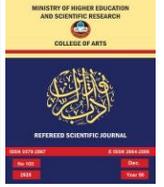




## Adab Al-Rafidayn

<https://ojs.uomosul.edu.iq/index.php/radab>



### "Speak-but keep yes and no unsplit": A Study of Pain in Emma Donoghue's Room

Mahmood Mohammed Tawfeeq 

Department of English

College of Arts / University of Mosul / Mosul-Iraq

Wafaa Aabd allatif Abdulaali 

Department of English

College of Arts / University of Mosul/ Mosul- Iraq

#### Article Information

##### Article History:

Received Nov, 14, 2025

Revised Nov, 26, 2025

Accepted Nov ,30, 2025

Available Online Feb..1 , 2026

##### Keywords:

Confinement,

Sexual Assaults,

Physical Pain,

Psychological Pain,

Representation of Pain.

##### Correspondence:

[wafaa.abdulaali@uomosul.edu.iq](mailto:wafaa.abdulaali@uomosul.edu.iq)

#### Abstract

Language often falls short before physical pain. From this viewpoint, the paper examines the representation of pain in Emma Donoghue's novel Room (2010). In this novel, pain is portrayed both as an intensely private experience and as a socially stigmatized discourse that resists expression. Drawing on Elaine Scarry's theory in her oeuvre, The Body in Pain (1985), alongside perspectives from the medical humanities and cultural contexts, the paper explores the workings of pain on multiple levels—psychological, social, and cultural—that shape the characters' lived experiences. The repeated sexual assaults that Ma, the protagonist, suffers during her seven years of confinement in a room, along with her child who is the product of this captivity, illustrate this complexity. After their escape, however, Ma becomes depressed, struggling to adjust to life outside the room, while her child cannot comprehend a world that shows them little empathy. Donoghue presents pain as a force that destroys language, destabilizes identity, and undermines the ability to continue life beyond confinement.

DOI: -----, ©Authors, 2023, College of Arts, University of Mosul.

This is an open access article under the CC BY 4.0 license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>).

تكملي، ولكن حافظي على عدم الفصل بين النعم واللا": دراسة للألم في رواية الغرفة لـ إيما دونوهيو

وفاء عبد اللطيف عبد العالي \*

محمود محمد توفيق \*

المستخلص:

يكشف الألم الجسدي عجز اللغة عن التعبير الكامل عن المعاناة الإنسانية. من هذا المنطلق، يحلل هذا البحث تمثيل الألم في رواية إيما دونوهيو "الغرفة". في هذه الرواية، يُصوّر الألم كخبرة شديدة الخصوصية وكخطاب اجتماعي موضوع لوصمة يصعب التعبير عنها. بالاستناد إلى نظرية إيلين سكارى في كتابها "الجسد في الألم"، إلى جانب وجهات نظر من علوم الطب الإنسانية والسياقات الثقافية، يستكشف البحث آليات الألم على مستويات متعددة — نفسية واجتماعية وثقافية — التي تشكل التجارب الحياتية لشخصيات الرواية. إن الاعتداءات الجنسية المتكررة التي تتعرض لها "ما"، البطلة، خلال سبع سنوات من احتجازها في غرفة، إلى جانب طفلها والذي هو ثمرة هذا الأسر، يمثل تعقيد هذه التجربة. بعد هروبهم، تصبح "ما" مكتئبة، تعاني من صعوبات التكيف مع الحياة خارج الغرفة، في حين أن

\* قسم اللغة الانكليزية/ كلية الاداب/ / جامعة الموصل/ الموصل – العراق

\* قسم اللغة الانكليزية/ كلية الاداب/ / جامعة الموصل/ الموصل – العراق .

طفلها يعجز عن فهم عالم يُظهر لهم قدرًا ضئيلاً من التعاطف. تقدم دونوهيو الألم كقوة تدمر اللغة، تزعزع الهوية، وتقوض القدرة على استمرارية الحياة ما بعد الأسر.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** احتجاز، الاعتداءات الجنسية، الألم الجسدي، الألم النفسي، وتمثيل الألم.

## 1. Introduction

This paper highlights how Emma Donoghue's *Room* presents a story of an oppressed young woman, Ma, and her five-year old child (Jack) in two periods: before and after confinement. Throughout their abduction, Old Nick coercively controls them manipulating even their senses. He restricts their behaviors, depriving them of the basic needs of life. As a biological father, Old Nick humiliates his family neglecting their agonies. After their escape, Ma and Jack find themselves among an uncaring society that fails to understand what traumatic pain they have undergone inside the Room. Depending on Elaine Scarry's theory in her *The Body in Pain* (1985) in which she believes in the ineffability of language to represent physical and psychological pain, this paper analyzes the ordeal of the two main characters of Donoghue's *Room*. The paper's discussion is enhanced by numerous critical points of view, which help in a better understanding of how Ma's predicament is presented.

## 2. A Contextual Background

Through most of her works, Emma Donoghue, the author of *Room*, shows a particular interest in gender-oriented subjects as well as historical fiction (Molea, 85). The events in *Room* are based on real-life kidnappings and the media attention that followed them. These include the 1991 kidnapping of Jaycee Dugard, the 2002 kidnapping of Elizabeth Smart, and, most famously, Margherita Dore believes that the charm of this novel is inspired by the 2008 Elizabeth Fritzl's case. Elizabeth's father, Josef, puts her in captivity for 24 years to be raped and humiliated in a brutal way (Dore, 2021, 9). Elizabeth Fritzl got out of her father's basement after 24 years of confinement during which she had seven children and one died as a baby. One of Elizabeth's children, Kerstin, was taken to the hospital for urgent medical care, which led to her rescue. Josef, later, let Elizabeth go to the hospital, where police, who were already suspicious of Josef, arrested him with his daughter. She was then able to relate her story and get free (Dabade and Gadkari , 89-94).

However, Donoghue herself writes on her website that the strong mother-child bond and "ancient folk motifs of walled-up virgins who give birth" is her interest to write her *Room* (Donoghue) and the previous traumatic stories, mentioned above, have just constituted the tip of the iceberg for writing (Morales-Ladrón, 83). Besides, in America, a child was kidnapped every forty seconds in 2000, Bilich states (2016,3); therefore, *Room* is considered a warrant of the noticeable increase of child abduction in the American society, a national problem that has become serious to describe.

