

An Adlerian Reading of Personality Development in Emma Donoghue's *Room*

Fatemeh Sadat Basirizadeh¹, Narges Raoufzadeh², Shiva Zaheri Birgani³, Mehrnaz Khoshgam⁴

^{1,2}Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of literature, Humanities and Social science, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

³Islamic Azad University, Masjed Soleyman, Khuzestan Province, Iran

⁴English Literature of Islamic Azad University-Tehran South Branch

fatemeh.basirizadeh@srbiau.ac.ir, raoufzadehnarges@gmail.com, shywazah2@gmail.com, mehrnazkh50@gmail.com

Abstract

This research aims to analyze the sadness that led to the trauma of the main characters Ma and Jack in the Room novel by Emma Donoghue. This research aims to understand and find out what is being experienced by Ma in the Room novel by Emma Donoghue. This research aims to illustrate the effect of economic situation on individual's thoughts, lives, norms and values, and to show how this writer, has rendered the personality development in his contemporary society. The significance of the study lies in the fact that most of Emma Donoghue's novel, mostly the earlier ones, have similar themes but the researcher is going to find personality development in his novel namely, In Room by finding Inferiority Complex, Striving for Success or Superiority, freedom of choice, conscious and unconscious for individualization Process, and social interest issues in the light of Adlerian personality development theory. The researcher tries to highlights how the characters struggle in society and consciously or unconsciously they are trying to discover self. The best advantage point for understanding the behavior of an individual is from the internal frame of reference from the individual him- or herself. The striving for significance is a movement toward fulfillment of the goal to achieve unique identity and to belong. Adler believed that each person strove for self-improvement having an innate desire to become better, to move forward and onward, to become superior. Adler did not feel that striving for perfection and superiority was a striving for superiority or perfection over others, but rather that it was a movement directed at self-improvement and greater competency. Thus, Room as a literary text represents the psychological state of the characters. Symbols and Characters can be analyzed according to psychoanalytic theory of Alfred Adler.

Keywords

psychoanalysis, conflict, personality development, social interest, Adler outcomes



I. Introduction

Humans have endured loneliness from the dawn of history against their will. Humans are social beings, and is more likely that a solitary existence would have a major impact on them. In particular, captivity is an extremely compulsory form of isolation that has attracted a lot of attention among anthropologists and even novelists who try to find out how influential the experience of confinement could be. Adler (1870-1937) is a physician who specialized in psychiatry and in 1907 was invited to join Freud's

Wednesday discussion group, which he later became president of the psychoanalytic society in 1911, but he resigned in October (Luttrell, 2009). Adler wrote on organic inferiority which were quite compatible with Freud's view, his first writing concerning aggression instinct which Freud did not approve of and the paper on child's feelings be taken more metaphorically than literally. Adler with nine other members of the organization (Viennese Analytic Society) resigned to form the society for free psychoanalysis in (1911). This organization became the society for individual psychology. Adler died in Aberdeen, Scotland during a lecture tour in UK (Adlerian Society, 2010). Adler (1927) maintains that human psychology is psychodynamic in nature. Like Freud's instincts Adler's fiction goals are largely unconscious, his goals have teleological function. The researcher is going to work on Adlerian reading of personality development in in Emma Donoghue's Room. The present research is a close consideration of Adler's most influential concept, that is social interest. It is considered as an individual's interest in furthering the welfare of others. Necessarily, it needs to understand individuals within their social context.

