

*Closet Children: Growing Up in Confinement
in Twenty-First Century Memoirs and Fiction*



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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to examine cases and stories about children who grew up in confinement. I will explore the importance of attachment in the cases of children who grew up in captivity, and the socio-emotional aspects of what it means to be human, by analysing their narratives. Through our cultural obsession with these children, we must not forget the trauma they have endured and by listening to their voices we can better understand their trauma and possible ways to heal from it.

Firstly, I will be looking at some notable and historical cases of children who grew up in confinement. Through these cases, I explore some of the devastating effects a life of confinement can have on children, such as the trauma and developmental delay it causes. Next, I will analyze two memoirs by kidnap victims: *3,096 Days* (2010) by Natascha Kampusch and *A Stolen Life: A Memoir* (2011) by Jaycee Dugard. I will look at the healing effect of trauma narratives and investigate the fascination of readers with this genre. Lastly, I will analyze two novels about growing up in confinement, *Room* (2010) by Emma Donoghue and *The Boy from the Basement* (2006) by Susan Shaw, and explore the reading they can offer as works of fiction.

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to examine cases and stories about children who grew up in confinement. In some of the cases, the children were detained by their own family while in other instances their incarceration was the result of a kidnapping. However, in all cases, the children grew up in abusive situations, isolated from the outside world. Children who grew up in extreme confinement situations are often categorized in connection to stories of ‘feral children’. There are clearly problems with this link, as it entangles children who have suffered from imprisonment within a culture, to children who have apparently grown up outside human society. The connecting factor is the shared isolation that such children experience. However, this classification indicates a less than human status by comparing the children to animals. By analysing their narratives, I will explore the importance of attachment in the cases of children who grew up in captivity, and the socio-emotional aspects of what it means to be humans. Through our cultural obsession with these children, we must not forget the trauma they have endured and by listening to their voices we can better understand their trauma and possible ways to heal from it.

In Chapter 2, I will be looking at some notable and historical cases of children who grew up in confinement. The first case is that of Kaspar Hauser (1828-1832), the first well-documented case of a neglected child. The next one, the case of Genie (discovered by the authorities in 1970), might arguably be the most well-known instance. Lastly, I will discuss the Fritzl case (2008). This chapter showcases some of the devastating effects a life of confinement

can have on children, such as the trauma and developmental delay it causes. In Chapter 3, I will analyze two memoirs by kidnap victims Natascha Kampusch and Jaycee Lee Dugard. The memoirs *3,096 Days* (2010) and *A Stolen Life: A Memoir* (2011) reflect on the traumatic time spent in captivity, and the need they felt as children to connect with their captors for lack of any other options. I will explore some literary genres by means of which these memoirs can be categorized, such as misery memoir, captivity narrative, and trauma narrative. By taking a closer look at the conventions within these genres, as well as the popularity they have enjoyed in recent years, I try to understand the cultural fascination with the stories about a childhood spent in captivity. In Chapter 4, I will analyze two novels about growing up in confinement that feature child narrators. Both Emma Donoghue's novel *Room* (2010) and Susan Shaw's novel *The Boy from the Basement* (2006) focus not only on the child's time spent in captivity, but mainly on their life after their escape. While one protagonist had his mother by his side in captivity, the other one spent his time in solitude. By comparing these novels, we can see worked out in fiction the difference having an attachment figure in times of stress makes for the development of children. Therefore, it is necessary first of all to explain attachment theory, since it is of such central importance to my analysis.

1.2 Attachment Theory

According to the attachment theory, babies are born with an innate need to attach themselves to other people, to whom they can turn to in times of need. First developed by John Bowlby, this theory claims that a secure emotional attachment to at least one primary caregiver is critical for a child's personal development. This attachment provides children with the much-needed sense of security and stability they need in order to grow and develop cognitively and emotionally. The

determining factors for a child attaching itself to its caregiver are not so much food-related but are rather about the provision of security, affection, and responsiveness.

This premise is supported by Harry Harlow's infamous monkey experiment. Newborn chimps were separated from their mothers and put into a cage with a choice of two surrogate 'mothers'. The first choice was a steel frame holding a bottle of milk, the second choice was covered in a soft cloth but did not hold a bottle. Every single one of the babes chose to cling to the cloth surrogate and would only occasionally go to the other surrogate when they were hungry. This experiment supports the attachment theory's premise that security is of utmost importance in a child's development, even more so than the provision of food. The experiment reached another conclusion. Harlow discovered that these monkeys who were reared in isolation suffered emotional and social problems as they grew up. They never had the chance to form an attachment and, as a result, had problems interacting with other chimps and often grew aggressive.

This latter result can be observed in human children too. As well as providing security for the child to explore, the attachment relationship also provides the child a frame to develop their own internal working model: "a cognitive framework comprising mental representations for understanding the world, self and others" (Duchesne et al. 40). It provides the child with an important social and emotional framework to guide "how children process social information and informs their future attachment behaviors" (Duchesne et al. 40).

Michael Rutter makes a distinction between privation, failure to develop an attachment, and deprivation, the loss of or damage to an attachment. In his research on privation, Rutter found evidence of "anti-social behavior, affectionless psychopathy, and disorders of language, intellectual development and physical growth" (qtd. in McLeod). Next to the lack of an

attachment, Rutter attests these developments to factors such as “the lack of intellectual stimulation and social experiences which attachments normally provide” (qtd. in McLeod).

Likewise, David Howe has found that in cases of extreme neglect in which an attachment figure is absent:

The child is left without a relationship-based strategy to help him regulate his traumatic emotional arousal. This is extremely disturbing. Evidence is mounting that severe neglect places children at some of the greatest risks of long-term psychopathology. For a young, vulnerable infant, to feel totally abandoned is to feel in extreme danger. The self is alone and exposed. There is no safe place to go. There is no adult in sight. No one has you in mind. The experience can produce such high levels of emotional arousal, children eventually shut down psychologically and dissociate. (113)

Images of the disturbing consequences of emotional deprivation and the lack of attachment in infants can be seen in René Spitz’s sobering film *Psychogenic Disease in Infancy* (1952). This film documents the isolation and its consequences on infants in institutional care, showcasing the impact of emotional deprivation on a child’s development. Spitz went on to publish on this topic for many years and his work inspired major changes, especially in the childcare sections of institutes and homes.

NOTABLE CASES

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will be discussing three notable cases of children who grew up in confinement: Kaspar Hauser (1828), Genie (1970), and the Fritzl children (2008). Kaspar Hauser is the first well-documented case of a neglected child suffering from extreme isolation through confinement. The mysteries of his life and death ensured that he would not be forgotten in literature and science. His infamy led to his name being lend to a syndrome of physical and mental growth retardation induced by isolation, abuse, and neglect in childhood: the Kaspar Hauser Syndrome. Genie's case has to be the most documented instance, with countless experiments detailing her life and progress. Scientists from all over the United States were involved in her treatment plan. And the latest case, that of Elisabeth and her seven children was so horrifying, it made the headlines all over the world. However, whereas there is plenty of documentation to be found on Hauser and Genie, in the Fritzl case not much information was released about the children. As much as possible, they try to keep the family private in order for the children to lead a normal life now that they are freed. These three cases show some of the devastating effects a life of confinement can have on children, and also how the world reacts to the news of these catastrophic events happening right in our midst.