## 3. *Room* and the Challenge of Expressing Pain

*Room* is a novel that hides behind its events thousands of untold devastating moments of unexpressed pain. In this section, the novel is divided into two main parts. In both parts, Jack and Ma are shown to be confined either physically or mentally and are manipulated by others to strip their selves leading to hinder their ability to adjust to society. The mechanism, Old Nick applies on them before escape, succeeds to minimize their abilities. However, after the escape, they have no free will to express themselves when they are shocked by much more sophisticated circumstances that lead Ma to try suicide over living.

### 3.1. Before the Escape: Wills Dominated By Walls

In their academic work, both Elaine Scarry and Judith Lewis Herman believe that torturers have the ability to manipulate the present and the future of the tortured person confined under their control. In her *The Body in Pain* (1985), Scarry writes that torture "contains specific acts of inflicting pain, [which] a

demonstration and magnification of the felt experience of pain”(27). Similarly Herman in her *Trauma and Recovery* (1992) states: “the psychology of the victim is shaped by the actions and beliefs of the perpetrator” (54) and captors manipulate victims totally to the extent of controlling their “bodily functions” (72).

Over ages, tortured victims in confinement, from many different countries, were exposed to different acts of, as Scarry describes “ agents of pain”. One of the most recurrent means used to manipulate victims is putting them in a room. Tortured people’s world according to Scarry, is reduced to “a single room” whose “ walls, ceiling, windows, doors” turn out to be sources of pain (40). Under such conditions, it might be thought that a person in confinement may reach a state when his/her pain is rendered visible. Although torturers are convinced that they inflict pain and make it beyond the boundaries of the sufferer’s body, still the operation of articulating pain is inexpressible and misunderstood (27). Such intense pain leads “the content of one’s language disintegrates; as the self disintegrates ”(35).

Emma Donoghue’s *Room* starts with Jack declaring that he has completed five years with his mother Ma in confinement. Then, readers know that Ma was kidnapped two years earlier and locked in this shed. Very early, Ma explains how she is frustrated and how time has been longer than usual inside the 11 by 11 space of the world. She tells Jack that:

“I cried till I didn’t have any tears left, I just lay here counting the seconds.” “How many seconds?” I ask her. “Millions and millions of them.” “No, but how many exactly?” “I lost count,” says Ma (Donoghue,5).

Clearly, because Ma has cried till her tears dried out, this means that she has been hurt continuously to the extent that she is stripped of most of her abilities to act back. She does not have the ability to cry and even her smiles are “not really”(Donoghue,12) Jack describes. Ma’s smiles are buried beneath her pain. Even if she sleeps, “ She’s still tired when she wakes up” ( Donoghue,19).

After that, *Room*’s narrator introduces his readers to his biological father, Old Nick. In fact, neither Jack nor Ma knows much about their tormenter. Jack acknowledges this, saying:

Nothing makes Ma scared. Except Old Nick maybe. Mostly she calls him just him, I didn’t even know the name for him till I saw a cartoon about a guy that comes in the night called Old Nick. I call the real one that because he comes in the night, but he doesn’t look like the TV guy ( Donoghue, 12).

In actual fact, Jack and possibly even Ma do not know the real name of whom they call Old Nick. Robin E. Field, in his *Writing The Survivor* (2020), writes “Rapists erase their victims by their very presence as well as through their violent actions”(19). Old Nick’s presence scares Ma and he usually comes at night to rape her again and again. Old Nick’s nocturnal sexual visits, are just like silent and hidden pain strikes, rendering Ma just a sex slave manipulating her whole body and senses. Perpetrators view sexual assault as a form of expressing control, anger, or sadism and act with the specific intent of causing the victim severe pain or suffering (Baker, 567).

Jack then provides additional information about Old Nick. Nevertheless, Jack is “not actually sure if he’s real” and “he’s not human like us. He only happens in the night, like bats” and that Old Nick “brings groceries and Sunday treat and disappears the trash”( Donoghue, 17). Old Nick’s domination reaches its peak when he controls Jack and Ma’s nutrition. Scarry, in her *The Body in Pain* describes this condition carefully saying:

forcing the body to feed on the body: the eyes are only access points for scorching light, the ears for brutal noises; eating [...] is replaced by rituals of starvation involving either no food or food that nauseates; taste and smell, two whole sensory modes that have emerged to watch over the entry of the world into the body, are systematically abused with burns and cuts to the inside of nose and mouth ( 48)

Evan Stark (An American sociologist), in his *Coercive Control: How Men Entrap Women in Personal Life* (2007), introduces the concept of coercive control. He defines “coercion” as “ the use of force or threat to compel or dispel a particular response”(228) and “control” to refer to the “structural forms of deprivation, exploitation and command that compel obedience indirectly”(205). This concept is mostly accompanied by psychological, physical, sexual ,and emotional abuse as well as isolation of sources of support, like family and friends (Miller et al, 316-322).

Old Nick uses such captivity dynamics among others to prevent Ma and Jack from any possible chance of resistance. He cuts off any reach to sources of support and interaction controlling every single item of their everyday behaviors. Moreover, he deprives them of food and cuts off electricity from the Room. Jack describes how they are obliged to eat cold food, saying: “lunch is slippery freezy green beans which are even nastier than green beans cooked. We have to eat them up because otherwise they’ll melt and rot” (Donoghue,67). Old Nick manipulates even their wishes and feelings. Ma says “I have to eat or I’ll feel even colder”(Donoghue,68).

Further, the Room is well sealed by an electronic keypad and Old Nick is “the only one who knows the code numbers”(Donoghue,81). Jack describes it as a “soundproofed cell”(Donoghue, 181) as it has only one window at the top called the “skylight”. Being soundproof, the Room locks Ma’s pain firmly. Ma is aware of what Old Nick has done. She describes how he has prepared the shed to be an agent of pain saying: “When he was turning the shed into Room[...] he hid a layer of fence under the floor joists, and in all the walls and even the roof, so I could never ever cut through”( Donoghue, 84); hence, he tightened his grip on what is inside the Room. Thus, the environmental conditions have an important role in complicating Ma’s traumatic feeling (Mursyidah et al , 5).

Suffering from psychological dehumanization, Ma tells Jack in a bitterly ironic way commenting on their worth: “we’re cheaper to keep than a dog”(Donoghue, 62) and that Old Nick “ thinks we’re things that belong to him, because Room does”(Donoghue,71). Elizabeth Grosz, in her *Volatile Bodies Towards a corporeal Feminism* (1994), believes that:

Man sees that his “function” is to create, and own, at a (temporal and spatial) distance, and thus to extend bodily interests beyond the male body’s skin through its proprietorial role, its “extended corporeality” in the mother whom he has impregnated and the child thereby produced, making them his products, possessions ...”(199).

