

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I would like to present my conclusion based on my findings on the representation of the child in *Room*. The chapter begins with the summary of the findings as well as my personal comments, followed by the limitation of my study and suggestions for future research.

Through Barthes' writerly codes analysis, I find that the child is represented as naïve, attentive, protective, and obsessive. There are 39 lexias representing the child as naïve, 28 lexias representing him as attentive, 28 lexias representing him as protective, and 46 lexias representing him as obsessive.

As can be seen from the paragraph above, the most outstanding representation is obsessive. Throughout the novel, Jack is portrayed to be obsessive about his routine, order, counting his teeth, *Dora the Explorer*, lucky and unlucky numbers, and cleanliness. All these traits are apparent from the moment he is in Room and until he leaves it. I believe Donoghue purposefully represents the child in such a way in order to show that incarceration does affect a naïve small child. It seems that

Donoghue wants to show that even though an incarcerated child is said to be able to adapt quickly and less problematically compared to teenagers or adults, the child is psychologically impacted by it. The impact is seen from the outstanding representation, namely the obsessive trait which is likely to indicate the obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD).

In my opinion, the obsessive trait in Jack is caused by his confined environment. The daily activity and the things he can do in Room are limited; therefore, every day seems repetitive. This may cause him to grow into someone who is inclined to follow his everyday thing; slowly this inclination can trigger his obsessive trait. He may be so used to the orderliness in Room that it becomes a learned habit which then turns into a must; this is likely to trigger the OCD tendency in him.

Besides, I think the trauma he experiences, although subtly, has contributed to the OCD tendency in Jack. As a child, he may feel that there is actually something wrong happening in Room although he does not know exactly what it is. All he can do is try to relieve his anxiety by counting his teeth. It seems the more often he does it, the more he is obsessive about it so that it becomes his own kind of 'relief' from the trauma. This kind of relief is likely to trigger the OCD tendency in him.

Moreover, I would like to highlight that in this case, we are talking about a small child who is still vulnerable to everything and easily absorbs things. This may suggest he absorb the orderliness he has been familiarised with throughout his initial years of life so that it is deeply planted in him and makes him obsessive about it. As

for the OCD, I do not have the right to claim it to be true since there is no statement from any experts written in the novel itself; what I can be certain of is his obsessive trait. I personally believe that the result of my findings matches the theory I provide in the second chapter, namely about the psychological impact of incarceration by Haney (2002), because my findings show the effect of incarceration on Jack. I also believe that Donoghue wants to highlight this effect and proves that when a child is able to adapt quickly to the new normal environment, it does not mean that everything is alright with him or her.

In addition to being obsessive, the child is represented as naïve, protective, and logical. Naivety seems to be a general trait found in children at Jack's age, but what is slightly different is that Jack is more naïve than other five-year-old children are because he does not know which are real and which are not although children his age are supposed to know; this is due to Jack's lack of knowledge about the real world. The fact that a trait found in general children is found in Jack most likely shows that in a way, he still grows up normally although he is incarcerated. I believe this shows that the great care and love Jack's mother gives him has shielded his childhood's innocence. As for attentive, in my opinion, what is worth noticing is how the quality time Jack spends in Room with his mother, such as when they read picture books together or his mother is reading stories for him, has helped him to hone his attentiveness. Donoghue here seems to highlight the importance of a mother's role in the development of her child. When it comes to protectiveness towards one's mother, I think it is uncommon to find this trait in five-year-old children in general. However,

children who experience or witness domestic trauma are likely to exhibit this trait towards the abused parent; probably this is the result of their instinct to protect their parent. From this trait, I think Donoghue wants to underline the strong bond between Jack and his mother.

Although I only mention and discuss four traits or representations in my thesis, it does not mean that they are the only traits that the child has. There are some other traits that I do not discuss as their occurrence is not outstanding. Therefore, they are considered minor traits, and thus, they are not discussed.

In my opinion, Barthes' writerly codes of narratives have managed to generate the representation of the child in *Room*. The codes have enabled me to derive as well as comprehend the representation. Because of my findings, I can see now that indeed an incarceration affects a child psychologically even though the child can adapt to the freedom later on. Furthermore, I am now able to see that Donoghue seems to utilise the language in her novel, which is the simple language of a five-year old, to represent him. It also shows that even the language of a small child has the power to deliver something through the use of simple words and sentence structures.

Nevertheless, I focus my analysis on this novel using Barthes' writerly codes as readerly ones do not help in deriving the representation of the child. This is because readerly codes focus on the plot; this will help in finding the main theme of the story. In addition, I only focus and discuss the traits of the child that appear the most. I do not discuss other traits due to the limitation of time and space allowed to do the analysis. Moreover, my analysis is focused only on the child; yet, I believe

there are other things worth analysing from this novel such as the representation of Jack's mother. Besides, I only approach this novel from semiotics field, but I believe there are other approaches that can be used to approach this novel.

For those who are aiming to analyse *Room* using Barthes' five codes of narrative, it will be much better if the novel can be analysed using both readerly and writerly codes effectively so that the analysis can be more thorough. Moreover, it is advisable for future researchers to discuss the minor traits besides the major ones as they may complement the major ones and produce more thorough findings. I would also like to suggest other researchers to analyse other aspects from this novel, such as the parent-child relationship, as it is a rich source of knowledge. Lastly, I would like to encourage others to approach this novel from other fields as there may be some findings which may broaden the opportunity of other new researches.

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