2.2 Kaspar Hauser

The best known historical case of a confined child has to be that of Kaspar Hauser, nicknamed The Child of Europe. The plight of Hauser became known on May 26 1828, when he suddenly appeared at the city of Nuremberg. He carried an envelope with which contained two letters

which identified the boy as Kaspar Hauser born on 30 April 1812 (meaning he was sixteen at the time of his discovery).

Hauser only knew a couple of stock phrases, such as “*Ae sechtene mocht ih waehn, wie mei votta waehn is*” (I would like to bush a one as my father is), “*woas nit*” (dunno), “*Reuta wahn, wie mei Votta wahn is*” (I want to be a rider like my father is), and “*Ross*” (horse), which he repeated in an meaningless fashion (Feuerbach 4, Simon 56, Newton 130-1). Unable to gain any more information from him, the boy was detained as a vagabond in Vestner Tower. One of the soldiers on guard in the Vestner Tower gifted Hauser with a wooden horse. The boy’s was so visibly delighted with this gift that several other wooden horses were given to him the next day. Over the next few days of detainment, Hauser spent every hour of the day seated on the floor playing with his horses, without paying attention to anything or anyone around him. It was later ascertained that this had been one of his pastimes while living in solitary confinement. Kaspar’s behaviour suggests that for lack of a human attachment possibility, he instead attached himself to an inanimate object. Just as birds can imprint on inanimate objects, as Konrad Lorenz has proven in his experiments with geese, Kaspar might have attached himself to the only other thing available to him: that is, his wooden horse (Hess 81-90).

Soon they realized the futility of interrogating of Hauser. Since he seemed to be an abandoned and neglected child, the boy was released from his cell and taken into the prison superintendent Hiltel’s lodgings for the next six weeks. Hiltel’s eleven-year-old son Julius became Hauser’s tutor for the duration of his stay. He taught Hauser to speak and within one month Hauser had acquired enough speech to express, to some degree, his thoughts and previous experiences. The Burgomaster of Nuremberg, Herr Binder, took over Hauser’s case and he gradually uncovered the boy’s extraordinary tale. Hauser had been locked away completely

alone in a barely lit dungeon for thirteen years. His most basic needs, such as shelter and food, were being met but he could barely move, had no contact with any people, and barely any sensory stimulation. Later, in his memoir, he described his prison as follows: “there was nothing in it [the dungeon] but the straw where I lay and sat, and the two horses, a dog, and a woollen blanket. And in the ground next to me was a round hole where I could relieve myself, and a pitcher of water; other than that there was nothing not even a stove” (qtd. in Newton 135). Hauser knew nothing about the first three years of his life before his confinement. Nor could he explain his sudden release. “I did not know what was an hour, or a day, or a week. I was always in a good mood and content, because nothing ever hurt me” (qtd. in Newton 136). Oblivious but content he spent his childhood in confinement.

Hauser’s innocence and naivety meant that he required protection which he found in three mentors: Georg Friedrich Daumer, a young teacher and amateur psychologist; Paul Johann Anselm von Feuerbach, one of the greatest lawyers of Germany; and Philip Henry, the earl of Stanhope. The first few weeks of his re-entrance into the world, Hauser seemed to have no response towards people and objects, meeting them with blankness. According to von Feuerbach, Hauser “appeared neither to know nor suspect where he was. He betrayed neither fear, nor astonishment, nor confusion; he rather showed an almost animal-like dullness, which either leaves external objects entirely unnoticed, or stares at them without thought” (qtd. in Simon 56). Hauser developed this dullness as a result of his neglect. As David Howe explains, neglect “starves the developing mind of stimulation. It denies the child information and interest about the self and others. In some cases ‘neglect slowly and persistently eats away at children’s spirits until they have little will to connect with others or explore the world’” (111). However, Hauser’s blankness soon gave way to a delighted interest in new sensations and experiences. During

Hauser's first months in Nuremberg, Daumer and others discovered through experiments that some of his senses (such as night-vision, hearing, and smell) were exceptionally sharp. However, some other abilities seemed seriously damaged: he could not distinguish foreground from background, or animate and inanimate.

Under the tutelage of Daumer, by February 1829 Hauser was able to write in the style of a beginner learning German. He recorded some of his story in a memoir (pieces of it are repeated in *Kaspar Hauser: Augenzeugenberichte und Selbstzeugnisse* by Hermann Pies, 1925:187-212). After the existence of a written account was reported in the newspaper, there was an attempt made on his life in 17 October 1829. The second attempt on his life on 14 December 1833 proved fatal.

2.2.1 Kaspar Hauser Syndrome

When Kaspar Hauser first appeared in Nuremberg, he was 4 feet 9 inches tall. He had spent most of his childhood in confinement: he could not move around much, had no contact with other people and barely any sensory stimulation. As a result, Hauser could barely say a few words whose meaning he did not understand, and he had trouble walking. He had sharpened senses resulting in a sensitivity to daylight and an aversion to loud sounds and crowds. A few weeks after Hauser's appearance, the mayor of Nuremberg declared in a proclamation that "the boy's strange behaviour 'provided no reason to assume that it was occasioned by idiocy or dissimulation, but rather led one to believe that this young man, from childhood, had been deprived of all human society and kept prisoner, isolated in an animallike state in the most inhuman manner'" (Benzaquen 442). Hauser's condition was the result of a horrible crime.

The Kaspar Hauser Syndrome - also known as reversible hyposomatotropism or psychosocial dwarfism - is the physical effect of protracted deprivation (neglect and abuse) and confinement that stunts children's growth. In his book *The Kaspar Hauser Syndrome of "Psychosocial Dwarfism"* (1992) John Money, a medical psychologist and pediatrician, showcases decisive evidence of how "isolation, abuse, and neglect in childhood might induce a syndrome of overall physical and mental growth retardation, following which catch up growth would be at best only partial and incomplete" (19). "Concomitant with growth impairment, pituitary growth hormone (somatotropin) secretion is suppressed. Both deficits are reversed on change of domicile" (Money, *Traumatic*, 252). The syndrome is thus a result of the lack of an emotional connection and can be (partially) reversed when the child enters a new environment and attaches itself to the new caregiver.

The importance of an emotional connection for children's growth has also been observed right after WWII in two German orphanages, nicknamed "Bienenhaus" and "Vogelnest". These orphanages were run by Fraulein "Grun", Fraulein "Weiss", and Fraulein "Schwarz". For a year, Doctor E.M. Widdowson and his team tracked the heights and weights of all the children. The rations for the children at Vogelnest were supplemented with extra bread, in the hopes to get a direct comparison of the growth-rate of the children with and without the additional bread. However, the children's growth curve did not evolve as they expected, and soon they came to the conclusion that "[t]here was clearly some other factor at work which was more than counteracting the beneficial effect of the additional food we supplied" (Widdowson 1317). Based on the attachment theory and Kaspar Hauser syndrome, it is not surprising that the growth rates coincided with the care and transferrals of the caregivers. Grun and Weiss were genuinely fond

of the children and the children of them. Schwarz, however, had a different temperament.

