside world held him back from a seamless adjustment and an intimate connection, Ma who is depicted in the novel as an

idealistic mother stands as a supporter for her son, she tended to raise his self-esteem constantly by calling him for instance her "hero" (Donoghue 218) as a reminder of his brave escape which gave way to her rescue. Even in her worst psychological states, her warm support has never ceased: once Jack asked Ma while having his breakfast "Am I growing? She looked me up and down 'Every minute'" (Donoghue 271). In fact, Ma's constant support rendered the feelings of safety that jack missed in his new life and motivated him to go on exploring it.

The strong bond between Jack and his mother helped him as well to correct all the false concepts he once developed in confinement. Though Ma whom Jack perceived as his reliable source of knowledge lied to him while in Room, Jack had deeply trusted and believed her, what helped tremendously in mending his subverted beliefs and concepts about reality and life. Once Jack was asked "you're like a new visitor from another planet, aren't you?" (Donoghue 279), he replied: "we're not visitors; Ma said we have to stay forever till we're dead" (279). Ma then is seen to be a trustworthy source of knowledge by Jack; so she endeavored to shape his consciousness and mend his shattered perception of his reality, the thing which contributed in his gradual adaptation to the world.

One significant moment in the life of Jack after his escape was his mother's attempt of suicide which led to her absence from him for a while. Unexpectedly, Ma's absence motivated Jack to develop a sort of independency to deal with his daily life. Jack's behavior is clarified by the Austrian psychologist Sigmund Freud who believes that the mother's disappearance can sometimes be fruitful to the child as it can "make the child feel as if he is superior and he does not need protection" (Vella 7). With this in mind, Jack could progressively construct himself as an independent entity and liberate himself from the destructive attachment to his mother.

It was the last chapter "Living" in particular which shed light on the boy's growing process and ability to adjust to his new life. Jack who stays with his grandmother while Ma is absent showed a better response to cope, like developing new habits such as playing outside and going to parks. Though his interaction with people was still limited and reluctant due to his long confinement, Jack showed an

unusual hunger to learn and discover his new environment. The boy excitingly describes his activities: "I'm riding lots on the bike that doesn't move, I can reach the pedals with my toes if I stretch. I zoom it for thousands of hours so my legs will get super strong and I can run away back to Ma and save her again" (Donoghue 339). Jack's willingness to cope with the outside world was mainly to strengthen his sick mother. Moreover, in this part Jack manifests the will to learn about social codes and manners for social development; "there's too many rules to fit in my head, so we can make a list with Dr Clay's extra heavy pen" (Donoghue 340). After he came to the world perceiving all mores and social habits as weird and abnormal, Jack's readiness to learn about social manners represents a significant progress in the coping process.

According to Carnall's coping process theory, people fall under the phase of denying and resisting change as they step outside their comfort zone, what raises their level of anxiety and stress, but time is capable of making them adapting new habits and choices to adjust to the change. Reaching this point though indicates that the person is going steadily towards a "new comfort zone" (White 8). Jack accordingly moved from perceiving the outside world as stressful, unfamiliar and scary to embracing it as his new comfort zone, this is mainly thanks to his psychological resilience and adaptation.

Unexpectedly, Jacks' journey of coping with his new world which he used to see as unfamiliar and odd manifests human beings' baffling ability to adjust to change. It was this ability which made him along with Ma survive their confinement, and it was this very ability which helped them find connection to their new world. With his adjustment to the real life, Jack in particular came a long way in liberating himself from his mental and psychological attachment to his previous life of captivity.

2.7.3. The Comfort Zone and Self-discovery
Though it was a prison, Room was for Jack his comfort zone and the space where he feels safe and secure, mainly because he knew nothing about life on the outside. This was an enough reason why he could not adjust easily to his new life after

the escape. Seemingly, Ma was aware about the wrecking effects of confinement on her child who was deprived from a normal education and social development; what urged her to reveal the truth to Jack as he reached his fifth year. In her first attempt to explain to Jack how she was kidnapped from the outside world and held captive in Room, Ma used the story of *Alice in Wonderland* which Jack used to love, in order to reveal her story. She compared herself to Alice to explain to Jack that she came from the outside world to Room just like Alice who found herself in Wonderland as she jumped down the rabbit hole.

In fact, it is Jack who seems to bear resemblance to Alice, since he was more challenged to step outside his comfort zone and discover the world which seems as first large and scary. He has to explore its rules and codes just like Alice who was puzzled by the rules and games of wonderland.

In confinement, Ma knew what they are missing beyond Room but Jack did not, because Room was his only reality and comfort zone. This is why Ma convinced Jack to escape his little womb so that he would have a better life; the thing what was completely rejected by Jack at the beginning.

For Jack, the outside world was just like Alice's Wonderland in its bewilderment, immensity and fear. "In Room I was safe and outside is the scary" (Donoghue 271). Jack's words say a lot about his overwhelming transition that includes as much growth as pain. Alice would never have had the chance to discover wonderland if she did not step outside her world. Similarly, Jack could have never experienced the free world if he would not liberate himself physically and mentally from Room.