II. Research Methods

Personal psychology seeks to see the lives of people as a whole, and every single reaction, every movement and impulse as an expression of the attitude of a person toward life. Such a science is of necessity practical and pragmatic, for with the aid of knowledge we can change and correct our attitudes. From an attempt, the study of Individual Psychology emerged to grasp life's enigmatic creative force-the power Expressed in the desire to grow, to strive and to accomplish, and in order to compensate for defeats in one field by aiming for success in another. This power is teleological - it expresses itself in the striving for a goal, and in this striving every physical and psychological attribute co-operates. It is absurd, therefore, to study either physical or mental conditions abstractly without relating them to the individual as a whole. The crucial thing is to consider the individual's meaning. The goal of their lives, which guides all their lives. (Collin Bett, Understanding Life Alfred Adler 2)

The main sense of inferiority is Original and natural baby feeling A boy of smallness, vulnerability, and weakness Reliance. Feeling of inferiority usually acts as an incentive for development. One basic force behind all human activity, a striving from a felt minus situation towards a plus situation; from a feeling of inferiority towards superiority and perfection. (qtd. in Counseling Theory and Practice 112) Adler started his career as a doctor and concluded early on that the physical character of an individual and the situation could have an effect on their future development. Due to physical deficiencies, Children experience weakness and helplessness over and over again. Adler called this organ (as in organic) inferiorities. One way of addressing weakness was through compensation making up for compensation by developing strengths in other areas, a weakness. Another way of adapting was to overcompensation, the transformation of a vulnerability into a force. Such vulnerability may be further complicated by one's place in the *birth order* since comparisons to older, more able, siblings may further expand *inferiority feelings, feelings* that all humans try to escape by becoming powerful or superior. (Pervin, 155). Thus, "to be a human being means the possession of a feeling of inferiority that is constantly pressing on towards its own conquest" (Adler, *social Interest* 73). The Adler's theory is also known as the "striving for superiority" model. This behavior is reflective of acts of the pursuit of superiority. (74) Indeed, the inferiority complex plays an important role, but not the most

decisive one in Adler's Individual psychology. Adler believes that one of every person's first feelings (after birth and also as a small child) is in fact the feeling of being inferior because the child experiences him-/herself as helpless, incomplete, insecure, dependent, insufficient, and premature in comparison to the parents and other adults and siblings around him/her. Inferiority feelings are therefore natural and unavoidable for every human being. (Adler, *The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler* 117) Nonetheless, it is absolutely subjective and relies on the interpretation of reality by a person rather than reality itself. "the impetus to progression, just as it arises from the helplessness and imperfection of childhood, and as it has forced all mankind to seek from out of its needs a security-giving culture" (Adler, *Social Interest*, 54). Adler infers that human cooperation and collaboration, as a result, Social concern originates in the feelings of inferiority. Inferiority complexes, on the other hand, are everlasting feelings of inferiority. They are "so overwhelming that they undermine an individual's courage to move forward with life, to meet and overcome obstacles, and to develop and make a contribution to the community" (Griffith and Powers, *An Adlerian Lexicon* 20). The human psyche is still in motion, in Adler's opinion the inside life of a human is at any time focused toward an ultimate target, namely the safety objective, which is according to Adler "common to all human beings" (qtd. in *Social Interest* 28). Marcus et al. (1998) in his book stated that: the core of Adler's integrated complex of philosophy, theory, and practice was a vigorously optimistic, humanistic view of life. He offered a value-oriented psychology that envisioned human beings as capable of profound cooperation in living together and striving for self-improvement, self-fulfillment, and contribution to the common welfare. Indeed, Adler predicted that if we did not learn to cooperate, we would run the risk of eventually annihilating each other. Thus, if we were to distill his view of the human condition into one main idea, it would be the concept of the Social Human, inextricably interconnected with others and all of nature. The central problem that humans face is how to live on this planet together, appreciating what others have contributed in the past, and making life better for present and future generations. This process begins in infancy as children become conscious of felt insufficiencies in the face of normal, everyday tasks, especially when they compare themselves to older children and adults. As a result, they experience what Adler called inferiority feelings, which are the very normal reactions to the awareness of not being able to function in a way that we wish. Adler also described this as experiencing a "minus situation." These feelings become motivation for striving toward what he called a "plus situation." (qtd. in *Psychoanalytic Versions of the Human Condition* 1-2)

Adler (1956) in his book *Cooperation Between the Sexes* stated :
 Individuals strive in this direction because of the "creative power of life, which expresses itself in the desire to develop, to strive, to achieve, and even to compensate for defeats in one direction by striving for success in another. This power is teleological, it expresses itself in the striving after a goal, and, in this striving, every bodily and psychological movement is made to cooperate" (92).