Widdowson describes her as follows:

She was older, rather stern and forbidding, and she ruled the home with a rod of iron. Children and staff lived in constant fear of her reprimands and criticisms, which sometimes seemed quite unreasonable. [...] Fraulein Schwarz had her favourites, however, and when she was transferred from one home to the other she persuaded the authorities to allow her to take these eight children with her. These children could do no wrong and they were always assured of praise rather than blame. (1317)

When the children were under Grun and Weiss's care, they would flourish even without the additional bread. With the exception of her favourites, the children under Schwarz's care would barely gain any weight even if they had bigger rations. Widdowson came to the conclusion that "psychological stresses due to harsh and unsympathetic handling may seriously curtail growth-rates" (1318). As noted before, all this provides further evidence that security and affection is even more important than food for a child's development.

2.3 Genie

When the family aid center first discovered Genie in November 1970, the girl was so small at only four and a half feet and barely sixty pounds, that they thought her to be about eight-years-old. However, this fragile looking girl had already reached the age of thirteen before anyone found out about her atrocious upbringing.

Genie lived in Temple City, Los Angeles, for nearly twelve years confined to a little room. During the day she would be tied to a potty chair, forced into a harness, to sit there naked.

This treatment left a calloused ring on her buttocks still visible weeks after her admission into the hospital. At night, if she was not forgotten, Genie would be restrained in a modified sleeping bag which again left her unable to move. She was then put into a crib covered with wire mesh. In the PBS documentary about Genie, the social isolation expert Jay Shurley tries to convey the horridness of her reality: “Solitary confinement is, diabolically, the most severe punishment, and in my experience, really quite dramatic symptoms develop in as little as fifteen minutes to an hour, and certainly inside of two or three days. And try to expand this to ten years boggles one's mind”.

Her room was at the back of the little house where barely any sounds reached her, hearing no voices save for some swearing from her father in moments of anger. There was barely any visual or tactile stimulation for the girl either. The room was sparsely furnished: the only furniture were the potty seat and crib, and there was no carpet on the floor nor pictures on the walls. The two windows were covered up for but a few inches at the top where the sky was visible. Sometimes she was given a magazine that her father edited by ripping out any potentially erotic images. Other times she was allowed to ‘play’ with a pair of plastic raincoats or things such as an empty cottage cheese packet. Her diet was equally limited: baby food, cereal, and occasionally a soft-boiled egg. To keep contact to a minimum, she was fed hurriedly by shoving the food in her mouth. If she choked, she would have her face rubbed in it.

If Genie made noises, her father would beat her with a large piece of wood. She learned to suppress all vocalization. But sometimes, in her desperation and hunger, she would use her body or some objects to make noise. This would swiftly be punished too. Her father never spoke a word to her. Instead, he growled or barked, sometimes even through the door to frighten the

girl. He would bare his teeth at her, and scratch her with his long nails. He taught her brother this dog-like behaviour too. Her mother was going blind and was frightened of her husband.

As a result of this treatment, the thirteen-year-old was severely malnourished, and wearing diapers for her incontinence. She never learnt the most basic life skills, such as chewing. Having spent her days naked, she did not react to temperature, heat or cold. Her limbs and muscles were partially atrophied owing to the physical restraints and inadequate activity. She stood stooped, bent at the waist, with her shoulders hunched forward with her hands held up before her. She had become nearsighted, only able to see ten feet in front of her: the exact distance from her potty chair to the door. She barely learned to talk outside the two phrases '*stopit*' and '*nomore*' (Curtiss 13). Having been beaten for making noise, she would be silent even in the face of frenzied emotions: frustration, fear, sadness; all would occur in silence.

Genie's plight became known to the world accidentally. When Genie was 13, her mother Irene finally succeeded in getting her husband to telephone her parents after a terrible argument. She took Genie, and at long last they left the abusive home. Three weeks later, in November 1970, Irene took her daughter with her to the local welfare centre in search for the department giving aid to the blind. But by mistake, the duo wandered into a family aid centre. When the people at the centre spotted Genie, they were immediately concerned and questioned the mother. The inconceivable answers they got were enough to immediately call the police who took Genie into custody and charge both her parents for "wilful abuse".

Genie was admitted into the children's hospital of Los Angeles for extreme malnutrition. Soon a team was assembled, led by Head of Psychiatry Dr Howard Hansen, to work on this extraordinary case. The rest of the team consisted of David Rigler, a psychologist who began to work out a research plan; James Kent, an expert in child abuse who became Genie's therapist;

Jay Shurley, an expert on social isolation; and as a later addition Susan Curtiss, a linguist who studied Genie's language. In the hospital they provided the girl with the pseudonym Genie, "to protect her privacy, chosen because it captures, to a small measure, the fact that she emerged into human society past childhood, having existed previously as something other than fully human" (Curtiss xiii).

The discovery of Genie made the news everywhere, and soon captured the interests of scientists all over the country. Her newly acquired celebrity status sparked the much-debated issue of how to handle her case. James Kent believed that Genie could get better if she would form relationships, "I thought as long as she had the capacity to form attachments, she had the capacity to learn, she had the capacity to get better" (*Wild Child*). His plan was the first to be implemented. In Russ Rymer's book on the case, David. A Freedman, a professor of psychiatry, agrees with Kent's insistence on the importance for Genie to form attachments:

The question becomes how to go about inducing in this child the ability to be aware of both herself and others and feel an interest in and need for others. My prejudices say that if this goal can be achieved she stands a chance of leading a relatively normal life ... to achieve this goal it will be necessary for Genie to establish a particularly close relation with some one person whose care for her will include the provision of a good deal of body pleasure. I'm referring to something analogous to what any good mother automatically and unconsciously provides her infant as she bathes, feeds, and diapers it. [...]

Without the creation of such an attachment, and all it implies with regard to Genie's need to attempt to maintain it, I doubt whether she will have the equipment to integrate whatever skills she develops. ... She should be, in my

view, bathed, clothed, toileted, massaged, kissed, cuddled, and fondled all by one person. Other people should be available but in a distinctly secondary role. Out of such an intense relation should grow both an awareness of herself and of whoever it is who is caring for her. Such an awareness, to reiterate, seems to me to be the necessary first step in her education. (60-1)

Forming secure attachments would have been arguably the most beneficial treatment for Genie's development. However, her treatment veered into a different direction. Genie's admittance at the Children's Hospital coincided with the screening of François Truffaut's *The Wild Child (L'Enfant sauvage)* (1969)). This film about Victor of Aveyron and Dr. Jean Marc Gaspard Itard explored the story of a historically documented wild child trying to be taught language in order to be integrated into society. The team in charge of Genie watched the film collectively. The film left its mark on Genie's case. As Benzaquen describes it, "Because the scientists construed Genie as a wild child, hence singularly valuable and precious, in her case research was given primacy over all other considerations" (427). Furthermore, Victor's story had a heroic educator, a role which in Genie's case was still uncast. Curtiss describes Genie as "another adolescent who affords us equally rich opportunities for study has been discovered in our own time: Genie" (xii). Benzaquen notes that "[h]istory appeared to be repeating itself, to the scientists' great fortune. Victor had made Itard famous; what professional and personal rewards would Genie not have in store for whoever was there, ready to grab them?" (429).