Ma realizes what is mentioned in the above quotation and she expresses that they are made objects Old Nick possesses and keeps under his control. Thus, their pain starts to increase day after day. Perpetrators, like Old Nick, tend to be extremely self-centered; their needs are prior to their partner’s or children’s (Bancroft,53). To Ma, Old Nick is her tormentor twice; by kidnapping her and also as her rapist. She is a poly-victimized woman whose voice has been muted. Jack is unaware of the act of rape happening to his mother. Thus, Ma finds her pain of rape a stigma if her little child realizes it. As a result, she does not acknowledge it totally to him rendering the trauma fully invisible to him.

Before Jack becomes five, Ma does not tell him about the outside world. This makes him feel a sort of normalcy inside Room despite their miserable conditions. All of what he saw on TV was described, by Ma, as unreal. One day, after seeing an advert on TV showing painkillers similar to those of Ma, Jack asks Ma to tell him the truth, but she refuses saying “Not tonight, I can’t think of the right words to explain” and he replies “Will you find the words tomorrow?” (Donoghue,52). A sense of confusion is

clear in Ma and her ability to speak is restricted. Thus, Jack compares Ma metaphorically with Alice in the *Alice in The Wonderland* saying: “Alice says she can’t explain herself because she’s not herself, she knows who she was this morning but she’s changed several times since then”(Donoghue,52). Ma and Jack, at this point, are like Alice, lacking recognition of their own identities inside the world of the Room.

Through their stay in the confinement, Ma and Jack try to express their pain consciously or unconsciously. All what has been mentioned above of physical and psychological manipulation affects their language to articulate their agonies. For the person in confinement “the body and its pain are overwhelmingly present and voice, world and self are absent”(Scarry,46). Scarry adds that distance between the person in prison and the torturer is colossal and he is void of any human recognition for the tortured pain (36).

Julia Kristeva in her *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection (1982)* introduces the concept of the “abject” where the body becomes a source of horror when boundaries are violated. Kristeva assures that true suffering of women often transcends being articulated and this leads to a sense of abjection where silence becomes more powerful than words (141). Ma remembers how her labor pains were badly neglected by Old Nick when she gave birth to a girl who was stillborn. Ma declares that “I can’t speak for anyone else. Like, I had an abortion when I was eighteen”(Donoghue, 204). Ma, here, feels disgusted to describe what miserable condition to give birth to a dead baby under “medieval conditions” inside the neglected Room. Like Dr. Adams in Hemingway’s *Indian Camp* and his famous phrase “Her screams are not important”(16) while he is doing a Caesarean section for a woman, Ma describes how Old Nick does not share any of her agonies saying:

“He was right there, watching.” Ma’s nearly shouting. “He didn’t know the first thing about babies getting born, he hadn’t even bothered to Google it. I could feel the top of her head, it was all slippery, I pushed and pushed, I was shouting, ‘Help, I can’t, help me—’ And he just stood there.” I wait. “Did she stay in your tummy? The girl baby?” Ma doesn’t say anything for a minute. “She came out blue.” Blue? “She never opened her eyes.”(Donoghue, 179).

Ma’s anguish is accompanied by the description of the silent stillborn baby. Simon de Beauvoir, in her *The Second Sex(1949)*, defines woman as “a womb” or “an ovary” (39). Thus, traditionally, the womb is a life-giver, but a stillborn baby makes it as a tomb. Giving birth to such a baby is the offspring of Ma’s suffering. Metaphorically, the baby’s death silently in the darkness of her mother’s womb is an equal representation of Ma’s dead voice inside the Room. Ma’s imprisoned body has become a double prison. She is locked inside a room and her body which is regarded, by men like Old Nick, as “a hindrance [or] a prison” ( Beauvoir , 7).

Ma’s pain, here, is totally a disintegrative one that she renders to be an integrative one by giving birth for Jack. Andrea O’ Reilly (2017) states that “the birth of Jack gives purpose to Ma’s life in Room and enables her to endure captivity through his love and their companionship ”(95). Ma’s pain is solaced by a new pain at time she fails to find a human being sharing what she suffers.

And as a result of breastfeeding Jack, Ma suffers a terrible toothache. All these miserable conditions are the direct reasons to inflict invisible pain in them and this is what Jack describes when he asks Ma : “Why you ’re still hurting even though Bad Tooth’s out?”(Donoghue, 68). In fact, the “coercive control”, basically, aims to inflict on victims immediate pain coming from injuries, broken bones, lost teeth, complications in pregnancy including miscarriage and stillbirth. It can have long-term physical odd behaviors or psychological consequences like anxiety and sharp depression ( Herman,36).

Through his “coercive control”, Old Nick as aggressor, as Evan Stark explains, tries to compel the victim into silence (2007, 249-255) which Ma decides to break. After Jack becomes five years old, they begin to use different ways to articulate their pain. Crying, as mentioned earlier, was Ma’s first

means used after abduction. It is an act that, as she declares, has left her without tears. Ma and Jack, wish to “burst through Skylight into Outer Space”(Donoghue,14) as if they look for inhuman beings that may communicate with.

As Ma’s crying fails to relieve her oppressed soul, she starts to behave hysterically as her language of pain. Thus, “the body speaks what the mind will not”(5) Jessica Daine Droogsma writes. Chewing her lips, biting her thumbnail and slapping her head are recurrent during her stay in confinement. Her nails’ biting, for example, is one of the most frequent acts Ma addicts. Because a person is “unable to face challenges and handle emotions” (98), Javed Ather Siddiqui et al. write, he/she addicts on such a hysterical act (biting nails) while even he/she is unaware of it.

Through regular habit of screaming, Ma and Jack hope to share their pain with somebody. “When we get up we do Scream, I crash the pan lids like cymbals”. Then, he describes Ma’s voice as “nearly disappearing”(Donoghue, 47). From time to time, Ma’s inner struggle presses on her conscious to do abnormal actions. She tells Jack saying “Actually, I’d love to break something. I’d love to break everything”(Donoghue, 77).

After numerous attempts of screaming through the skylight, Ma and Jack are hopeless and say “when we scream, nobody hears us” and furthermore Ma adds saying “I was flashing the light on and off half the night last night, then I thought, nobody’s looking”( Donoghue, 91). A woman’s screams in confinement according to Judith Herman ( *Trauma and Recovery*) symbolizes breaking of silence, an urgent expression of pain, an involuntary release of unbearable anguish. According to Julia Kristeva, the scream is a communication tool instead of the incapable language.