Individuals can use safeguarding devices in attempts both to excuse themselves from failure and depreciate others. Safeguarding devices include symptoms, depreciation, accusations, self-accusations, guilt, and various forms of distancing. Symptoms such as anxiety, phobias, and depression, can all be used as excuses for avoiding the tasks of life and transferring responsibility to others. In this way, individuals can use their symptoms to shield themselves from potential or actual failure in these tasks. Of course, individuals may be able to do well in one or two of the tasks of life and have difficulties in only one, e.g., in work, community, or love. (qtd. in *Psychoanalytic Versions of the Human Condition* 2)

III. Review of Literature

Women's struggle is an effort undertaken by women to get their goals. Can aim to gain equal rights, not discrimination and to gain his freedom as a woman living on earth. According Ratnasari, women's struggles is a way to get the equality with men, feminism beliefs become the major weapon to get the equality of the human rights. The principles of feminism analyze the position of women and men in the social life with intend to build up the understanding for the accomplishment of women's better life. The principles of feminism develop thoughts and efforts to create appropriate ways to overcome intolerance and exploitation to women. (Ratnasari, 2014). Tong (2013: 7) declares that the real meaning of feminism is the state where women are free from oppression, power, hegemony, injustice, and violence. Kaptein also writes that struggle, the object of value is not yet realized or guaranteed. What is valued has not been secured yet—it is something which people want to realize or save due to its future reality is not certain. So there is a possibility of losing or not realizing something valuable. (Kaptein, 2017). at last, whether a struggle is good or terrible does not depend on whether the goal is to crush the bad or get the good, but whether the object one is trying to realize or preserve is deemed good or bad (cf. Badaracco 2013). "MA'S TRAUMA; A PSYCHOANALYTIC STUDY IN EMMA DONOGHUE'S NOVEL *ROOM* (2010)" is done by ARDI RIDHO NUGROHO determines the factors that cause trauma in Ma, who became one of the main characters in the novel *Room* and the characteristic that occur after trauma. In analyzing the trauma that existed in Ma's character in *Room* novel, the researchers used descriptive qualitative methods. The study used Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory. Based on the data analysis, the results of this study indicate the factors that affect trauma in Ma, where the factors are, human rights abuses, the verbal and physical violence to the victims, and loss of something that is very meaningful in life.

IV. Discussion

4.1 Personality development in main characters in *Room*

Jack is the character in the story feels the changing or development in his character or personality. The development can be seen from the beginning through the ending of the story. This can be seen from his conversation with his mother the first time he goes outside with his mother. Jack's Personality evolves from happy to r unhappy .He's a very happy kid when he lives in a home, but a lot of things happen when he lives in a room. He's not in the room anymore and it affects his attitude. He becomes an unhappy guy. He's not sad, really, but he just doesn't really like the outside. He still does, he thinks about his space and wants to go back and use it all.

Ma says we need to talk to some police. I snuggle against her, I say, "Want to go to Bed." "They'll find us somewhere to sleep in a little while." "No. *Bed*." "You mean in a Room?" Ma's pulled back, she's staring in my eyes. "Yeah. I've seen the world and I'm tired now." "Oh, Jack," she says, "we're never going back." The car starts moving and I'm crying so much I can't stop. (p.174)

Jack's crying convinces him that the world outside doesn't really like him. It is indicated when he was tired of the escape plan and he was successful in saving his mom, he wants to go back to sleeping in the bedroom. He isn't going to want to be for the one he has in the room, sleeping on other beds. However his mother insists that they won't be back in the room anymore.

Ma and the Captain talk a lot more. I'm nearly asleep but it's too bright and I can't

get comfy.