The novel suggests that stepping outside one's comfort zone ultimately serves the growth process which Jack describes as "scary", but eventually it is this painful process of discovering things out of his room, and struggling to adjust and liberate himself from its psychological shackles that allowed him to experience the immensity of the world and therefore enlarge his horizon. This seems clear as Jack visits Room with his mother for the last time and wonders if Room was reduced:

> We step in through Door and it's all wrong. Smaller than Room and emptier and it smells weird… Nothing says anything to me.
>
> "I don't think this is it," I whisper to Ma.
>
> "Yeah, it is."
>
> Our voices sound not like us. "Has it got shrunk?"
>
> "No, it was always like this." (Donoghue397).

In fact, it was not Room which got shrunk, but it was Jack's vision and perception which got larger as he experienced a bigger world. Jack also felt Room a strange and unfamiliar place after the weeks he spent in the free world, which means that his adaptation to the outside world which is becoming his new comfort zone changed his parameters of what is normal and what is strange, just like his adaptation to Room before made him perceive Room as the normal place to be in.

Jack ended up his visit saying goodbye to Room "'Goodbye, Room' I wave up at Skylight. I look back one more time. It's like a crater, a hole where something happened. Then we go out the door" (Donoghue 399). Jack's adaptation to his new life transformed his vision so that he undermined Room which he used to see as his intimate home to "a hole where something happened", which means that he could get rid of his attachment to it and accomplished a full psychological liberation.

2.8. Conclusion:

The novel sheds light on the characters' psychological and even mental confinement brought about by their transformative experience of captivity. It explores the wrecking effects inflicted on them by their confined environment, and the reasons behind their intricate attachment to it, which has mentally and psychologically held them back from easily accepting their transition to the outside world. Yet, the characters' psychological adaptation and special bond contributed into embracing the change gradually, and therefore liberating themselves thoroughly from the psychological chains of Room. Through both characters, Emma Donoghue has

provided an insightful exploration of the paralysis experienced by prisoners once they are kept alone to face the free world, which is transformed by captivity into abnormal and scary. As such, the novel has plainly demonstrated the various sorts of mental confinements which physical captivity can lead to.

General Conclusion

Through applying a psychological theory, this research attempted to examine the multifaceted influence that the experience of confinement can exert on individuals. Being held in isolation from human connection proved to transform the individual's identity, perception of freedom and society as well as some fundamental concepts, such as reality and normalcy. With these concepts being distorted, the individual experiences a kind of psychological and social paralysis as soon as he moved to live once again in the free community.

Room by Emma Donoghue is such a genius literary work which allows us to explore such transformations brought about by captivity. Analyzing the experience of "Jack" and "Ma" inside and outside their prison-like Room, this work explored the ways in which the characters' identities were reshaped and to a certain extent distorted as a result of their prolonged isolation and deprivation from practicing normal social roles, what voided them from a meaningful sense of self and undermined their identities. As such, the characters faced the challenge to recognize and identify themselves in the outside world.

Besides the identity crisis faced by both characters, confinement gave rise to other issues such as experiencing alienation and disconnectedness from the social order after a prolonged social isolation. This led the two characters to feel paralyzed and imprisoned in their nutshells, unable to connect to their new world.

The work tried to scrutinize as well confinement's influence on the characters' concepts of freedom and normalcy. For this, chapter one provided a solid ground to understand some psychological mechanisms espoused by prisoners for the sake of adapting to life of captivity. This psychological adaptation as clarified by prizonization theory gradually transformes the confined environment in the eye of the prisoner into a "normal" place to be in, which made the free world upon his release seems abnormal

and scary. Projecting this theory on the case of Ma and Jack proves that confinement changed the characters' parameters of normalcy, since they perceived the free world after their release as 'abnormal' and unfamiliar.

By highlighting such multilayered impact inflicted by confinement, this extended essay tended to prove through both chapters that these effects stand as a mental and psychological prison in which Jack and Ma are locked up after their escape, what hindered their process of coping with their free new world, as well as held them back from a seamless social integration.

Chapter two, in particular, explores the ways in which these psychological impacts inflicted on Jack and Ma's characters are strongly manifested once they live outside Room, which proves once again that physical confinement gives rise to psychological confinement. The chapter also provided a psychological analysis of their process of embracing change, and of their struggle to liberate themselves from the psychological influences that a life of captivity left them with.

This research found it important though to tackle the notion of the 'comfort zone', in the course of analyzing how psychological adaptation to captivity has subconsciously turned Room into the characters' 'normal' place, or in a sense their comfort zone, what was a chief reason behind perceiving the outside world as scary and abnormal. Psychological adaptation can be both a blessing and a curse, since it enables the individual to get accustomed to change, yet it can be extremely dangerous as it turns even the worst situations in his eye as 'normal' just like Room.

Room then is represented in the novel as a metaphor of mental confinement which dominated Jack and Ma upon their release. It is also an embodiment of the 'comfort zone' from which they were challenged to detach and liberate themselves in order to experience the immensity of the free world. Confinement therefore is not necessarily physical; it can be even mental and psychological. This was the reason why Ma stated that "people are locked up in all sorts of ways" (Donoghue 350).

The novel as such is a serious invitation to his reader to liberate himself from the different kinds of mental and psychological confinements in which he may be living. It

General Conclusion

is these confinements which blind their vision and undermine their perception as well as deprive them from experiencing a better life just like Jack whose intimate attachment to Room mentally imprisoned him so long from accepting change and discovering the bigger world. The novel also prompts us to ask ourselves this urgent question: what kind of Rooms can we be living in?

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