

miniature reality. Jack has never known anything and Ma has never embedded anything in his mind. As Jack says, “my head was too small to have Outside in it. When I was a little kid, but now I'm five I know everything.” (102) Everything is real except the things in TV for Jack, and until Ma discloses the reality. Stories take Jack outside of himself and outside Room in a way that he doesn't yet comprehend:

Mountains are too big to be real; I saw one in TV that has a woman hanging on it by ropes. Women aren't real like Ma is, and girls and boys not either. (22)

Donoghue interweaves the connection to reincarnation in the novel. The sections of the novel called “Dying” “After” and “Living” readily supports this theme and reflects a cycle of death and rebirth. When Ma tells Jack about rebirth then Jack is only interested in the identity link to reincarnation: “If I grow in you again...will you still call me Jack?” (315) It is notable that the first person Jack meets in his second life in Outside is named Ajeet, a man of Indian heritage. The name Ajeet is associated with the Hindu God Vishnu, who governs transformation and preservation of soul in its various incarnations. And it is the magic Rug in the novel which transports Jack from his first life to the next. Donoghue's novel investigates the concept of privacy on a number of levels. Old Nick violates Ma both physically and emotionally, and yet his own right to privacy affords him the opportunity to hold two people captive in his high hedged-in backyard. At the same time, the media offers Ma a way to tell her story and earn some much-needed cash for Jack's future. But media violates their privacy to an extreme degree. They are after pictures and Jack has to go out in disguise. The Paper levels Jack “the Bonsai Boy,” thinking of him as someone whose growth was stunted and restricted.

Donoghue makes use of many symbols to make her narrative complex. Various symbols used are: Room, Rug, Wardrobe, Teeth, TV, Fables, Fairy Tales, and Art. Many of them act as characters to the narrator while for others they are just things. Room is symbolically a universal phenomenon of how we start in a very small world – Room as womb- and then we move into the outer world of our childhood, and gradually move into the wider world. Besides being a major space that fills up Jack's life, Room is a character. It expands and contracts in size with the perspective of each character. When Jack is very young, Room is large. When Jack revisits the Room at the end of the novel, it has shrunk in size in inverse proportion to his expanding knowledge and experience. We can only imagine how Room confined and restricted Ma's outlook and vision of her life, during her time of imprisonment. Rug symbolizes the classic literary tool to transport a character to a longed-for destination –a transport to the afterlife and other non-physical realms. In the novel, while Rug is Jack's real means of escape, it may also have been his means of comfort. On a whimsical plane, Rug helps transport him to a more comfortable state of mind:

I have to keep Rug on my blow-up in the bedroom, I'm not to drag her all around the house. So I sit with her over my head like a tent, her smell is just like I remember and the feel.” (289)

Rug may have been Jack's first 'blankie,' but it takes on even greater proportions for Jack. "I was born on her and I was dead on her too." (305) Another symbol is Wardrobe though which Donoghue does not let Jack wander into a make-believe world. His world is quite real and he needs a concrete means of escape. When he is hidden away in Wardrobe during Old Nick's visits, he is protected. He gets through the time by counting either his teeth or how long it takes for Old Nick to make "that gaspy sound." (52) In Freud's and other traditional dream interpretations, as well as various cultural mythologies, teeth are a major symbol. To dream that you are losing your teeth signifies a loss of control. Jack is constantly counting his teeth, and sometimes miscounts, especially when he is nervous. Old Nick becomes angry and sarcastic at Ma's request for a fan and Jack counts: I count my teeth, I keep getting it wrong, nineteen then twenty then nineteen again. I bit my tongue till it hurts." (69). Jack is very much attached to his mother's rotted tooth, which he carries around and keeps track of unfailingly. He likes it especially because it is a part of Ma and it serves as protection. When he is lifted into the truck, Jack worries about tooth:

Are you there, Tooth? I can't feel you but you must be in my sock, at the side. You're a little bit of Ma, a little bit of Ma's dead spit riding along with me. (137)

