

## The Power Of Transition And Child's Play In Emma Donoghue's Novel *Room*.

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### ABSTRACT

To transform is the act of crossing a boundary in the making of something new. The very first body that one changes are the first line one crosses in human existence, which is one's mother's body. This transformation happens for one's selfishness. The mother's body is always in transformation and is growing to accommodate the child. Emma Donoghue was born in Dublin, Ireland. *Room* is her seventh novel. It is based on the true story of the Fritzl case in Austria. It is narrated by a five-year-old Jack who lives in a twelve-foot shed that he shares with his mother. His prisoner is his biological father, Old Nick. This article focuses on the importance of child play, vocabulary and the power of transformation with the help of Freud's ideas on *Creative Writing and Daydreaming*

**Key Words:** Child's Play, Transformation, Vocabulary, Freud.

In creative writing and Day Dreaming, Sigmund Freud compares child's play to creative writing. When one asks creative writers on how they draw materials or their contents, they would not be able to answer a proper explanation that will be satisfactory. According to Freud the seed of one's imagination lies in childhood. "The child's best-loved and most intense occupation is with his play or games. Might we not say that every child at play behaves like a creative writer, in that he creates a world of his own, or rather, rearranges the things of his world in a new way which pleases him?"(CWADD 421). It would be offensive if one thinks that the child is not taking his/her play seriously. According to Freud the opposite of this play is reality. The child plays his/her game with deep emotions. The child knows to differentiate his/her play towards reality. Thus while playing the child also likes imagination or the objects of his/her play to the real world. This linking according to Freud is the differentiation of the child's 'play' to 'phantasying'.

A child has grown up, stops playing and learns the practicality of life. The child would look at how seriously he/she has once played their childhood plays. While the child is mature and labouring every day to pay his wages, the child would be able to relief through

humour. "As people grow up, then, they cease to play, and they seem to give up the yield of pleasure which they gained from playing" (CWADD 422). Adults can't give up on the pleasure that was once a part of their routine. It is only possible to substitute pleasure with something. "In the same way, the growing child, when he stops playing, he now *phantasies*. He builds castles in the air and creates what are called day-dreams" (CWADD 422). Children never conceal their game from the grownups. On the contrary adult's phantasies are concealed. Adults are ashamed of their phantasies and they conceal them from others. But these phantasies are an adult's most treasured and intimate possessions. In child's play, the motive of the child often imitates the elders. According to Freud, the motive forces of phantasies are unsatisfied wishes. The adult/the child aims to fulfil their unsatisfied wish through their daydreaming/child's play. The imaginative activities are moulded depending on the situation the child is in.

There is a profound predictor of health and wealth that can be determined by three years of age: that is language. Language is the essence of the human being. Animals have noises or gestures that they can communicate with. Human beings are much more adept and facile at language. Babies come to this world programmed to learn this essence of language. There is a huge growth spurt, increase and capacity in the brain that occurs right before babies come into this world. They are hard-wired to learn different languages. It is not only their capacity but they learn language from their caretakers. Mothers and babies have unique experiences of learning the essence of language. Language is the interaction between the caretaker and the baby.

The evidence of hardwiring is very much evident in the 'Still Face Experiment' that was conducted by Harvard University. It focuses on the importance of the hard wire that exists. The mothers are instructed to turn away and then turn back to the child and have a still face. The baby first tries to engage to elicit a response, then tries to reach out which is hard-wired. Then she starts to get frustrated as the mother is not responsive and starts to get the whole process creative and hard-wired. The mother must concentrate on the baby and the baby demands the mother's attention.

Hart and Risley were two researchers who were researching the war between wealth and poverty. Their work was the deep observation of family life. They went to the homes of 42 families and observed them. They worked with the families every hour a month from the time the children were 7 months until the end of the third year. They determined their research by the interaction of the parents with the child. After three years of observation, they saw that there were 30 million more words as professional families than the working class and families in poverty. Those families in poverty were only interchanging 600 words an hour. For professional families, it was over 2000 words an hour. They were having constant talks with the babies. Neurological development of the brain depends on words. Each time a word is said it shoots up and stimulates the neuron when the word is repeated the same path is stimulated again. It gets stronger and branches out; this further enhances the learning capacity. If the words are not repeated the opposite neurons shrink and die. The scientific word for this is 'pruning'. This is also called 'Language Nutrition'.

Jack's imagination is very powerful. He inhibits his imagination from his mother. Jack explores and has creative knowledge-building. Being in a room does not stop him from learning. Ma gives Jack the freedom to follow his fascination. He perceives things differently. He sings plays, draws and acts. Even though he does not know that there is a world outside,

both Jack and Ma are always creating. They are constantly learning. Jack's fantasies are mostly from what he watches on television. As he has not seen the world outside he believes that whatever he sees on the television is true. He is constantly asking beautiful questions like "In outer space? I wish it was inside so I can play with it" (Room 9).

Jack is well educated by Ma. He is very conscious about his screen timing. He knows that he should not watch too much television. "Before I came down from Heaven Ma left it on all day long and got turned into a Zombie that's like a ghost but walks *thump thump*"(Room 13). Jack is constantly learning words with Ma. As they do not meet any people or the world outside Ma puts all her effort into educating Jack with as many words as possible. Even while eating they are constantly discussing new words or the music they listened in the television or the cartoon that Jack watched on television

Look how big my muscles, though. I bounce on Bed, I'm Jack the Giant Killer in his seven-league boots

"Vast," Says Ma.

"Gigantic."

"Massive."

"Huge."

"Enormous," says Ma.

"Hugeormous." That's word sandwich when we squish two together.

Though they are trapped in the Room, Ma makes sure that Jack has his Physical Education. They lift the table upside down onto the Bed and the Rocker on her with the Rug over the Bed. They count their steps. They have ten books on the shelf and four of them are for Jack with pictures in them. Jack says that he likes *Alice in Wonderland*, but she has too many words and lots of them are old for him. Jack is much enhanced and forward in every single vocabulary as he practices a lot with his Ma. Jack names every single object in the Room and he gives them a gender. The author has purposefully capitalized the first letter of each word like Door, Egg snake, Rug, and Bed. He relates everything to the stories that he hears. When he saw a mouse in their room for the first time he relates it to *Alice in Wonderland*. "O Mouse, I say in a whisper so he won't be scared. That's how to talk to a mouse, it's in *Alice*, only she talks about her cat Dinah by mistake and the mouse gets nervous and swims away"(Room 38).

They use different games to play vocabulary pronunciations. They play parrot. When Ma says Parrot, Jack would read the subtitles on the television while it is on mute. While he is reading she constantly tells him the meaning of hard words. She tests his vocabulary very often. "Ma finds had words to test me from the milk carton like *nutritional* that means food and *pasteurized* that means laser guns zapped away the germs"(Room 41). Ma never told Jack that there is a world outside because he did not want Jack to feel trapped. When Ma wanted Jack to understand the difference between the outer world and the world he was trapped in, he has a hard time differentiating between reality and non-reality. "Forests are TV and also jungles and deserts and streets and skyscrapers and cars. Animals are on TV except ants and spider and Mouse, but he's gone back now. Germs are real, and blood. Boys are TV

but they kind of look like me, the me in Mirror that isn't real either, just a picture" (Room 66).

The Room thus stands as a metaphor for the womb and the developing relationship between the mother and child. The novel shows how one's environment can affect the growth of the child. Despite their captivity, the mother makes the shed a lovely home despite being a captive. She turns the Room into an emotionally beautiful place for her and Jack. Thus the novel Room becomes a source for transformation and healing.

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