The National Institute of Mental Health agreed to fund a scientific project on Genie. To the conference consultants from all over the country were invited to help the team decide which direction to take the research. After many debates, they decided to specifically study Genie's language progress. Susan Curtiss, a postgraduate student from UCLA researching childhood

language acquisition, began working with her. The main aim was to research the critical period hypothesis, the theory that the ability to acquire language is biologically linked to age. However, Genie's ability to learn language has wider implications. Language is a form of self-expression; it requires a sense of one's place in the world and relatedness to others. For language to develop you need a rich verbal environment. But Genie's childhood had been deprived, and any attempts to articulate herself led to beatings. For Genie to learn language, she would have to discover confidence in herself and others.

After a couple of months living in the hospital, the team decided that it might be more beneficial for Genie to live in a family home, with a foster family who could provide a more focused and constant care. Her first home was with Jean Butler, her special education teacher. Butler applied to officially be Genie's foster-mother in 1971, but her application was denied. Shortly thereafter, Genie moved in with David Rigler and his family. Rigler took on the role of Genie's therapist, foster parent, and chief scientific experimenter all in one. For four years, she lived with the Rigler's, who truly cared for her and showed immense sympathy. But in the autumn of 1974, their financial aid did not get renewed, and the family was exhausted. Their foster-care was terminated in 1975.

The year 1975 is when Genie turned eighteen and her guardianship reverted back to her mother. However, Irene could not cope with the girl and she was transferred from one home after another for the next several years. Some of them were unsympathetic or even abusive. In her next foster home, Genie was severely punished for vomiting. This experience traumatized her so that she never opened her mouth again. Eventually, she ended up in an adult care home. Through the uncaring treatment, Genie's development regressed severely, reverting back to her original silent state.

The unbearable tragedy of Genie's story lies not only in her confined and deprived childhood but also what happened after her purported rescue. Jay Shurley realized that they needed to focus on the socio-emotional aspects, to form attachments. In his own words, during the conference "[m]y pitch was - and some others agreed - that the interests of the girl, in terms of therapy, would have to be uppermost, and that anything we might learn from her should be a secondary consideration, and should be done within the context of her therapy ... Other said that this was too great a scientific opportunity - that research had to be primary" (qtd. in Rymer 58). Regretfully, in the end, testing overshadowed her treatment. The scientists focussed on her pedagogical development which meant that her social and emotional development were not a priority.

2.4 The Fritzl Case

This following case is so horrific that when the news first broke in Austria in April 2008, it made headlines all over the world. Josef Fritzl incarcerated his daughter in his basement for twenty-four years and fathered seven children with her. Elisabeth became imprisoned on 29 August 1984 in her hometown Amstetten. Her father led her to the basement and proceeded to render her unconscious with a chloroform-soaked cloth. Even more shocking must have been to find out that her confinement was planned; Fritzl had prepared for her arrival. Besides the bed, there was a television, washbasin, toilet, and electric stove installed. In fact, Fritzl had been preparing for her arrival for five years when he started building his basement in 1978.

Elisabeth became imprisoned a few weeks after she turned eighteen. Fritzl explained to the authorities that she ran away to join a cult. His statement was never questioned. In the basement the sexual abuse continued, twice a day every day, resulting in seven children.

Elisabeth first became pregnant in 1986 at age twenty, but in her tenth week of pregnancy she miscarries. On 30 August 1988 her oldest daughter Kerstin is born; then comes Stefan in February 1990, Lisa in August 1992, Monika in February 1994, twins Alexander and Michael in April 1996, and Felix in December 2003. Some of these children were more fortunate than others, getting to live aboveground in light with Fritzl, the others in the cellar became ill and, as a result, one of them did not survive. The middle children - Lisa, Monika, and Alexander - became Fritzl foster kids who got to live a relatively normal life with their grandmother 'upstairs'. Kerstin, Stefan, and Felix never saw any daylight until they were freed in 2008. Little Michael passed away three days after birth when Fritzl refused to get him medical treatment.

The windowless basement was a dimly lit and dank place without ventilation, making condensation and mold a big problem. At times, food was so scarce that all they had to eat was stale bread, and Elisabeth would have to chew it up with water to feed it to her babies. In 1993, Fritzl decided to expand the cellar to accommodate the birth of his children. There was no doubt in his mind that other children would be born in the basement. New rooms were added, a shower, and finally warm running water. Elisabeth and Kerstin were thrilled with the extra space, but little Stefan was terrified. At first nobody could persuade him to enter the new rooms. All this new space was overwhelming for this three-year-old whose entire world up until then had been contained within the same four walls.

The children in the basement and Elisabeth herself were constantly ill, yet Fritzl would only provide them with aspirin and cough medicine. Elisabeth would try to provide as much structure and a semblance of family life as she could. The day would start at 6 A.M. with breakfast, a wash, and then lessons. Elisabeth would teach the kids with the help of books,

newspapers, and the television. With the most basic ingredients, she would conjure up a meal three times a day.

In Fritzl the desire to fuse his two families began to grow. He talked to Elisabeth about taking them to live upstairs. However, around the middle of March 2008, nineteen-year-old Kerstin had become life-threateningly ill. By the beginning of April, she began to suffer epileptic fits. Elisabeth convinced her father that now was the time for her 'return from the cult'. Fritzl and Elisabeth took Kerstin upstairs to a bed, whereupon Fritzl called emergency services. The ambulance rushed her to the hospital. Upon arrival, they immediately induced an artificial coma; Kerstin was suffering from multiple organ failure. Dr. Albert Reiter realised something was wrong and alerted the police. One week after Kerstin was hospitalized, Elisabeth had 'returned' and come to visit her daughter. She was apprehended on her way toward the hospital's exit and the truth of the case finally emerged.

The Austrian authorities charged Fritzl with coercion, incest, rape, enslavement, and murder by neglect. As for Elisabeth and her children, doctors helped the two families integrate at a special clinic they resided at for several weeks. The family is now trying to build up a new life under anonymity.