Also teeth are a means to survive by giving nourishment and as weapon when in danger. Raja, the dog, bites Jack in an effort to protect Ajeet's baby. Ma tells Jack he can do anything to Old Nick, including biting. TV symbolically acts a teacher for Jack. Other than Ma, it is the only medium that instructs Jack and has made him such a powerful narrator. It has added to his overall development in a confined place like Room. Jack admires Dora, a character in his popular TV show, and loves to be her companion. He believes that Dora exists only for him, because she talks to him. Among her many thoughts and themes, Donoghue looks at Freud's stages of personality development as it relates to childhood and identity. The language of the novel is "appallingly weird", but it is endearing rather than tiresome. As Donoghue says, "I just choose a handful of classic five-year-old mistakes to use and then I gave Jack a lot of his own quirks. It's hard to find that line between being realistic about how a child would be and really irritating the reader." (Laura 1) Like the real room, Jack's language is limited and confined by extreme isolation. He is provided a very consistent routine and complete attention of his mother's tutelage. He is encouraged by both his Ma and his environment to develop his language skills and use his imagination. Readers may find him unusually verbal, but psychologists have found that around the age of five, the child's thoughts often outrun the child's language. When he repeats his conversation or observation, it comes through his mind's eye. First time readers do find language very odd, so it is a bit too tricky to decide on the details. Donoghue provides Jack with childish grammar mistakes like "brung, "I findned him", "I knowed." She is not thoughtful of the shocking details but instead wants to explore how human beings respond to extraordinary situations and to each other. Her use of Jack as narrator is undoubtedly to defamiliarize to an already unreal scenario.

The entire narratological complexity of the novel is resolved towards the end through Jack's perspective. The delineation of the oppressive environment prevailing within the Room evokes an "empathic concern" in the mind of the reader. In her perceptive book, *Empathy and the Novel*, Suzanne Keen defines empathy as, "a vicarious, spontaneous sharing of effect [that] can be provoked by witnessing another's emotions state, by hearing about another's conditions, or even by reading." (Keen 208) Narrative empathy being "other-directed" (Keen 208) enables the reader to feel what are supposedly the emotions of others. In Donoghue's *Room*, e.g., one feels at one with the emotions, feelings and experiences of Ma. Her situation is incredibly challenging. On the one hand, she has to create the make-believe world for the child to grow/evolve with, on the other; she has to cope with the physical and mental torture that she is subjected to by Old Nick. Despite these all, she copes remarkably well with her existential given, and emerges as a strong woman who may be devastated physically but whose spirit is indomitable. To conclude, child has been used as a peculiar device, unconventional ploy to unravel, 'unknot', simplify, and to unfold the complex narrative universe of this novel. Donoghue's narrativization through a child narrator effortlessly renders an oppressive and choking single room situation as an experience which metaphorically touches the readers' consciousness thereby transmuting it into an experience which demands tremendous rigour, attention and effort on the one hand and extraordinary tenderness and child's innocence on the other. In other words, the daunting task of building narratological complex novel has been ironically and interestingly juxtaposed with unscarred, pure and innocent vision of the child narrator.

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Bard of the Black: A Study of Select Poems of Gwendolyn Brooks

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Abstract: Gwendolyn Brooks is one of the major American Poets of the twentieth century. Her poems register her reactions to racism and are charged with the feelings of the suffering black community and reveal her quest for the emancipation of the black. She was the first black woman to receive Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1950s. Brooks celebrates womanhood and she never wanted her feminist approach to induce any hatred towards the natural duties of a woman.

Keywords: Gwendolyn Brooks, American Poetry, Feminism.

