

**The Capability to Overcome Adversities in Emma
Donoghue's *Room* (2010)**

Thesis

*Submitted as a partial fulfillment of the requirement to obtain
the strata one (S1) degree*



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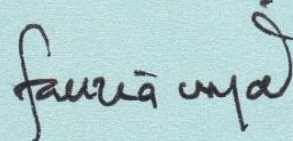
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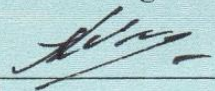
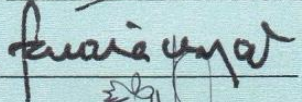

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ABSTRAK

Martha, Vionika Annisa. 2015. *The Capability to Overcome Adversities in Emma Donoghue's Room (2010)*. Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris. Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni. Universitas Negeri Padang.

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Skripsi ini merupakan analisa Novel *Room*(2010) karya Emma Donoghue. Masalah yang diangkat adalah sejauh mana karakter protagonist dalam novel ini menunjukkan kemampuan untuk mengatasi kesulitan dalam membebaskan dirinya dari penculikan dan sejauh mana elemen fiksi seperti plot (konflik) dan seting memberikan kontribusi dalam mengungkapkan makna. Tujuan peenganalisaan ini adalah untuk mendapatkan jawaban sejauh mana karakter protagonist dalam novel ini merefleksikan tindakan seseorang yang memiliki kemampuan untuk mengatasi kesulitan serta menunjukkan kontribusi elemen fiksi(plot dan seting) dalam mengungkapkan makna. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan pendekatan teks dan konteks. Analisa ini juga di hubungkan dengan konsep life instinct dari Sigmund Freud. Hasil analisa menunjukkan bahwa karakter protagonist melakukan dua tindakan yang bertujuan untuk mengatasi kesulitan yang di pacu oleh life instinct yang dimilikinya. Pertama, dengan menggunakan kemampuan fisik yang disertai dengan emosi. Tindakan tersebut tidak berhasil namun memberikan dampak yang baik terhadap tindakan selanjutnya. Kedua, dengan menggunakan kemampuan fisik disertai pemikiran yang lebih matang.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Being locked up for several years in eleven feet square room is a not an easy condition to be faced by people. The limitations that exist will cause them being stressed, traumatized, and even depressed, unless they have life instinct to overcome them. Hence, the life instinct that they possess will make them use their capabilities to gain the solution in order to come out of the problems. The success in gaining the solutions often results from their attitude of facing the problem. According to Lim (2007), attitude means a state of mind and feeling regarding the situation. This statement stressed that mind and feeling are the two important aspects in people that shape their responses to the problem. It implies that the response triggers the reactions and actions that become the solutions for the problem.

The attitude that directs people in facing the problem is divided into two forms. They are positive and negative attitudes. Young (2007) states that:

The most important decisions that people make when dealing with any circumstances is attitude. Choosing positive attitude will improve people's relationship, develop their ability and have optimism in their life. Meanwhile choosing negative attitude will lead to unhappiness, poor relationship and lack of ability.

This statement implies that positive attitude creates positive reactions and gives benefit for people. The positive attitudes manifest in behaviors such as having positive thinking, creative thinking, optimism, and expecting of success. On the

contrary, negative attitude produces negative reactions, and give bad effect for instance, people become pessimist in running their life, hard to communicate with others, and have a sequence of emotional imbalance.

The positive attitude can be produced because people have life instinct. This instinct has driven them to have motivated behaviors in order to cope more easily with the problem of their life. The most prominent behavior is that people have an ability to solve problems. This helps people in physical and emotional state when they are facing the problem. They focus in finding the solutions for themselves. Thus, it keeps the balances of life. Lim (2007) stated that people are able to overcome all problems and see the problems as a great chance to go forward. These statements suggest that positive attitude gives confidence to people to solve the problem.

In addition the positive attitude leads people to attain their goal. It provides them the agency. Tracy (2007) stated that positive attitude can help people see their choices and opportunities. They turn out to be more focus on achieving what essential for their life. In order to do that, they tend to be more creative and use their capability in order to face the problems in their life.

Capability means a skill, ability, or knowledge that makes a person able to solve their problem and achieve the goal of their life. According to Stephenson (1992) capable people are more able to deal effectively with the turbulent environment. He states that:

Capability depends much more on people confidence that they can effectively use and develop their skills in complex and changing circumstances than on their mere possession of those skills.

It means people who believe their own capability will automatically develop their aspect of capability in order to achieve their goal. Capable people do not only know about their specialism but they also have the confidence to apply their knowledge and skills within varied and changing situations. Taking effective and appropriate action within unfamiliar and changing circumstances involves judgments, values, the self-confidence to take risks and a commitment to learn from the experience.

