



BOOK REVIEW

Fanny Alisya Putri

Faculty of Humanities, Andalas University, Padang, Indonesia

fannyalisya44@gmail.com

Donoghue, Emma. *Room*. Canada: Harper Collins, 2010, 336 pp (hardback)

We live in a popular culture where depression has become a thing that is almost sought after. Thus, we all struggle with an obstacle of life: going through mundane lives with empty souls in a hopeless, dark place. Speaking of desperate places, *Room* (2010), a novel written by Emma Donoghue, attempts to answer how captivating life in a world of pressure provides no alternative options but committing suicide or escaping. Emma Donoghue, an Irish-Canadian author, was born on 24 October 1969, living in an English society where mental health problems such as depression carried public attention.

Having been inspired by Elisabeth Fritzl's case in 1996, where she had been sexually raped and abused by her father as a captive for 24 years until she gave birth to seven children, Donoghue creates her characters inspired by a real-life event. All information collected is mostly from police records, newspapers, and the press, making her a more exciting storyline. *Room* was shortlisted for the Man Booker and Booker Prizes and has sold over two million copies. Adapted from the same novel, the movie has been nominated for four Academy Awards for Best Adapted Screenplay, Best Director, Best Picture, and Best Actress. In *Room*, Donoghue creates Ma and Jack based on Elisabeth's true story, which represents a social fact that depression, after prolonged trauma, becomes a misunderstood disorder.

Donoghue's book is compelling; her style is pretty unique and imaginary. We will feel how the author expresses emotions like suffering, pain, and happiness from a five-year-old kid's perspective, defining a depressive situation around him and making this book unusually written and different from any other novel. Donoghue navigates the story beautifully around the conflict based on Jack's perspective, making the novel a pure triumph. Jack unfolds the dark atmosphere in a happy tone with his curiosity and innocent thought of explaining his mother's experience.

The story begins with Ma's childhood. She is abducted by Old Nick, who constantly sexually and emotionally abuses her in a captive room. She spent her life satisfying him until she gave birth to Jack. Ma teaches Jack many things in the Room, invents games, and does many tasks such as reading, drawing, singing, and making breakfast despite her limited custody. "Ma tells Jack that too much TV will rot his brain, but she uses television to teach him vocabulary, in-game called Parrot, she asked Jack to imitate the words he hears on the news" (Donoghue, 6).

The author reveals Jack's ability to describe some parts of the story that soften the tragic event, which Ma represents somewhat differently. "I don't like dying, but Ma says it might not be OK when we are hundred and tired of playing. Also, she takes a killer. Sometimes she takes, never more than two because some things are good for us but too much suddenly bad" (Donoghue, 12).

Sofianah (2013) argues that the environmental factor has a significant role in creating Ma's traumatic feelings, triggering her depression symptoms, and impacting how she behaves, thinks, and feels. Ma is one of the characters gently exploring the nature of PTSD (Post-traumatic stress disorder). Morales-Ladron (2017) states that Ma needs to go to the hospital after escaping because of her principle during her unrequested psychotherapy. It can be explained that to those who recover naturally after a period of dysfunctionality, a resilient individual caused them to experience a traumatic experience (92). The result of her therapy in the clinic probably has been defined in terms of concepts of separation, such as depression, social reintegration, and self-blaming.

This story shows that Jack is worried about her mother. He is the helper of Ma's depression, and her reason keeps living. Jack becomes unaware of when and what causes his Ma to feel sad. His biological father is the kidnapper who still rapes her mother nearly every night. This guy drops food and supplies, comes and goes. He never sees him because what Ma wants is to keep him safe in a wardrobe for the sake of his mental health. He is used to being happy with his mother in the Room, but she cannot bear it anymore and plans to escape. It is very difficult for her, and she wants freedom. (O'really, 2017) "When the mother regains the mother's health for practice in the room, she and her son can restore their relationship and recover from trauma." Ma knows they do not live miraculously, but they suffer tragically. Ma has sacrificed her seven years, devoting every scrap of mental energy while preserving her insanity process. The Room is a house for Jack, but Ma is a prison." I can't be in the same Room. It makes me shudder" (199).

The author, Donoghue, wants to deliver a message to the reader to avoid any speculation and exaggerated assumptions when exploring Elizabeth's case. The way she speaks of the truth in this fiction is left to the readers' imagination. They might feel closeness and dynamic emotions through the characters as the representation of the real victims without bringing up a thrill. The concept of 'room' is to stretch out slowly, piece by piece. That is why Donoghue creates the child's perspective of Jack to narrate the novel perfectly. She decides to take the relationship between mother and son, their moments together in the Room to the women when they escape, and their recovery from a traumatic event. Donoghue encourages us to decode the voice and story to answer the clues. It connects us with the mind, which sometimes we are not certain completely. She is such a phenomenal author, and her writing is very distinctive. It might sound repetitive, but it does not involve the author's vision for us to adore her works. She is doing an excellent job for the writer who was happy to write her seventh novel at forty. Donoghue is making this story very beautiful around these restrictions.

This novel arouses many unpleasant and good feelings while making the reader think over many essential things, from the first-page reading until the end of the stories. The more the reader reads, the more their imagination grows. The author is terrific, going through the different aspects psychologically and physically, like something a person will go through once they have escaped captivity that restricts their mind and body. Donoghue makes sure that we go through the motions of seeing Jack and Ma's recovery, which is done gradually, so it all looks pretty realistic. Nothing is gratuitous in the book.

The writing and the storyline are so interesting from the perspective of a five-year-old kid, the childlike terminology. It does not brace you; it just gets us stuck without warning, and we must adapt to her language. She makes us emotionally invested in reading this novel, as the author was trying to convey frustration and happiness and the emotional feelings between Jack and Ma based on their point of view.

References

- Ladrón, M. M. (2017). Psychological Resilience in Emma Donoghue's *Room*. *National Identities and Imperfections in Contemporary Irish Literature: Unbecoming Irishness*, 83-98. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Musyidah, H. S. (2013). Ma's Anxiety in Emma Donoghue's *Room*. *Litera Kultura: Journal of Literary and Cultural Studies*, 1(3).
- Donoghue, E (2010). *Room*. Canada: Harper Collins publisher.

O'Reilly, A. (2017). "All Those Years, I Kept Him Safe": Maternal Practice as Redemption and Resistance in Emma Donoghue's "Room." *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement*, 8(1-2).

Morales-Ladrón, M. S. (2017). Psychological resilience and rebirth in Emma Donoghue's "Room."