Meanwhile, Ma’s physical pain spreads her whole body. Scarry explains in her *The Body in Pain* that pain “occupies the entire body [...] and systematically destroys anything like language or world extension”(55). Jack proves this claim by describing Ma’s condition saying “pain is like water, it spreads out as soon as she lies down”(Donoghue, 23). Here, she takes painkillers and addicts on to resist what hurts her. Jack declares from time to time Ma’s sleep saying that Ma “is gone” for a whole day to describe that she is totally destroyed by her pain.

In fact, Ma’s sleeping is noticed to be a chance for her to get rest from suffering. She says that “when I was asleep was the only time I wasn’t crying, so I slept about sixteen hours a day”(Donoghue, 83). Thus, her pain destroys her ability to stay awake and by sleeping she silences all her vital activities including her language. So, crying is followed by sleeping and going into a coma-like condition. Therefore, failure of words is followed by failure of crying leading to switching off the body in pain totally by leaving the conscious state and leaning to that of the unconscious. For Ma, sleep becomes a defense mechanism against unbearable conscious experience. Instead of facing reality, the mind chooses such long and psychic numbing or switching off. As sleep is a death-like experience, it is an escape away from living.

Following Ma’s psychological condition, it has been noticed that the more confined a person is, the more subjected to psychological problems he is. Human beings need to socialize in order not to feel alienated from life. 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... [confined people] 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).

To get rid of this sense, Ma makes plans to run away from their miserable confinement. She sets up two plans: A and B. In plan A, she tries to trick Old Nick that Jack is ill and needs to be injected with some fluid in the hospital because he suffers from diarrhea. Old Nick refuses to take him to the hospital so Ma declares Plan B. This new plan claims that Jack has died after his heart stopped from fever. She wraps him with rug. Old Nick takes him to bury him nearby. Meanwhile Jack begins to suffer new type of more complicated pains. He says:

When I look down, the street is black and a long long way. I know to jump good but not when everything's roaring and bumping and the lights all blurry and the air so strange smells like apple or something. My eyes aren't working right, I'm too scared to be scave (Donoghue, 123)

After that, Jack gets off the truck and describes how he sees somebody with a dog that he "can't remember what to shout" adding "I'm on mute"(Donoghue, 124). Then he shouts help but it " doesn't come out very loud" and he adds saying "I open my mouth for the widest scream but no sound comes out"( Donoghue, 124). After he wants to tell Officer Oh that he wants the police to save Ma, "my mouth isn't working"(Donoghue,128) says Jack. Lack of communication skills, fear and shock, all hinder Jack to portray his predicament easily and his speech organs are caught in a hysterical muteness, a state described as a disorder of the vocal function, resulting in loss of voice (Schuster et al, 2). Kelly et al, in their *Finding the Costs of Freedom*(2014), highlight how coercive control survivors' ability to say and do ordinary everyday things is taken away and unqualified to meet their own needs (20). After that, the police succeed to free Ma from confinement and she is reunited with Jack ending their isolation in that Room.

### **3.2. After Escape: Trapped Again in Another Pain**

After enduring seven years of confinement behind the walls of Old Nick's Room, Ma and Jack suffer from some psychological and mental disorders. They, in particular Ma, aspire to be released from such severity and restriction to indulge in the society. Because of years of deprivation from social connection, Ma and Jack find difficulty socializing. In a similar condition, a prisoner from Northern California 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).

This prisoner's estrangement indicates his failure to relate to others, facing barriers of "social alienation" (Saleem, 72). His isolation leads him to feel such a destructive feeling from inside. This feeling is exactly noticed with Jack and Ma and their lack of social integration makes them unable to interact with others. Ma declares difficulty coping with the society, saying: "everything feels different, but it's because I'm different"( Donoghue,203). In fact, because of their traumatic condition, police prefer to take Ma and Jack to Cumberland Psychiatric Clinic where they find themselves trapped again in a new room monitored by Dr. Clay, who is responsible for their medical and mental recovery. They even sometimes are obliged to take medicine when they feel well and have no need for treatment.

Ironically, Jack feels sick to sleep outside Old Nick's Room. As they attend therapy sessions and deal with the hospital staff, Jack and Ma feel that they are boxed in this institution and are manipulated by them. Ma's pain was totally neglected by her doctor. To treat her wrist, Dr. Kendrick tells Ma that "it'll probably need to be broken again at some point" (Donoghue, 145). The doctor then tells Jack that "She'll be asleep when it happens" (Donoghue, 145) justifying his right to do the operation. Furthermore, Ma replies to doctors that "Jack doesn't need treatment"(Donoghue,145) to which the doctor replies: "We're just following the protocol for cases like this," to prove that what they do is just to follow the rules of their institution.

Inflicting pain on Ma and Jack continues inside Cumberland Clinic. Ma's miserable days in confinement are treated with suspicion. Instead of understanding how she was raped, Dr. Clay, committed to the instructions of courts, insults Ma repeatedly. Jack narrates one of the conversations between Dr. Clay and his mother:

"I'll get onto the lab right away to see if they need another sample from you both for DNA," he tells Ma. "DNA?" She's got her crazy voice again. "You think I had other visitors?" "I think this is how the courts work, every box has got to be ticked." Ma's sucking her whole mouth in so her lips are invisible (Donoghue, 161).

Dr. Clay deals with Ma ruthlessly and she reacts with silent pains. She feels helpless and her words dry in her mouth. Instead, Ma sucks her mouth hysterically and still Dr. Clay is unresponsive to her agonizing feeling. After this, Ma reunites with her family one after another.

Unfortunately, the family reunion comes to be destructive rather than blissful for both Ma and Jack. After she meets her mother, Ma knows that after her absence, her parents could not communicate their pains. Grandma tells Ma that her father "went back to live in Australia after he thought Ma was dead and had a funeral for her, Grandma was mad at him because she never stopped hoping" (Donoghue, 164) and that she could not sleep without pills. Ma's absence was "torture" to her. Then, Grandma describes how she was behaving hysterically to find Ma, saying: "I used to pull up beside girls and slam on my horn, but they'd turn out to be strangers" (Donoghue, 165). However, her parents' divorce indicates that their pains, though are from the same source, are still unsharable and beyond communicating. Finding her family shattered, Ma gets shocked and disappointed.