The issues of the capability in overcoming the adversities are very common in daily life. One of the examples is experienced by Oprah Winfrey. According to her biography (2013), Oprah is the most popular American television presenter, media mogul and philanthropist. She was born in Mississippi and lived with her mother in poverty. At the age of 9, she was raped by her mother's cousin repeatedly. After that case, Oprah moved to Nashville to live with her father. When living with her father, she learned to read many books, made summary and had discipline. These have changed her become a stiff, confident, and disciplined woman. Moreover, lived in poverty, experienced sex abuse and being discriminated caused Oprah to work hard to change her sorrow life into a success. Thus, she has achieved many achievements in her life. One of them, she has become the most well-known TV presenter in the world. She succeeds to bring her show to be loved by many people. The writer of Oprah biography, Kelley (2013) stated that;

As a woman, she has wielded an unprecedented amount of influence over the American culture and psyche. There has been no other person in the 20th century whose convictions and values have impacted the American public in such a significant way.

She has become an inspiring woman in the world. She gives power to women to be able to change their life. She conducts woman to get out from their powerlessness to be powerful women who have the capability to use their intelligence, knowledge, creativity and credibility to overcome problems. Even, those problems will affect their successes' in their life.

The issue about the capability to overcome adversities is also found in the literary works. Novel, as the one example of literary works, has effectively revealed this phenomenon. One of them is the novel *Room* (2010) by Emma Donoghue. The protagonist in this novel experienced many problems in her life. Instead of give up with the troubles she had, she maintained to overcome those problems with the capability which she possessed. It appears through the ability to adapt with its surrounding and people, also by being able to utilize the facilities and times whichshe had done in overcoming the problems. The way she reacted to those problems positively and even used it as a media to achieve her goal indicated that she had a life instinct within herself. This makes the novel interesting to be analyzed.

1.1.1 The Capability to Overcome Adversities

There are three terms in this study. They are capability, overcome, and adversities. Capability means a person's ability to do or to achieve certain goal in their life. According to Stephenson (1992) capability is an integration of

confidence in one's knowledge, skills, and values. It refers to one's ability make individual able to fulfill own needs. In another word, the capability means the action of someone believing in her or his knowledge, ability, and skill to pursuing her or his goal in life. It may depend on many contingent circumstances.

The second one is overcome. In Cambridge dictionary of American English (2000), overcome means to successfully deal with or gain control of something difficult. It refers to the action of someone to face and not to avoid problems in life. In another words, the overcome means the skill knowledge and ability that someone possess to conquer or deal with the problems and limitations that one's should face in life.

The last term is adversities. According to Cambridge dictionary of American English (2000)adversity means a difficult situation or condition: misfortune or tragedy. It refers to the condition where people do not have much opportunity to get what they want. There are limitations which occur that will prevent people to achieve their goal.

In this study, the capability to overcome adversities refers to the way of people who have the capability to overcome the obstacles in their life, fulfill own needs even help other people. It is done by provoking the life instinct which they possessed and managing some strategies to do activity which make them able to life as normal people. It gives them ability to fulfill own needs, accept the limitations and even guard others.

1.1.2 Brief of Emma Donoghue

Emma Donoghue was born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1969. She has a first-class honors Bachelor of Arts degree from University College Dublin and a PhD in English from the University of Cambridge. Her thesis was on friendship between men and women in 18th century fiction. Donoghue has taught creative writing for the Cheltenham Literary Festival, the Arvon Foundation, the University of Western Ontario and the University of York. In 1998 she moved to Canada and became a Canadian citizen in 2004.

Donoghue's first novel was 1994's *Stir Fry*, a contemporary coming of age novel about a young Irish woman discovering her sexuality. This was followed in 1995 by *Hood*, another contemporary story, this time about an Irish woman coming to terms with the death of her girlfriend. Her 2007 novel, *Landing*, portrays a long-distance relationship between a Canadian curator and an Irish flight attendant. *The Sealed Letter* (2008), Donoghue's latest work of historical fiction, is based on the Codrington Affair, a scandalous divorce case that gripped Britain in 1864. *Room* (2010), is one of her newer interests and personal themes, Donoghue balances the sensationalistic turn of her imagination with the more conservative theme of motherhood. Yet most of her plots and characters are inspired by real case studies, whether from police blotters and newspapers or the lesbian popular press.