“What is it?” she asks.

“We really have to go back to Room,” I tell her. “I need Toilet.” “That’s OK, they’ve got them here in the precinct.” (p.180)

The precinct they are living in now has toilets, but Jack prefers to use the one he is staying. It indicates that he doesn't feel relaxed on the outside. He still asks his mom to go back to her place. He also assumes that the room is more comfortable than the outside. The escape can eventually be done really well by Jack. He may go outside and ask for aid. A new environment for him is the world outside the place.

He feels the modifications in his the environment the one that makes his evolving personality. Jack is described in the room as cheerful, creative, but frightened boy. Outside the room, however, the personality of Jack evolves. He is not the one who is the former Jack. He becomes a courageous Jack. He is no longer fearful but he becomes brave.

‘Ma’s not here, no time for cry, I’m Prince Jacker Jack, I have to be JackerJack or the worms crawl in. I’m on my front again, I bend my knees and stick my butt up, I’m going to burst right through Rug and she’s looser now, she’s coming off my face — (p156-157).

Jack become brave in the outside because he wants to save his mother who still in the room. He tries to answer Police Officer’s question about his mother.

“Your ma , is that what you said?” asks Officer Oh. “Is that that who’s got the dresses?” Nodding’s easier

“Where’s your ma tonight?” “In Room.”

“In a room, OK,”

she says. “Which room?” “Room.” “Can you tell us where is it?”

I remember something. “Not on any map.” (p. 164)

The quotation above shows Jack’s bravery to talk with the Police Officer. He tries to tell his mother’s position who still stuck in the room. Adler stated that changes in physical or social environment may produce changes in person’s self-concept an behavior. And changing in someone’s environment can affect the changing in his/her way of thinking and behavior. Jack feels the physical and social changes in the story. Since Jack was born until he was five, he only lived with his mother in a single room. He's living with his mother in the room and the captor provides whatever he and his mother need. Family is the first element. The members of the family that affect are Grandma and mother. This is because mother and grandma are the most important or important Jack’s closest guy. Such two individuals affect the personality of Jack from to become sad, courageous and friendly, happy, fearful and rude. Second element is an environment. The changes in the physical environment affects social environment for Jack. Jack's personality evolves from introverted to extroverted. He was cheerful, creative, afraid and courageous while he was still living there. The Room when he was already, he becomes the unhappy, excruciating, unimaginative, brave, and friendly. He very smartly announces his progress in modifying to social norms:

I'm learning lots more manners. When something tastes yucky we say it's interesting, Jake wild rice that bites like it hasn't been cooked. When I blow my nose I fold the tissue so nobody sees the snot, it's a secret. If I want Ma to listen to me not some person else I say, 'Excuse me', so me times I say, 'Excuse me, Excuse me', for ages, then when she asks what is it I don't remember anymore. (Room 204)

Struggling with Ma to heal her trauma via Jack, she passes through this condition. There are two criteria, the first being a secure haven and a safe base. Jack is like Ma's secure haven and safe base. Jack is a chance for Ma to escape, and whenever she is with Jack, Ma is physically safe. In this case before Ma had a son she had almost given up on

her situation. As Adler stated almost the same for us, we think that if we didn't take that step, we might have done what could have happened, that we would take another step. We could live in a better situation. Ma spends this stage for nearly two years and after Jack with her, she has a hope to escape from the room. After the presence of his son, Ma had a will to escape her situation even if it was trivial. To conquer the fear inside her trauma she had made her adaptable. She did survive. Vera, Carbelo and Vecina in their book entitled Masten 'Resilience' and 'Ordinary Magic' state that one of Room's main achievements is Donoghue's exploration of the capacity human beings experiencing dreadful conditions might develop to overcome distress and perhaps even to benefit from it. During their life time, people can go through severe stressful circumstances that might lead them to experience unbearable pain, intense strain and trauma. Although these extreme incidents might trigger post-traumatic stress disorder or some other pathology in some individuals, many others not only learn how to confront and come to terms with adversity, but they also bounce back from it (41)

We eventually leave them ready to return to working "normally" in a "normal" community after the dreadful experience that mother and child have experienced, but the questioning of "normality" would shatter assumptions about parenting, conventional schooling and mental health.