In May 1984, addressing a crowd of the Jefferson Lecture in Washington DC African American Poet Gwendolyn Brooks proclaimed openly... "Blackness is what I know best. I want to talk about it with definitive illustration, in this time..." Her experience as a black woman shaped her poetic aesthetics and influenced her choice of subjects. Hager remarks, "Among her triumphs was her steadfast fidelity to the community in which she lived, worked and taught. She found in the women, men, and children of America's black communities all that she needed to fill more than twenty books and to provide bountiful insight into lives everywhere." (2-3) Her poem "The Ballad of Rudolph Reed" portrays black white confrontation when a black family settles in a white residential area. Rudolph Reed, a black man is the head of the family. The whites throw stones at their house provoking them so that they will react and out if the area. On the third night the outrageous Reed barges out of the house to defend his family and self respect. In his act of defense he attacks four whites and is fatally wounded by them. The climax is gruesome for the white neighbors kick his corpse with a heartless expression "nigger." The end of the poem gives a powerful and touching picture of the whimpering wounded little child with the "oakened" mother doing nothing but removing the blood stained gauze. Similarly, Brooks' dream for a free life is expressed in the following two poems, "Saddie and Maud" and "A Song in the Front Yard". The poem "Saddie and Maud" portrays two different characters. It resembles Maugham's "The Ant and the Grasshopper". Saddie is lively, unconventional and does not bother about social restrictions. She bears a child even before marriage and her family is ashamed of her. But Maud who concentrates on her studies and lives a conventional, controlled life has a dull and lonely life. Here the poet seems to appreciate liveliness and warmth more than unnecessary rules which are not well meant. In other words, the poet always recommends a carefree emotional life rather than a life with too many stipulations. A life of suppression perhaps was the reason for this attitude of criticizing the moral codes of the society. Brooks

celebrates womanhood and she never wanted her feminist approach to induce any hatred towards the natural duties of a woman. Brooks like Alice Walker celebrates the womanhood and insists that the woman should draw from her own experiences and give expression to them truly and authentically. Even in expressing the feelings of a woman there is a celebration of womanhood. In fact, the “woman” gets unveiled in her poems. Through her poems, she gives vent to her strong inner feelings as a woman. For instance, in the poem “the mother” she depicts the self effacing helplessness of a mother in aborting her children which leaves an everlasting mark for the rest of her life. She uses the technique of dramatic monologue to probe into the feelings of a woman as a mother who is compelled to opt for abortions. The mother can never forget the abortions. She describes that this mother is different from the normal mothers. Yet not very different: “Hardly your crowned and praised and ‘customary’ Mother; but a Mother not unfamiliar, who decides that *she*, rather than her World, will kill her children. The decision is not nice, not simple, and the emotional consequences are neither nice nor simple.” (RPO 184 quoted in Melhem 23) The aborted children are the children the mother had conceived but not delivered. She, as a mother regrets the loss of love and affection that she could have showered on them, had they been allowed to be born. They were the damp little pulps of flesh with a little or no hair whom she could have reared as a mother feeding them, scuttling of the ghosts and feed them with a gobbling mother-eye. The mother in the woman imagines that “the voices of the wind” are nothing but the voices of her “dim killed children”. Celebrating motherhood is a common feature in any literature but here is a poet who penetrates into the very heart of a mother who had to abort for social reasons and compulsion. The mother renders her apologies to the unborn children. She denied them of their strives in the life, the aches, the games, the joys etc. She whines yet controls herself with the conviction that she need not whine for the other man’s crime. *Though why should I whine, / Whine that the crime was other than mine?* [SP] She was not deliberate even in her deliberateness. Her conception was true for they were born, had a body, but died without any giggle or plan or cry. There is no truth in saying that were never made because as a mother she knew and felt that they were made. But they were made to die before experiencing the world. The continuous conflict of emotions in the dark depth of her heart is brought to limelight through the expression,

Since anyhow, you are dead/ Or rather, or instead, / You were never made/ But that too, I am afraid / Is faulty; oh, what shall I say, how is/ Truth to be said? / You were born, you had body, you died/ It is just that you never giggled, or played or cried/ Believe me, I knew you, though faintly, and I loved, I/ Loved you... [SP]

The womanness in the mother is thus celebrated through the continuous flow of strong heartfelt feelings of a mother for the born yet unborn. The mother owns up the responsibility of her action and at the same time does not complain about the situation that caused her to make such a choice. Further she neither allows herself to forget the event. She speaks with the voice of a mother so as to establish the significance of being a woman. The choice of abortion is a painful one and a powerful one to