As an author Donoghue has won several prestigious awards for her literary works. Donoghue's first novel *Stir Fry* (1994) was a finalist for the Lambda

Literary Award in 1994. This was followed in 1995 by *Hood*, won the 1997 American Library Association's Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Book Award for Literature. *Slammerkin* (2000) was a finalist in the 2001 *Irish Times* Irish Literature Prize for Fiction and was awarded the 2002 Ferro-Grumley Award for Lesbian Fiction. *The Sealed Letter* (2008), was long listed for the Giller Prize, and was joint winner, with Chandra Mayor's *All the Pretty Girls*, of the 2009 Lambda Literary Award for Lesbian Fiction. Donoghue's novel *Room* (2010) was long listed for the Man Booker Prize and it made the shortlist. *Room* had been awarded the Prize. *Room* was also shortlisted for the 2010 Governor General's Awards in Canada, and was the winner of the Irish Book Award 2010. It was short-listed for the Orange Prize for Fiction 2011.

Emma Donoghue was often asked about the research that she conducted for drawn the idea for her work. In an interview with stylish magazine (2010) Donoghue affirms:

“I don’t need to go out looking for them, I just come across them. I remember once I wanted to see pictures at Kenwood House in Hampstead Heath and there was one portrait, which was very unusual, because it was a portrait of two girls in a garden and one of them was black and one of them was white but they were both dressed equally prettily, a very unusual way to represent a black woman in the 18th century. So I literally just read the little plaque then I went away and I wrote a short story about them; they were cousins. I immediately go and research enough to work out whether it’s an idea that’s going to appeal to me. It might be five years before I write it, but I do sort of grab hold of the ideas as soon as I come across them.”

As a writer Donoghue tends to do research for her piece of work. She usually does not go out for finding an idea but she did some researches by reading into the

relevant information. With the research she had done she is able to get the whole ideas and information about what she is going to write and what kind of work that she will do. She usually gathers the information and will complete her work after some years.

Room is an emotionally powerful story of young Jack and his mother. Being locked up for seven years in an eleven feet squared room makes it both a heart wrenching and an exciting story of overcoming horrible circumstances. In *New York Times* (2010) Aimee Bender praises *Room* as one of a good novel to be read. As she says;

“Donoghue navigates beautifully around these limitations. Jack’s voice is one of the pure triumphs of the novel... Thrilling and at moments palm-sweatingly harrowing... This is a truly memorable novel, one that can be read through myriad lenses – psychological, sociological, and political. It presents an utterly unique way to talk about love, all the while giving us a fresh, expansive eye on the world in which we live.” – Aimee Bender in *New York Times Book Review*.

The quotation above shows that Bender considered Donoghue work has some good points. From the theme, character and setting it can make the readers become interested about the story. The way Donoghue presented this novel with its limitations give the readers’ new view point about life. That is why *The New York Times* named it as one of their six best fiction titles of 2010.

1.1.3 Room

Room (2010), novel written by Emma Donoghue reveals the capability to overcome adversities. It is represented by the protagonist character (Ma). She is a twenty seven years old woman. She is a victim of sex abuse and random

abduction conducted by an old man which has been happened for seven years. During the seven years of her abduction she was locked up in an eleven feet square room. In difficult conditions, she realizes that all of the problems cannot be solved if she does not cope with it. She attempts to overcome the adversities of her life by using her capability. In this analysis, there are two ways done by protagonist to show her capability in overcoming adversities. First, by using physical ability and emotion to escape from the abductor and its surrounding. Second, by using physical ability and ability to think how to adapt with the surrounding and its people.

First, she tries to attack the abductor with no preparations. She does not aware of her physical strength limits. She is also too gullible which leads her to her failure to escape. She tries to escape from its surrounding with some methods, such as; digging a hole, scratching the skylight, cooking a strong flavored food, and screaming

Second, she tries to adapt with its surrounding and its people. She manages her diet to keep her healthy. Then she maintains her immune system which helps her to adjust with the condition. She uses books and television to gather both information and knowledge. Furthermore she uses Sunday treat, a name of the facility which she obtained once a week and only for a single request, to fulfill her daily needs. In term of adapting with people, she is able to do it properly. She protects her son from violence. Then she is able to pretend as a good wife for her abductor that led her safety.

1.2 Problem of Study

There are many issues which can be explored from the novel *Room* (2010) by Emma Donoghue. However, this study explores the issue of the capability to overcome adversities. In order to reveal the issue, research questions are needed. Those research questions are:

1. How far does the protagonist character in novel *Room* (2010) reflect the issue of the capability to overcome adversities?
2. To what extent do the other fictional devices, such as plot (conflicts) and setting give contribution to reveal the capability to overcome adversities?