MEMOIRS

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we explored some of the horrifying cases from the perspective of an observer. Now, with the help of captivity narratives, we will explore the trauma of growing up in solitary confinement from an insider's perspective. This chapter will take a closer look at two memoirs written by kidnapping victims: Natascha Kampusch's *3,096 Days* (2010) and Jaycee Lee Dugard's *A Stolen Life: A Memoir* (2011). With some exceptions, literary criticism of autobiographical works has only been a serious upcoming genre in the literary field for the past few decades. As James Olney states, much of the early criticism focused on the question of 'autos', "how the act of autobiography is at once a discovery, a creation, and an imitation of the self" (19). Since life-writings such as autobiographies and memoirs are "a self-reflexive, a self-critical act [...] the criticism of autobiography exists *within* the literature instead of alongside it. The autobiographer can discuss and analyze the autobiographical act as he performs it" (Olney 25). This is one of the reasons Olney gives for the delay of a body of critical literature on autobiographical works. My analysis of the two memoirs will be twofold: firstly I will focus on the details of the cases themselves, secondly I will pay attention to the self-reflective notions of the women and the trauma they have endured as captives.

3.2 Natascha Kampusch

Part of the reason why the aforementioned Fritzl Case garnered so much attention was the discovery of another girl in Austria, just two years earlier, in a strikingly similar case. The girl, eighteen-year-old Natascha Kampusch, escaped on 23 August 2006 from her abductor who had

imprisoned her since the age of ten and forced her to live in his self-built cellar. Natascha went missing on 2 March 1998, kidnapped by Wolfgang Priklopil. He held her captive in his home in Strasshof - a commuter town thirty minutes from Natascha's hometown, Vienna's Donaustadt. Priklopil confined Natascha in the cellar: a room of 2.70 by 1.80 metres, bare save for a pallet bed, toilet, and sink.

In her memoir *3,096 Days*, Natascha intermittently reflects on the situation and her behaviour while kidnapped and after her escape. These sections are indicated by signal words such as 'today' and 'as an adult'. In these therapeutic reflections, Natascha analyses her own actions as a child after the events and with an adult understanding. As George Howard et al. note "life stories have always been a staple of psychological practice. For example, therapy usually begins with an invitation to a client to tell his or her story" (398). Memoirs are often stories told as therapy, a result of the agreement on the positive potential of sharing one's story. As Alistair Thomson explains, a "post-Freudian acceptance that talking about one's life could have positive, therapeutic benefits has encouraged remembering for recognition and reconciliation" (59).

With the advancements in trauma theory, the recognition of the therapeutic benefits of sharing one's narrative has only increased. Trauma narratives are often shared in an attempt to find closure and resolution, or at least understanding. Cathy Caruth considers the best treatment for trauma to be the development of a narrative of the traumatic event since "trauma [...] requires integration, both for the sake of testimony and for the sake of cure" (153). There can be no 'cure' for the trauma, however, the integration of the narrative of the trauma can cure the dissonances of traumatic memory. These dissonances of traumatic memory will be discussed in further detail in the discussion on *A Stolen Life*.

As Lucy Robinson states, the retelling of traumatic life stories indicates the possibility of recovery and reconciliation: “the relationship between retelling and recovery and suggests that the telling and publication of [...] stories might help to externalise the experience, rendering it less traumatic” (569). The therapeutic effects of writing a memoir about one’s trauma are clear, however, that does not explain the recent boom in publishing such accounts. These kind of memoirs are often referred to as ‘misery memoirs’: that is, “An autobiographical work in which the author recounts personal experiences of abuse or other trauma, typically suffered during childhood, and their eventual recovery from such experiences” (Oxford Dictionary). Even the publishing industry was taken by surprise at the popularity of the misery memoir. Joel Rickett, deputy editor of the *Bookseller* (a publishing trade magazine), comments: “It’s quite rare to see a genre come out of almost nowhere and to establish itself as core stock, part of any bookshop or book display. But the numbers these are selling are phenomenal. From a publishing perspective there is no let-up in consumer demand” (qtd. in Addley). Kerry Sharp, commissioning editor at Simon & Schuster, adds: “There is a fascination for the extremes of experience and there always has been [...] ‘It’s not a publisher’s position to philosophise about why it is fascinating. Real people’s real life stories just are.’” (qtd. in Flood).

This memoir enables Natascha to represent herself and how she has come to understand the experience. She describes how she coped for all those years and how on the first night there was a decisive moment for her survival: “I accepted what had happened and, instead of railing against my new situation with desperation and indignation, I acquiesced” (Chapter 1). In a self-analysis, she recounts how her mind withdrew in itself by regressing psychologically to a four or five-year-old’s state of mind. Through this coping-mechanism, she could accept her new world as a given. That first night she even asked Priklopil to perform her usual nighttime ritual of a

story and a goodnight kiss. Children crave routine, and in this situation where everything was different and terrifying, she clung to something familiar.

Humans are social creatures and children need an attachment figure. In Natascha's case, Priklopil was not only her sole provider for sustenance but also her only companion. "Nobody in the world outside would believe that an abduction victim would do anything to make her kidnapper play Parcheesi," Natascha declares in her memoir. However, this is a very understandable reaction from a socio-emotional viewpoint. As she continues, "I was a child and alone, and there was only one person who could relieve this oppressive loneliness" (Chapter 3). After a few months of solitary confinement, there was another human need that craved to be sated: touch. Natascha asked Priklopil to embrace her, her first physical contact in months.

In a ploy to make Natascha more submissive, Priklopil soon changed his story from an ordered kidnapping to kidnapping for ransom money. He led Natascha to believe that her parents had no interest in freeing her because they did not love her: "He systematically undermined my belief in my family, and with it an important pillar of my already tattered self-esteem" (Chapter 3). That Easter Sunday, 12 April 1998, Priklopil told Natascha that he had given up hope on ransoming her, followed by what she calls a "life sentence": the proclamation that he could never let her go since she has seen his face (Chapter 3). A year later she even had to assume a new name, thereby losing her own identity. From then on she would be known as Bibiane.

Natascha's confinement went beyond her physical imprisonment of being locked in a cellar behind a cement enforced door by a physically superior person. She was also prevented from attempting escape by her own psychological prison. Priklopil had taken her freedom, her family, and her identity. Starting from age fifteen, Priklopil even allowed Natascha to occasionally step outside of the house for short periods of time, "But that was at a time when my

captivity had become a fixed component of my ‘self’ [...] He knew that by then my inner prison had grown such high walls that I would not seize the opportunity to escape” (Chapter 5). He taunted her to run on several occasions, shoving her naked body outside, but to Natascha the outside world had become a threatening place.

Priklopil allowed Natascha to leave the cellar once she entered puberty, but she was forced to play the dutiful housewife. He watched her constantly, and she had to perform tasks around the house under his strict supervision. Then the physical and verbal abuse began. Priklopil would later admit that he always wanted to have a slave. On the one hand Priklopil wanted to dominate Natascha, yet, he also craved love and approval. He abducted her as a child in order to shape her to fit his fantasy of the ideal family, “in the end, he really only wanted two things from me: approval and affection. As if his objective behind all the cruelty was to force a person to love him absolutely” (Chapter 7).

Natascha has never detailed any sexual abuse she might have undergone, wanting to preserve that last remains of privacy. In her memoir, the only time she refers to it is in Chapter 7: “When I turned fourteen, I spent the night above ground for the first time in years [...] he subjected me to minor sexual assaults [...] But when he manacled me to him on those nights I had to spend upstairs, it wasn’t about sex. The man who beat me, locked me in the cellar and starved me, wanted to cuddle”. The film *3096 Days*, produced with Natascha’s consent, implies that nighttime events did not stay with cuddling but often progressed to rape. Of course, this could possibly just be scripted sensationalism for the benefit of the film. But that summer Natascha tried to commit suicide for the first time.