In this frustrating situation, Ma and her son face their suppressed thoughts as annoying dreams. Because he finds their pain have not been shared by people around them, Jack begins to undergo repeated nightmares. Jack tells Ma "In the night there's vampire germs floating around with masks on so we can't see their faces and an empty coffin that turns into a huge toilet and flushes the whole world away" (Donoghue, 191). Also, Jack dreams of Ma's tooth and hair, he narrates the nightmare saying: "Me and Ma in the sea, I'm tangled in her hair, I'm all knotted up and drowning" (Donoghue, 225). Ernest Hartmann, in his *The Nature and Functions of Dreaming* (2011), supposes that, "the dream does not simply repeat the material, but changes it and weaves it into an ongoing story" (24). Therefore, these dreams echo Jack's inner struggles in the new world and he concludes saying: "In Room I was safe and Outside is the scary" (Donoghue, 193). This indicates how he feels unsafe in their new society. Thus, Jack's psychological condition has begun its development negatively leading him to undergo a more disintegrative pain outside the Room.

After that, Jack's grandfather returns from Australia to meet Ma. His return adds layers of complication to Ma and Jack's psychological burden. Jack describes the meeting, saying:

He's looking at the table, he's all sweaty on his face. "No offense." "What do you mean, 'no offense'?" Ma's talking nearly in a shout. "I can't be in the same room. It makes me shudder." "There's no it. He's a boy. He's five years old," she roars (Donoghue, 198).

Similarly, Jack is looked at with degradation after escaping by the society. The media describes him as a "freak" (Donoghue, 207). In fact, what is mentioned in the above quotation is unexpected by Ma. She gets shocked that even her father considers the little child an inanimate entity. Grandpa looks at Jack as a source of pain and stigma for the family. Grandpa does not care about hearing Ma's suffering in confinement and how difficult it was to give birth and raise Jack up. Her pain is totally neglected by her father. Jack astonishes from what his grandpa does and tells Ma "Is he the real Grandpa?" (Donoghue, 199).

The negative reactions are, in fact, indications for misunderstanding of the rape victim's pain leading to what is critically called "secondary victimization", which means being treated badly or blamed by people in their neighborhood or society. The secondary victimization happens when friends, family or law enforcement, react hurtfully and blame the victims, or do not care about what they report (Prathikshaa,756). Such a negative reaction by Ma's father deteriorates her psychological and mental state increasing her depression and anxiety. He thinks only in personal considerations regretting the family reputation.

Just after six days of release from the dreadful circumstances of the Room, the media and press insist on interviewing Ma. She agrees mostly in order to get attention to her case to ensure financial support for her child. Jack describes how the team prepares Ma for the interview in Dr. Clay's office. He describes the office as a room that "is all changed around full of persons and lights and machines. A woman comes over with a box of colors and starts painting Ma's face" (Donoghue, 202). They are described to change the room of the office to a place for directing Ma and Jack's case as a story rather than focusing on their real pain. Putting makeup on Ma's face appears to be as an operation for hiding her real tortured face. After that, the interview begins while Morris, Ma's lawyer, is there to assist her in case she needs any support.

Elaine Scarry describes in her *The Body in Pain* how torturing people contains "physical acts" and "primary verbal act, the interrogation"(28). A close reading of *Room* shows that what the interviewer does to Ma is fully similar to Scarry's supposition and the interview becomes another ordeal. Now, Ma is the tortured and the interviewer is her tormentor. The interviewer is described as being uncaring of Ma's pain and starts to disturb her with poisonous questions.

Ma starts hysterical reactions and Jack describes her while sitting in front of the interviewer, saying: "Ma's hands are all shaking, she puts them under her legs". Jack describes ironically how the interviewer beautifies the situation saying: "we're just trying to help you tell your story to the world" ( Donoghue, 204). The media, in fact, try to share Ma's "story" rather than sharing her personal destructive pain. The interviewer asks Ma some stupid questions that prove that they are unable to imagine the difficult circumstances Ma and Jack have undergone. She asks Ma, saying: "On that cold March day five years ago, you gave birth alone under medieval conditions to a healthy baby. Was that the hardest thing you've ever done?" and Ma replies that giving birth for Jack was "The Best Thing" (Donoghue, 204) to prove that such a pain is so integrative to find solace in him.

Then, being uncaring for Ma's emotional condition, the interviewer continues to ask and this time dares to accuse her of being the reason behind Jack's bad psychological state. Secondary victimization occurs during news gathering where journalists often cannot balance the public right and individual privacy leading to victimization stemming from negligence (Tandon ,120-121). The interviewer asks Ma saying: "Did you feel bad about deceiving him?"(Donoghue,206) and then she describes their escape as a "rescue". At this moment, Ma gets agitated. The negative responses of the media damage Ma's trust in them. Ma backfires and wonders how numerous cases of people suffer pain silently. Ma talks about these cases saying :

did you know, in America we've got more than twenty-five thousand prisoners in isolation cells? Some of them for more than twenty years." Her hand is pointing at the puffy-hair woman. "As for kids—there's places where babies lie in orphanages five to a cot with pacifiers taped into their mouths, kids getting raped by Daddy every night, kids in prisons, whatever, making carpets till they go blind ( Donoghue, 207).

Obviously, Ma's mental exhaustion reaches its peak as she bursts to connect her situation with a common problem thousands of victims in America suffer. She accuses media of being responsible of hiding people's agonies. Furthermore, she feels that the "pacifiers" are no more than locks taping the

mouths of orphan babies from releasing their pains. She feels that prisoners, though they are still little children, are stripped of their senses, rendered blind and unable to articulate their sufferings. The victims of confinement lose their eyesight as they are kept engaged with hard works as knitting carpets.

At this point, Ma feels how the unshareability of pain is a social problem, not only a personal one. The interviewer tells Ma that “now you have lots of help from your family as well as many dedicated professionals ” and Ma replies with what can be a clear cut evidence that she is hopeless to adjust to the society. She declares “It’s actually harder ” and “When our world was eleven foot square it was easier to control”( Donoghue, 207). She misses being in the room despite of the miserable days spent in. Ma finds it safer and easier to survive silently with her pain in the room. Then, the climax of misunderstanding for Ma’s pain occurs when the interviewer says: “Is there a sense in which you miss being behind a locked door?” which Ma considers a “stupid question”(Donoghue, 208). Finally, she regrets the interview as a whole.

To express their pain, victims are completely unable to communicate the deep personal feeling with an uncaring person because for the torturers the “human agony is made invisible”(Scarry,1985: 29). Meanwhile, what happens to the victim’s soul or body is difficult to be expressed because “intense pain is world- destroying”(Scarry,29). This case makes the tortured hopeless and the ability to resist becomes ineffective. Victims, finally, find their words valueless to externalize what they really feel. They get confused over noticing how their torturers’ reactions are strict proving misunderstanding for their agonies. Ankita Das and Rajni Singh in their “Contesting Captive Spaces: A Reading of Emma Donoghue’s *Room*” believe that the treatment Ma’s faces often “handicaps the survivors of captivity against integrating into the larger society leading them more destroyed than rehabilitated” (788).