1.3 Purpose of Study

The aim of this study is to reveal the issue of the capability to overcome adversities in the novel *Room*(2010) by Emma Donoghue. Besides, this study is done in order to explore to what extent characters, plot (conflicts), and setting give contribution in disclosing the issue of the capability to overcome adversities.

1.4. Previous Study

The analysis of this novel that focuses on the capability to overcome adversities has not been found yet. However, there are two studies which give contribution and inspiration in analyzing this novel.

The first analysis is done by Longjam (2012) entitled: *Search for Identity in Bharti Mukherjee's Jasmine*. The analysis in this article studied the novel

Jasmine. It analyzed an Indian women impulse, in searching for their identity by facing the problems of adaptation and survival between cultural clash of Indian and American. The character is represented by Indian woman, *Jasmine*. By focusing on the character, Longjam proposed the idea of self-reliance by Edmund. Edmund explained that self-reliance is an ability to stand on your own, responsible for oneself. In this analysis, after the protagonist achieved the self-reliance, she realized that the true identity of a person does not lie in being an Indian or an American but it lies in the inner spirit of the person to be at peace with her own self. Even when the protagonist goes through the worst experiences of her life, she is able to come through obstacles and attain a new identity and overthrows her past life.

The other study that gives contribution to this study was written by Russilawati (2003) entitled *When Reality Contradicts Dream*. The analysis in this article analyzed an autobiography of Ron Kovic which is written by him entitled *Born in the Fourth of July*. This analysis analyzed the physiological development of the protagonist during his childhood adolescence and adulthood is affected by war. She proposed the idea of physiological development based on Atkinson theory, by focusing on the character. According to Atkinson, physiological process of human adult can be seen through his perception, patterns of thinking, motives, emotions, conflicts and ways of coping with conflicts that change over time. Being born in the age of war is affected the protagonist point of view about war. With the process of physiological development during the stage of his

maturation, the character began to understand the wickedness of war and changes the character believe of it.

Those two analyses have inspired this study of the capability to overcome adversities. Both of them show how the character can overcome their problems. Different from the previous study, this analysis focuses on how far the novel uncover the capability to overcome adversities through the fictional devices such as setting, character and plot (conflict).

1.5. Theoretical Framework

The analysis of this novel is related to the concept of human instinct by Sigmund Freud. Freud in Salem (2006) stated that instincts are innate, goal directed sequences of behavior; they are more complex than simple reflexes but are impervious to the influence of learning and experience. These statements signify that human behavior is always governed by instinct.

In Freud's view, human behavior is governed by two kinds of instinct. They are life instinct (Eros) and death instinct (Thanatos). These two instincts have functions in complementary manner in the personal and interpersonal lives of human. The death instinct is underlay aggressive motivation. This instinct creates the energy of self-destructive behavior. Meanwhile, the life instinct is considered to be the basis of basic survival and pleasure motivation. This instinct aims to complete and sustain the individual life.

The life instinct forces people to survive by having solutions for the problem. Freud in Kastenbaum (2007) asserted that the life instinct (Eros)

function to cause people seek out for new experiences, reach out to the others, and expend energy in pursuit of their goal. This instinct provides people to have motivated behavior. By having these motivated behaviors, people can face the problem in their life and reach their goal. The motivated behaviors lead people to use their capability to overcome the adversities their life. Furthermore, the main motive in life instinct is to maintain the life. People are able to maintain their life by solving their problems with their capability which is driven by their motivated behaviors. In maintaining their life, they focus on how to find the solutions for themselves by using their capability.

Capability means a person's competence in operate effectively in unknown contexts and with new problems. Stephenson, (1992) stated that capability is a condition when people with capability justified confidence in their ability to take effective and appropriate action, explain what they are about, live and work effectively with others, and continue to learn from their experiences as individuals and in association with others, in a diverse and changing society. It means capability helps people to identify their possibilities and opportunities when they have set of goal. Furthermore, with the capability that people possessed, they will be able to determine what they wanted to do or achieve. It also shows that people have the right to pursue their goal if they have willingness to do it with their ability, skill, experience, and knowledge. In this analysis, those aspects of life instinct and capability were done by the protagonist, she shows her motivated behaviors by learning from her experiences about how to survive in the room with the limitations, also she is still able to care and watch over her son,

andable to have a healthy life. She maintains her life by solving each problem which is happening in her way to tracking down her goal. The capability of the protagonist can be seen through her actions, such as she takes effective and appropriate feats when she deals with the problem, continue to learn from her experiences as individuals whom being locked in a room and able to survive in a diverse and changing society.