Natascha had never shown any sign of wanting to attempt escape, so Priklopil gradually began to integrate her into his life. Shortly before her eighteenth birthday he even took her on a

ski-trip. On this trip, Natascha tried to reach out to someone for help for the first time. In the bathroom, she was separated from her tormentor for a few precious seconds and she tried to appeal to a woman for help. However, the woman she addressed was a tourist and, unfortunately, did not understand her plea. After this event, Natascha realized she had to escape on her own. An opportunity presented itself shortly after she turned eighteen when she was performing the routine task of vacuuming the car. When Priklopil got a phone call, he stepped away from the noise and left Natascha on her own. Taking this chance, she finally escaped from her eight-year-long confinement.

3.2.1 Stockholm Syndrome

Apart from confronting the experience, the memoir allows Natascha to challenge her readers into understanding the situation, her actions, and her mental state. After her escape, the media went wild with speculations and immediately started to victimize her. When, instead, she asserted herself as an intelligent and strong woman, the public did not understand it and they soon turned against her. Natascha felt misunderstood, and in order to correct the misleading image the media painted of her, she wanted to write the memoir as an explanation and to take her integration back into society into her own hands.

Some may find the memoir to be an uncomfortable read because it attempts to humanize Priklopil and to portray him multi-dimensionally, just as Natascha saw him:

Nothing is all black or all white. And nobody is all good or all evil. That also goes for the kidnapper. These are words that people don't like to hear from an abduction victim. Because the clearly defined concept of good and evil is turned on its head, a concept that people are all too willing to accept so as not to lose

their way in a world full of shades of grey. When I talk about it, I can see the confusion and rejection in the faces of many who were not there. The empathy they felt for my fate freezes and is turned to denial. People who have no insight into the complexities of imprisonment deny me the ability to judge my own experiences by pronouncing two words: Stockholm Syndrome. (Chapter 7)

Natascha decidedly rejects this diagnosis, interpreting the label as a method to re-victimize victims “by taking from them the power to interpret their own story – and by turning the most significant experiences from their story into the product of a syndrome” (Chapter 7). However, the situations that Natascha describes in order to vehemently deny the diagnoses correspond exactly to the symptoms that define Stockholm Syndrome.

Shirley Jullich describes how Classic Stockholm Syndrome relating to hostages has been expanded to an overarching theory by D.L.R Graham, a theory now commonly referred to as Graham’s Stockholm Syndrome Theory, an universal theory of chronic interpersonal abuse. Or as Graham explains and subtitles her theory: bonding to an abuser/captor as a survival strategy (Graham 30). She reviewed the literature and found that bonding occurs in victimized groups such as cult members, incest victims, and most interesting to us physically and/or emotionally abused children and battered women. Graham’s theory claims that emotional bonding can occur between a victim and an offender when the following four conditions co-exist: (1) perceived threat to survival and the belief that one’s captor is willing to carry out that threat; (2) the captive’s perception of some small kindness from the captor within a context of terror; (3) isolation from perspectives other than those of the captor; (4) perceived inability to escape (Graham 33). In Natascha’s memoir, all four elements can be found.

The first element, a perceived threat to survival, is evident in Natascha's recounting of the multitude of abduction and rape cases before she was taken: "To my recollection, hardly a month went by during my primary school years that the media didn't report yet another abducted, raped or murdered girl ... The psychologists interviewed on TV advised us back then not to resist the attackers so as not to risk being killed" (Chapter 1). This advice equated to Priklopil's own claims: "'If you cooperate, nothing will happen to you.' The kidnapper had inculcated that belief into me from the very beginning, threatening me with the worst kinds of punishment, including death, if I resisted him" (Chapter 5).

The second element is perceived kindness, with the keyword being 'perceived', because a person whose survival is threatened perceives kindness differently. As Graham explains, "a small kindness - one that likely would not be noticed under conditions of safety - appears huge under conditions of threat and/or debilitation" (35). For example, the cessation of violence can be perceived as a kindness, or after deprivation even the allowance of some of the most basic needs can make the victims perceive their torturers as kind. Similarly, Natascha recounts that she "was immeasurably grateful to the kidnapper back then for such small pleasures, like the sunbathing or swimming in the neighbours' pool [...] there were small, humane moments during my time in captivity [...] Those moments were there and I treasured them" (Chapter 7).

The third element, isolation, was in Natascha's case strongly present. She was not allowed to leave the house, leaving Priklopil as her only social contact. In Chapter 4, Natascha focuses on the effects of solitary confinement, sensory deprivation, and isolation by referring to some studies in order to highlight her own experience in comparison.

The fourth element, perceived inability to escape, has already been briefly discussed above. Natascha's psychological imprisonment bound her to Priklopil even when she was able to

leave the house. In her memoir, Natascha recounts a handful of occasions towards the end of her imprisonment where they left the house and were amongst people. She describes how on these outings she did not feel liberated but instead was paralysed with fear. Priklopil took her to a DIY store, where she “wobbled through the corridors and saw people everywhere. But I was no longer one of them. ... After that experience I knew that I was unable to ask for help. What did the people outside know about the abstruse world I was trapped in?” (Chapter 9). On another occasion their car got stopped in a stop-and-search operation by the police and again Natascha did not speak up. Now she realizes that one comment would have been enough to escape, but instead she cowered in her seat.

Even though Natascha finally did take the initiative and managed to escape, in an interview with BBC Radio she reveals that she feels a kind of guilt for Priklopil’s suicide, “I knew that if I didn’t try and escape, he would kill me sooner or later. And I knew that if I tried to escape, he would kill himself ... I know that I’m not to blame but I still don’t feel comfortable about the fact I triggered it [his death]”. Julich explains how children can remain curiously loyal to their offenders well into their adulthood because of their dependency on the offender and their own lack of power: “Unlike adult victims of kidnapping or other abuse, who might retain pre-existing undamaged sense of self, children are in the process of developing their sense of self” (120-1).

Although Natascha rejects the label Stockholm syndrome, her reactions to and behaviour under the duress of her situation are understandable and typical developments. This is where the complex issue of ‘autobiographical truth’ becomes relevant. As Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson explain, “when one is both the narrator and the protagonist of the narrative, as in life writing, the truth of the narrative becomes undecidable; it can be neither fully verified nor fully discredited.

We need, then, to adjust our expectations of the truth told in self-referential writing” (15-16).

Paul John Eakin makes the similar claim that “autobiographical truth is not fixed but an evolving content in an intricate process of self-discovery and self-creation” (3). For the act of remembering involves a process of reinterpretation of the past in the present by actively giving meaning to the memory (Smith and Watson 22).