Feeling her words’ inability to represent her pain effectively, Ma loses her ability to talk more. “Ma’s got tears coming down her face, she puts up her hands to catch them”(Donoghue,209) Jack says. Eventually, Ma prefers to skip communicating with others by taking pain killers and asks Jack and Noreen saying “ Let me sleep”(Donoghue, 210). At this point, Ma tries to commit suicide rather than sleep. Jack narrates her condition saying : “She doesn’t switch on, she doesn’t groan even or roll over, she’s not moving when I pull her. This is the most Gone she’s ever”( Donoghue, 218). This time, Ma goes into a fit of silent pain that she has never suffered before even in her most miserable days inside confinement. Jack declares “I don’t think Ma can hear, I don’t think she can see”( Donoghue, 219) indicating that pain has stripped Ma of her basic senses.

Ma’s suicidal thoughts indicate how deep and complicated her agonies are. Trying to commit suicide is seen as an alternative language to express her pain by ending the whole body in pain itself. To Ma, the interview was her chance to externalize what she and Jack have undergone in their seven years of confinement. She is shocked to face, after escape, what deteriorates her new psychological scars. Now, she is fully hopeless and badly wounded from inside.

Near the end of the novel, Donoghue appears to show Ma and Jack keeping their language of pain kept in their bodies. Grandma tries to explain for Jack that “Because she’s not well. In her head. She is being taken care of ”(Donoghue, 221). Jack’s pain, after being alone while Ma is deeply asleep, appears to be personal and invisible inside himself. Jack says: “my hand’s exploding the worst hurt I ever. He adds saying: “Ma,” I’m screaming, Ma in my head but [...] I’m all alone in the hurt in the hurt in the hurt in”( Donoghue, 234). Jack’s pain leads him to a sense of alienation from all what surround him. After that, Ma, on phone, apologizes from Jack for her absence. Jack asks Ma if she is still tired and she replies “I am. But it’s OK” (Donoghue,236). Her response indicates her hopelessness and helplessness to express her pain anymore and she is still hurt.

During his mother’s absence, Jack feels that nobody has shared him real sympathy. In time Ma appears not ready to express her pain, Jack’s realization of life hardships increases. He says: “it feels like

a million years and Ma's still not coming for me"( Donoghue, 249). Jack thinks that he and Ma have not been given any attention after they escaped confinement. Jack says: "In the world I notice persons are nearly always stressed and have no time. Even Grandma often says that"( Donoghue, 250). Here, he implicitly complains how their case has been diminished and unshared even by their family. He speaks generally saying: "I'm looking at kids, adults mostly don't seem to like them, not even the parents do [...]. Sometimes there's a small kid crying and the Ma of it doesn't even hear" (Donoghue, 250).

Then, Ma and Jack move to live in an independent home reminding them of their life in Room. Ma believes that she has to deal with her pain alone rather than sharing it with others. Shanmathi, in her "The Study on Relationship Between Learned Helplessness and Adjustment among Young Adults", describes how according to Martin Seligman's "Learned Helplessness" an individual may accept to stay passive in face of an unavoidable and untreatable experience after failing to adjust to new situation in his/her life. This then leads to mental health issues like isolation and depression (522-523). Thus, Ma tells Dr. Clay that although "all those years, I was craving company. But now I don't seem up to it"(Donoghue, 274). She adds that "Most days ... Jack's enough for me." "The Soul selects her own Society—Then—shuts the Door—"( Donoghue, 274). Even Jack reaches the same conclusion saying:

When I was four I didn't know about the world, or I thought it was only stories. Then Ma told me about it for real [...]But now I'm in the world all the time, I actually don't know much, I'm always confused. "Ma?" [...] "Do you sometimes wish we didn't escape?" I don't hear anything " ( Donoghue, 274)

Being in Room, they are physically isolated and their voices are silenced. After their escape, Ma and Jack are shocked by more difficult psychological and social isolation. Jack, being "always confused" in the world, indicates his and Ma's unrelieved feelings after escape. Communicating with uncaring society, Ma and Jack's pain increases as they could not integrate in any environment. Along the novel, their language to explain their long felt bitterness fails and their pain remains foreign even to their closest people.

#### **4. Pain in Child Narrator's Language**

The events of Emma Donoghue's *Room* are mainly narrated through the first-person point of view of a five-year old child, Jack. Mostly, through his monologue, Jack narrates the complicated events of *Room* as he realizes them in his simple perception of life. *Room*'s structure as a book is divided into five parts, which follow the developmental stages as Jack's realizes the surroundings, before and after escape from confinement (Morales-Ladrón, 84).

Being confined behind the walls, Jack has a very little awareness of the entire system of life. His conversation, with Ma before escape and with others after escape, reflects how limited access of knowledge he has (Dore, 2017,62). In fact, a close reading of *Room* shows that Jack, as a child, lacks the necessary ability to articulate his and his mother's pain in an effective language. He often portrays fragmented and simplistic portrayal of their pain experiences. Basically, life under "coercive control" constricts feelings and behaviors that a child can express; so he/ she feels that his life is narrowed and compressed (Katz , 106-107). Jack relies on concrete imagery capturing the immediacy of their feeling focusing on "their daily routines and on the delight that mother (Ma) and child share in each other's company throughout their horrifying incarceration"(Morales-Ladrón, 84).

From a linguistic aspect, along the novel, Jack makes numerous grammatical mistakes. He does not use the definite articles correctly and most often omits them beside the use of fragmented sentences. Through these aspects and others, Donoghue makes use of such narrative strategies to portray Jack's mental style which is unusual but convincing to show how his mind is affected by the painful traumatic and abnormal upbringing. Jack presents patterns of "underlexicalization"(Flower,152) that means that

his vocabulary is limited to express situations fully. He is observed to be deficient in even the most basic concepts.

Jack lives all his life confined in an 11 by 11 garden shed known as Room. This confinement affects his thinking and his mind's storage of words and perception of reality. Because of his little age, his mother protects him from the direct harsh atrocities she was facing. Jack is unable to name things and does not know what is going around him. In Room, he sees the outside just through the skylight and watches partly how Old Nick torments Ma in a fragmented way from behind the slats of his wardrobe. Even hearing them, Jack could not have a full understanding of social contexts they communicate. He also ignores the violent nature of the sexual assault Ma experiences (Tan, 71). Thus, he does not fully comprehend the reasons behind their suffering and does not feel their tribulation. As a result of misunderstanding of cause and effect, Jack does not understand why Ma suddenly cries. Thus, he is unable to relate concrete things with each other and moreover with abstract concepts.