Jack insists on going back to see Room at the end of the book and it is at this point that the reader understands that since he sees the old house, the place he was fully attached to, in a different light, he will adapt to the new order: 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. 'Yeath, it is'. Our voices sound not like us. 'Has it got shrunk?' 'No, it was always like this'. (319)

The novel ends with mother and child saying goodbye to Space, suggestively inducing readers to believe that the resilience they have built in the face of their ordeal can give them security in the (sometimes) hostile world in which they now find themselves, despite their weakness in their new reality.

IV. Conclusion

Whether correct or not, provide significant clues regarding one's style of life since they are impacted by self-selected goals. Therefore, the personality development of Ma and Jack relates to how he suppresses traumatic thoughts. Adler also believe in "The happiness of mankind lies in working together, in living as if each individual had set himself the task of contributing to the common welfare" (Adler, Understanding Human Nature 255) . Social pressure on the individual was strong, i.e. people lived with a strong superego. This made them lack self-knowledge and restraint, two very important qualities for surviving in an unfamiliar environment. Characters distanced from the super-ego. As Adler said "The well-adjusted individual strives for superiority and wholeness in the environment while expressing a love for and communion with other people." (qtd. in Superiority and Social Interest 195) Characters try to get over these pressures and problems. Consequently, psychoanalytic theory is not only a cure for the issues of the psychic person, but also plays an important role in viewing several disciplines in a separate way, especially literature, by presenting many literary elements with a psychic interpretation.

References

- Adler, A. Foreword. In R. Dreikurs, *Fundamentals of Adlerian psychology*. New York: Greenberg, 1933
- Adler, A. *Social interest: A challenge to mankind*. London: Faber & Faber. 1938
- Adler, A. *Superiority and Social Interest. A Collection of Later Writings*. Northwestern
- Adler, A. *Understanding human nature*. Garden City, NY: Garden City Publishing
- Adler, A. *The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler* (H. L. Ansbacher & R. R. Ansbacher, Eds.). New York: Basic Books. 1956
- Adler, A. *The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler: A systematic presentation in selections from his writings*. Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc. Used by permission of Perseus Books Group. 1964
- Basirizadeh F, Zaheri Birgani SH, Raoufzadeh N. (2021). Concept of Time in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. *Birci Journal*, Volume 3, No 2, May 2020, Page: 768-776 e-ISSN: 2615-3076(Online), p-ISSN: 2615-1715(Print) www.birci-journal.com/index.php/birci
- Company. 1927.
- Donoghue, Emma. "Biography of Emma Donoghue". Accessed October 19, 2016. 10.37 AM. < <https://www.emmadonoghue.com/emma-donoghue.html>>.
- Donoghue, Emma. *Room*. New York: Little Brown Company. 2010
- Dr. Mahdi Dehghani Firouz Abadi, Fatemeh sadat basirizadeh, et. Al. The Effect of Covid-19 Pandemic on Online Education of the EFL Learners. *Tob Regul Sci*. Volume 8, Number 1, January 2022 Doi.org :10.18001/TRS.8.1.304
- Eds.). New York. 1956.
- Linguistics and Literature*. Vol. 2, No. 2, June, Page: 67-74 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33258/linglit.v2i2.460>
- Soqandi, M. Basirizadeh, F. Cultural Materialism in Lorca's Poetry. *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal (BIRCI-Journal)* Volume 3, No 2, May 2020, Page: 682-691 e-ISSN: 2615-3076(Online), p-ISSN: 2615-1715(Print) www.birci-journal.com/index.php/birci
- University Press, 1964a.
- Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*: Bergsonian Study. *Linglit Journal: Scientific Journal of*