3.3 Jaycee Dugard

As well as the therapeutic effects of writing one’s life story, the memoir can also be a testament of survival and triumph. The fact that the work exists demonstrates mastery and coming to terms with the trauma. As Maureen O’Conner notes, giving voice to the event is strengthening for the writer (516). Many writers want to give meaning to their struggle and for someone else to benefit from reading their story. This is also the case for Jaycee Dugard’s *A Stolen Life: A Memoir*. In the Introduction, Jaycee lists two reasons for writing the memoir. The first one is to take back her power by telling her story and no longer keeping the kidnapper’s secret. Even though Phillip Garrido does not believe himself to be responsible for his actions, Jaycee asserts that he most certainly is responsible for stealing her life. The second reason she gives for writing her story is to open up the discussion in hopes of helping someone else. She hopes to inspire people to speak up. And to show that “you can endure tough situations and survive. Not just survive, but be okay even on the inside, too” (.....).

Jaycee’s nightmare began on the morning of 10 June 1991 in Tahoe California. While she was walking to school, Garrido used a stun gun on her. He then proceeded to carry her into the back of his van while his wife Nancy helped subdue the girl. For eighteen years Jaycee was held

captive by the pedophile in his backyard. He raped her repeatedly, sometimes even for days at a time in what he called ‘runs’, resulting in two daughters.

These kidnapping memoirs by Natascha and Jaycee, and the novels discussed in the next chapter, can be categorized as captivity narratives. However, the memoirs and novels discussed in this thesis bring a new element to this established genre: the child narrator. As Elise Marienstras points out, in traditional captivity narratives, children are “merely passive victims [...] looked at either as mere attributes of their mothers, or, as micro-victims, being parts of the victim-families” (35). She infers that the captivity of children are “merely side stories which are meant to add to the atmosphere of horror where female heroism is redoubled by the sufferings added to her own adventures” (39). The recent shift towards captivity narratives featuring children and narrated in child-like voices represent an interesting shift in our culture. The popularity of the child captivity narratives is undeniable, as witnessed by *A Stolen Life* and *Room*.

Although Jaycee was already thirty-one years old when she published her memoir, the main focus of the book lies on a childhood spent in captivity. Furthermore, her narrative voice and style are unmistakably childlike. For example, she has included photocopies of her childhood diary, and the fragmented structure of the memoir reflect the perspective of the captive and traumatised child. Additionally, Jaycee decided to forego the help of a ghostwriter, rather choosing to describe her captivity in her own words even though she had no formal schooling after the age of eleven.

Intrinsic to the captivity narrative is the trauma, always present though in varying degrees. As Bonnie Hanson infers:

Captivity narratives are inherently suffused with and structured by trauma. Many of the very conventions and tropes on which the genre relies are traumatic: death or loss of loved ones, physical and mental suffering, hunger, constant fear and uncertainty, the decimation and re-construction of identity, and, of course, the double-edged sword of liminality, the space captives uneasily inhabit. (7)

According to Cathy Caruth, traumatic events cause a phenomenon referred to as traumatic memory; it denotes a spatial and temporal paradox in memory. The traumatic event is not fully processed by the individual at the moment of occurrence, nor fully integrated into understanding, though the memory remains accurate and accessible:

The trauma is the confrontation with an event that, in its unexpectedness or horror, cannot be placed within the schemes of prior knowledge [...] Not having been fully integrated as it occurred, the event cannot become [...] “narrative memory” that is integrated into a completed story of the past. [...] In its repeated imposition as both image and amnesia, the trauma thus seems to evoke the difficult truth of a history that is constituted by incomprehension of its occurrence. (Caruth 153)

Jaycee’s memoir reflects the temporal dissonance of traumatic memory and acknowledges that there might be some inconsistencies in her account. She prefaces *A Stolen Life* with an author’s note explaining that “This book might be confusing to some [...] but that’s how it was for me. It didn’t feel like a sequence of events. Even after I was freed, moments are fragmented and jumbled”. The memoir’s structure also mimics the temporal dissonance. Like Natascha in *3,096 Days*, Jaycee also intermittently reflects on the events in her memoir. The narration is interspersed with these sections announced by the heading “Reflection”. It shows the

reader the struggle to achieve some understanding of the situation, inviting the reader into the thinking process. Thus there are two voices being represented: Jaycee the protagonist who tells the surfaces story, and Jaycee the reflective voice who tries to make sense of the situation with comments by regressing, analyzing, and speculating about the events. Jaycee has clearly experienced many traumatizing events. She is just giving her perspective whilst, even now, she is still processing the trauma herself and in the process of integrating it into narrative memory.

In the third chapter, Jaycee describes how on her first day of captivity Garrido forced her to touch his penis. He offered her comfort and Jaycee describes her conflicting emotions in accepting: “I do not want comfort from this awful man, but there is no one else here and I reluctantly lean into what comfort he gives”. In the following “Reflection”, Jaycee proceeds to contemplate how the echo of that day and the experience of her confinement followed her even into freedom: “Today I sometimes struggle with feelings of loneliness even when I am not alone. I think this feeling began in that room Phillip put me in. Hours turned into days, days to weeks, and weeks to months and then years. I have spent a lifetime alone, or so it seems to me sometimes” (Chapter 3). Jaycee interjects this commentary in order to relate the emotional responses of abuse survivors to the trauma. Yet, she also focuses on the recovery and coping techniques for dealing with the loneliness. By admitting that she is still “working through these feelings”, she shows fellow victims that they are not alone in their struggle and that it is an ongoing process to overcome trauma.

Jaycee’s trauma was substantial. Garrido captured her for the sole purpose of fulfilling his sexual needs as a paedophile. He made her feel like she carried the responsibility for solving his ‘sex problem’ and to prevent anyone else from getting hurt. As she reveals in Chapter 6, “I think that sounds really weird, but I also don’t want him to do what he is doing to me to someone

else. So what choice do I have?” By shifting the responsibility to the victim, the abuser pressures them to stay. So Jaycee endures and has to suffer through countless of ‘runs’, times where Garrido stays up for days with the help of drugs in order to fulfil his every sexual fantasy.

In a similar fashion to Natascha’s *3,096 Days*, Jaycee’s description of her kidnapper shows signs of Stockholm syndrome. Next to the aforementioned studies of Julich and Graham, Stockholm syndrome has received more academic attention in the recent decades as a symptomatology associated with various forms of traumatic entrapment. Lisa Hooper et al. lists several, some even specific to kidnap cases (99-100). Victims like Jaycee do not stay with their abusers because they have bonded with them, but rather the opposite: victims bond with their abusers because they see no escape (Graham 50). In Chapter 18, Jaycee describes how at a certain point in time she was not physically locked in a room anymore but she still felt like a prisoner: “I feel I am bound to these people—my captors—by invisible bonds instead of constant handcuffs”. Furthermore, there is security in the known, and Jaycee was conditioned to fear the outside world. Especially after she had kids, the compulsion to stay became bigger: “The outside world was scary for me. I was so afraid that if I left or tried to leave and take them both with me, I wouldn’t be able to protect them. I knew they were so safe in the backyard; I didn’t have to worry about anyone taking them like I was taken” (Chapter 19).