Thus, Jack's narrative style is naïve and often humorous (Morales Ladron, 84). His simple and fresh look at reality serves as a device through which Donoghue introduces a process of de-familiarization. As the story is told through a child's innocent perspective, that grants readers a chance for being far enough from the horrors of the story (Caracciolo, 200; Morales-Ladrón, 87). The depiction of Jack's perspective can be seen in using onomatopoeia unconsciously such as the use of words "nnnnng nnnnng nnnnng" as a sound of mosquito, "Vrum Vrum" refers to the noise of car engine and "boom boom" indicates the sound of explosion, (Onomatopoeia Online Dictionary). These, as well as so many onomatopoeic words, add a special touch for the novel's narration differentiating it from an adult narration.

Experiencing blurry childhood in confinement, Jack constitutes a secluded experience of reality in his mind. Emma Katz says that "Like their mothers, children were living with narrowed space for action—their ability to say and do normal day- to- day things and to display normal emotions was limited by what perpetrators/ fathers would allow"(2022,92). This adds layers of suspect to his narrative authenticity. Lucia Lorenzi argues that creating a child narrator is considered a "limited Observer"(22) that renders the narrative credibility questionable. Before the escape, Jack permeates his narration for the events with cartoon stories, most of them are irrelevant to what they really suffer. This reflects Jack's innocence and his inability to understand the sophisticated physical or psychological human struggles.

Jack's awareness of concepts of life; especially pain, is, to some extent , deliberately restricted by Ma. Jack is a home-schooled boy. His words are restricted to what his mother taught him in time she internalizes her pain to make him live a normal life inside confinement. So, cultural environment has constructed Jack's ideology in observing life from a subjective point of view according to what he has been aware of. Jack's lack for experience leads him to behave against articulating his and Ma's inner struggles. His language is unqualified to mirror the deep pain undergone by them. Instead, Jack prefers to be silent in numerous situations than commenting on what is happening. While Ma is struggling with deadly circumstances by sleeping for long hours a day, Jack describes her situation as "gone". Moreover, his wish to go back to Room seems to be as if he feels nostalgic for a place where he was locked just as unworthy entity.

In Emma's *Room*, Jack's narration is decorated by numerous metaphors and often direct simple similes to mirror a child's mind style in thinking. Ma and Jack create a kind of language of their own inside their room in a way to accommodate Jack's limited understanding of the world. Most of Jack's metaphors are expressed over his looking through the skylight on the room's roof or over connecting things with what he watches on TV. His mother also enhances his imagination by telling him stories to enrich his capability to communicate with her within their limited life. Metaphors, used by Jack and Ma, are noticed to be very personal to convey their painful experience in the confinement. Their metaphors lack to be evocative ones.

For example, Jack's awareness of life is greatly blurred by fairy tales and cartoons. His imagination is obsessed by these limited things especially before escape. After picking her tooth up, Ma is "glad it's out, now it can't hurt anymore" (Donoghue,61), Jack, as a naïve child narrator, advises his mother to put it under her pillow believing in the Tooth Fairy ritual. This ritual involves putting a lost tooth under the pillow hoping that a fairy replacing it with money or a gift overnight(Toumba,277).Using such a metaphor reflects how a child's perspective can weaken narrating the terrible experience of toothache.

Further, Ma compares her plight to that of Alice's in *Alice in Wonderland*. Jack misunderstands her attempt to describe her painful condition. He asks if Ma has " actually lived in TV one time?"( Donoghue, 73). Moreover, Jack, after his mother tells him some facts of their confinement, describes Old Nick as " a stinking swiping zombie robber"( Donoghue, 85). In fact, such a metaphorical image is personal as it came from what Jack watched on TV. After knowing that Old Nick is a bad man, he connects him to zombies. This, definitely, does not reflect the amount of pain inflicted on Ma and Jack by this man. Jack's description of Old Nick as a 'robber' is a naïve word. Because of his lack of lexicons, he uses this simple word instead of the word "kidnapper".

After escape, Jack seems trapped by his lack of language in the face of the traumatic reality. Jack's contact with real life is described by Morales Ladrón in his " Psychological Resilience in Emma Donoghue's Room", saying:

Although he wants to ask for help, his lack of experience in talking to any other human being silences him. When the police finally find his mother, the only thing he wants to do is go back to Room, the place where he feels comfort and solace (89).

Finally, Jack's narration is best described by Rubik (2017, 222) when he considers that readers have to re-construct the narrative for themselves to obtain some consistent consequence of the information given by Jack. All above narrative circumstances lead the painful truth in *Room* to be unshareable and hidden behind the articulation.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this study shows how Emma Donoghue's *Room* presents a young woman protagonist called Ma and her five-year old child, Jack, fail to get the sympathy they hope from all those people around them. During their confinement in the Room, Ma and Jack are manipulated coercively by Jack's biological father, Old Nick. Ma, as a weak young woman, is exploited and rendered a sex slave and Jack is presented as a neglected entity deprived of his basic rights as a child. Screams through the skylight and other attempts, all fail to hold their voice outside their confinement.

After they escape the miserable circumstances of the confinement, Ma and Jack are shocked to face a new type of oppression that restricts their ability to articulate what they have undergone along the previous period of their life. Inside the psychiatric clinic they are put after their escape, Ma and Jack are treated according to the doctors' will and during the interview by the press, Ma is annoyed by questions irrelevant to her agonies. Even the family members, especially her father, do not understand what destructive traumatic pain they suffer. Realizing her pain ineffable, Ma retreats such uncaring society by oversleeping and moreover by taking painkillers trying to switch off her life by committing suicide. Finally, Ma and Jack choose to live in an independent residence away of people who do not recognize their pain.

## References

1. Baker, Katharine. *Once a Rapist? Motivational Evidence and Relevancy in Rape Law*. *Harvard Law Review*, vol. 110, 1997, pp. 563–619.