The analysis of this novel is supported by text and context based interpretation. According to Guerin (2005) text based interpretation is the approach that based on the analysis and interpretation to text itself and context based interpretation is the approach that based on the circumstances of culture, history political, and social. It means this analysis is done not only by examining what the text serve, such as fictional devices, but also by correlating it with other fields. The fictional devices analyzed in this analysis are character, plot (conflict), and setting.

The first device which is used in this analysis is the character. Character is important element to reveal the meaning of this novel. Di Yanni (2002), character has different roles, personalities, manners, attitudes, appearances, and even languages. The analysis of the characters can be done by examining their speech, manner, and actions. The character in this analysis shows herself as someone who has a life instinct by using her capability to solve the problems she faced. In literary works there are two kinds of character, they are flat and dynamic character. According to literary terms and definitions (2014), dynamic character is one whose personality changes or evolves over the course of a narrative or

appears to have the capacity for such changes. The character in this analysis is a dynamic character. It is shown from the personality changes that conduct in protagonist life. She is able to adapt with her condition and act according the situation.

The second device is plot. It is focused on conflict. Conflict is actual opposition of needs, values and an interest in the characters. It is supported by Flanagan (2009), who explains conflict as the struggle between two opposing forces. He also adds that conflict does not only between a character and an outside force but it also takes place in the character's own mind. For instance, character may have to decide between right and wrong, between two solutions for a problem or he must deal with his own mixed feelings and emotions. In this analysis, the internal conflict occurs when the protagonist is dealing with her mental and physical struggle. On the other hand the external conflicts are the limitations that she got from her condition being locked in a small room with the entire problem. The pressures that she got from other characters also have the role in her external conflict.

The last device is setting which gives the contribution in order to reveal the meaning of this novel. It relates to the circumstances, location, and atmosphere of the characters in the story. Endriga (2003) says that setting has a way of drawing the reader into a piece of literature while facilitating understanding of the characters and their actions. It means characters and settings in a story are influenced by setting. It gives contributions to reveal the meaning of the story by persuading toward the characters and conflicts. Circumstances and

surrounding in this analysis determine the thought and the action of the protagonist.

1.6 Methodology

The analysis of this novel is done through combining text-based and context-based approach. Text-based approach focuses on exploring fictional devices such as character, setting, and plot (conflict). These devices cannot be separated in exploring the meaning of the text since they supported each other. Character is used to reveal the capability to overcome adversities by analyzing character's behavior, way of thinking, and ideas. Then, setting gives contribution in evoking the meaning through the atmosphere and situation which create conflict. Meanwhile, plot (conflict) plays important role in conveying the meaning of this novel. These devices are connected to context-based approach by analyzing to what happen in real world related to the psyche of the character. These devices are analyzed based on the concept of life instinct by Sigmund Freud.

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION

Novel *Room* (2010), written by Emma Donoghue shows the issues of the capability to overcome adversities. It is revealed through text-based and context-based approach. Text-based approach examines the interrelation between fictional devices such as the protagonist character, plot (conflict), and setting. These devices are connected to context-based approach which refers to the situation in this novel. The capability to overcome adversities is represented by the protagonist Ma. She is a twenty seven years old woman who able to accomplish her goal (getting out from the room). She attempts to overcome the adversities of her life by using her capability which is driven by her life instinct. There are two ways that protagonist has done to show her capability in overcoming adversities. The first is by using physical ability and emotion to escape from the abductor and its surrounding. The second is by using physical ability and ability to think to adapt with the surrounding and its people.

In attempting to escape from the abductor and its surrounding in panic, the protagonist tends to use her physical ability and emotion. The setting refers to the condition when she is being locked in room with its problems. It also refers to the social surrounding or the situation and the condition around the character that determines the thought and the action of the character. The plot (conflict) also helps in disclosing the meaning. The situation or the condition gives significant contribution in disclosing her efforts in escaping from the room. It can be seen

through the way of the protagonist releases her both external and internal conflict in facing its surrounding and people. She able to use her ability, but it is not being supported by her mental state. Those escaping plan the protagonist has tried, do not success but it helps her to the next phase in overcome her problems.

The second way is by using physical ability and ability to think. The protagonist does that with a well organized plan and preparation. The setting refers to the situation where the protagonist has to save herself from her current situation. It also refers to how the protagonist faces the problem in her recent surrounding and its people. Then, it leads to the action of the protagonist which affects the way she thinks and acts.

The capability to overcome adversities can easily be found in real life. It is generally done by people for either consciously or unconsciously to achieve their goal. It makes them tries to use their capability in order to accomplish it. Instead of giving up with the trouble they have, they maintain to overcome those problems. It appears through the way they solve their problems with their capability, such as; ability, knowledge, and skill.

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