2. Bancroft, Lundy. *Why Does He Do That?: Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men*. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2002.
3. Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. Translated by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier, Vintage Books, 2011.
4. Bilich, K. A. "Child Abduction Facts: Some Important Information About Kidnappings in the US." *Parents*, 2016, [www.parents.com/kids/safety/stranger-safety/child-abduction-facts/](http://www.parents.com/kids/safety/stranger-safety/child-abduction-facts/). Accessed 31 Oct. 2025.
5. Caracciolo, Marco. "Two Child Narrators: Defamiliarization, Empathy, and Reader-Response in Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident* and Emma Donoghue's *Room*." *Semiotica*, vol. 202, 2014, pp. 183–205.
6. Dabade, Aarti, and Kinjal Gadkari. "Incest Story of the Captivated: The Girl Who Spent 24 Years of Her Life Imprisoned by Her Father." *Veritas*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2022, pp. 89–94.
7. Das, Ankita, and Rajni Singh. "Contesting Captive Spaces: A Reading of Emma Donoghue's *Room*." *Journal of English Language and Literature*, vol. 9, no. 2, Apr. 2018, pp. 786–93. DOI: 10.17722/jell.v9i2.354.
8. Donoghue, Emma. *Room*. Little, Brown and Company, 2010.
9. Donoghue, Emma. "Room." *EmmaDonoghue.com*, n.d., [https://emmadonoghue.com/component/index.php?Itemid=209&id=6&option=com\\_content&view=article&utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://emmadonoghue.com/component/index.php?Itemid=209&id=6&option=com_content&view=article&utm_source=chatgpt.com). Accessed 31 Oct. 2025.
10. Dore, Margherita. "Narrative Strategies and Mind Style in Emma Donoghue's *Room*." *Fictions*, 2017, pp. 61–73.
11. Dore, Margherita. *Mind Style in Translation: Emma Donoghue's "Room" in Italian*. University of Rome "La Sapienza," 2021, pp.9-29. doi:10.25951/4726.
12. Droogsma, Jessica Daine. "Female Hysteria across Cultures and Periods in American Literature." Honors Program Theses, no. 56, 2008, pp. 1-43.
13. Field, Robin E. *Writing the Survivor: The Rape Novel in Late Twentieth-Century American Fiction*. Clemson University Press in association with Liverpool University Press, 2020.
14. Fowler, Roger. *Linguistic Criticism*. Oxford University Press, 1986.
15. Grosz, Elizabeth. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Indiana University Press, 1994.
16. Hartmann, Ernest. *The Nature and Functions of Dreaming*. Oxford University Press, 2011.
17. Heiden, Zachary. *Change Is Possible: A Case Study of Solitary Confinement Reform in Maine*. American Civil Liberties Union of Maine, 2013.
18. Hemingway, Ernest. "Indian Camp." In *Our Time*, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925, pp. 15–19.
19. Herman, Judith L. *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*. Basic Books, 1992.
20. Katz, Emma. *Coercive Control in Children's and Mothers' Lives*. Oxford University Press, 2022. *Oxford University Press*
21. Kelly, Liz, Nicola Sharp, and Renate Klein. *Finding the Costs of Freedom: How Women and Children Rebuild Their Lives after Domestic Violence*. Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit, London Metropolitan University, Solace Women's Aid 2014.
22. Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez, Columbia University Press, 1982.
23. Lorenzi, Lucia. "'Am I Not OK?' Negotiating and Re-Defining Traumatic Experience in Emma Donoghue's *Room*." *Canadian Literature*, no. 228/229, 2016, pp. 19–33.
24. Miller, Elizabeth, et al. "Pregnancy Coercion, Intimate Partner Violence, and Unintended Pregnancy." *Contraception*, vol. 81, no. 4, 2010, pp. 316–22.
25. Molea, Amelia. *Language, Literature and Cultural Studies*. vol. 1, Military Technical Academy, 2008.

26. Morales-Ladrón, Marisol. "Psychological Resilience in Emma Donoghue's *Room*." *National Identities and Imperfections in Contemporary Irish Literature*, edited by Luz Mar González-Arias, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, pp. 83–98.
27. Mursyidah, et al. "Ma's Anxiety in Emma Donoghue's *Room*." *English Language and Literature Journal*, vol. 1, no. 3, 2013, pp. 1–6. *Portal Garuda*.
28. O'Reilly, Andrea. "'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*, vol. 8, no. 1–2, 2017, pp. 89–98.
29. "Onomatopoeia Dictionary: Written Sound." *Onomatopoeia Online Dictionary*, 2014, [www.writtensound.com/index.php](http://www.writtensound.com/index.php). Accessed 31 Oct. 2025.
30. Prathikshaa, C. "A Study on Secondary Victimization and Its Impact on the Recovery Process of Sexual Assault Survivors." *International Journal of Advanced Research in Science, Communication and Technology*, vol. 5, no. 4, June 2025, pp. 756–763, doi:10.48175/IJARSCT-27673. *IJARSCT*.
31. Rubik, Margarete. "Out of the Dungeon, into the World: Aspects of the Prison Novel in Emma Donoghue's *Room*." *How to Do Things with Narrative: Cognitive and Diachronic Perspectives*, edited by Jan Alber and Greta Olson, De Gruyter, 2017, pp. 219–40.
32. Saleem, Abdul. "Theme of Alienation in Modern Literature." *European Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, vol. 2, no. 3, 2014, pp. 67–76.
33. Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. Oxford University Press, 1985.
34. Schuster, J.-P., S. Mouchabac, Y. Le Strat, and F. Limosin. "Le Mutisme Hystérique / Hysterical Mutism." *CLINIQUE*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2017.
35. Shalev, Sharon. *A Sourcebook on Solitary Confinement*. London School of Economics and Political Science, 2008.
36. Shanmathi, M. "The Study on Relationship Between Learned Helplessness and Adjustment among Young Adults." *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, vol. 12, no. 4, 2024, pp. 521–27. DOI: 10.25215/1204.047.
37. Siddiqui, Javed Ather, and Shazia Farheen Qureshi. "Onychophagia (Nail Biting): An Overview." *Indian Journal of Mental Health*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2020, pp. 97–103.
38. Stark, Evan. *Coercive Control: How Men Entrap Women in Personal Life*. Oxford University Press, 2007.
39. Tan, Marcus Yi Hern. *Bonsai Boy: The Traumatized Child in Emma Donoghue's Room*. MA thesis, Nanyang Technological University, 2018.
40. Tandon, Neeti. "Secondary Victimization of Children by the Media: An Analysis of Perceptions of Victims and Journalists." *International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences*, vol. 2, no. 2, July–Dec. 2007, pp. 119–135. *International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences*.
41. Toumba, K. J. "The Legend of the 'Tooth Fairy.'" *European Archives of Paediatric Dentistry*, vol. 14, no. 5, Sept. 2013, pp. 277–78. DOI: 10.1007/s40368-013-0093-9.