Jaycee had her first child on 18 August 1994 when she was only fourteen. The baby was born with the help of Nancy, Garrido’s wife, who was a nurse’s-aid. Her second daughter was born on 13 November 1997. With the arrival of her daughters, some small changes came in regards to her own living situation too. Garrido built a tall fence around the backyard so the children could get some sun, and for the first time in six years Jaycee was allowed outside. The Garrido’s see the children as an opportunity to be a ‘real’ family since Nancy was not able to

have kids. In order to achieve a family unit, the girls had to call Nancy ‘mom’ and Jaycee their sister. Besides that, Jaycee had to change her identity, so the girls grow up knowing her as Allissa (Chapter 20).

In her reflections, Jaycee shows an awareness of Garrido’s manipulative behaviour and how much her situation pushed her towards him. Garrido tried to gain her trust and even went as far as to apologize after raping her and begging for her forgiveness. Beyond his manipulative behaviour, Garrido was her entire world: she depended on him for sustenance and supplies, companionship and comfort. Graham’s theory predicts that the victim, who is “suffering despair and needs nurturance as a result of terror created by the threat to survival” will “bond to the first person who provides emotional relief” (Graham 51). Even though Garrido was the cause for her terror, he was also the only person who she could turn to when in emotional distress. Young Jaycee describes in Chapter 4 how “Phillip seemed like a nice guy when he wasn’t using me for sex. I even started enjoying his company” which she follows with reflective insight “I was naïve and desperately lonely”. Graham’s theory also predicts that the emotional bond is particularly likely to develop “if the person who provides emotional relief is the abuser, because kindness by the abuser creates hope that the abuse will stop” (51). During the ‘runs’ Jaycee separates the two sides of her abuser, convincing herself that everything will be okay since he will be “the nice person” again afterwards (Chapter 7). As expected, he offers her his platitudes when he is finished: “He asks if I’m okay and I look at him and burst into tears. He takes me in his arms and says it’s okay, that he is done, and that I can get cleaned up and go to sleep. He won’t bother me like this for a while” (Chapter 7). Celia Doyle and Charles Timms point out that the fear children feel who suffer abuse will be accompanied by the natural stress response. But when this fight or flight response does not lead to escape from the abuse, the victims will look to their abusers for

rescue. As a consequence, “[t]hey will start to feel that if they can be good enough ... [their abusers] might value them or at least stop abusing them. They will therefore become very compliant, wanting to please and trying to see their abusers in the best light” (80).

With the help of time, distance, and her therapist Jaycee has managed to overcome the symptoms of Stockholm Syndrome (though she never mentions the syndrome by name): “I have come to realize that I no longer need to protect him, Phillip Garrido. He no longer, or ever really, needed or deserved my protection. It has taken time for the guilt to wear off. But after living with him for so long I am amazed at how good I feel that I am no longer subject to him” (Chapter 7).

Jaycee has come a long way in her recovery. The end of her imprisonment was not a planned affair. Garrido's delusions escalated over the years, and by 1991 his religious fanaticism reached its peak. Garrido felt that the authorities were harassing him and interfering with his mission. One day he decided to go down to the parole office with the whole family in order to convince the authorities that everything was alright, so he could proceed with his mission unencumbered. The officers proceeded to interrogate Jaycee separately, and eventually a female officer came bearing the news that Garrido had confessed to her kidnapping. When the officer asked for her name and age, Jaycee was only able to provide her with the later. She physically felt unable to say her name after not using it for eighteen years. Eventually she spelled out her name on a piece of paper: Jaycee Lee Dugard (Chapter 24).

Earlier, I touched upon the sudden popularity of child captivity narratives and misery memoirs. Yet, the question remains: why are people so fascinated with reading trauma narratives? As Jill Bennett shows in her book *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art*, much of the academic discourse surrounding trauma studies “focus on the

allure of trauma discourse” (5; original emphasis). However, the discourse seems to be far from reaching a consensus on what precisely the ‘allure’ of reading trauma narratives is.

Bonnie Hanson offers a plausible explanation: relief and resolution. She states how in the cases of memoirs, readers already know by the narrative’s very existence that the protagonist emerged “well enough to write the story. Readers knew that relief would come by the end of the narrative” (43). She continues her argument by drawing a parallel between the fascination with captivity narratives and the fascination with horror stories: it is the not knowing that causes anxiety. However, that which causes the anxiety is also what draws people to the genre. Noel Carroll points out that the curiosity and fascination key to art-horror “receive especial amplification in what I have referred to as narratives of disclosure and discovery” (190). Hanson relates this principle of art-horror to the captivity narrative:

The cultural fascination with captivity narratives and the trauma they depict, then, can, in part, be traced to a desire for catharsis [...] Based on the formula of the captivity narrative, the readers knows that Dugard will return home, and in that, the reader hopes to find positive resolution at the end of the book. (44)

In *A Stolen Life*, the moment of relief and resolution for the readers comes when Jaycee finally is able to write her name down.

Yet, Esther Addley disagrees with this explanation for the allure of trauma narratives: “As a reader, there is certainly a relief in reaching the end of one of these books, but the faint glimpses of hope and positivity offered at their endings rarely atone for the horrors that one endures to get there”. Addley cites ‘inspiration’ to be the key factor for the readers, as evidenced from letters to publishers and online reviews sections. Oliver James, a chartered psychologist and author, categorizes these inspired readers into two groups. The first group are readers who can

identify with the books. For the majority, though, the appeal seems more straightforward: “When you read them you feel that your own lot isn’t quite so bad” (qtd. in Addley).

LITERARY FICTION

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, two fictional novels about growing up in confinement will be discussed: *Room* (2010) by Emma Donoghue and *The Boy from the Basement* (2006) by Susan Shaw. The protagonist from *The Boy from the Basement*, Charlie, has been locked up from a young age in the basement by his father. The protagonist in *Room*, Jack, on the other hand, has been born in captivity and has never left the garden shed he and his mother live in. Unlike the memoirs, the novels do not only portray their lives in captivity, they focus on the boys' life after their escape. By comparing these two novels, we can see worked out in fiction the different consequences of growing up in solitary confinement or having a secure attachment figure, and how it impacts the social and emotional development of children. Because these are works of fiction, they can offer the reader things the memoirs could not, such as a happy ending.

4.2 *Room*

Emma Donoghue's *Room* was loosely inspired by the real life Fritzl case. She played upon the notion of "a woman who bears a child to her captor and manages to protect his childhood" (Donoghue, "Back Bay", 6). To differentiate the novel from the Fritzl case, Donoghue set *Room* in a garden shed in America and removed the element of incest. Donoghue credits another element on her website to be an inspiration for the novel: her own experience of having kids, "the locked room is a metaphor for the claustrophobic, tender bond of parenthood" (emmadonoghue.com). Her intentions were not to create a "horror story or tearjerker, but a celebration of resilience and the love between parent and child" (emmadonoghue.com).

This mindful construction can be seen in the novel's structure. The book can be divided into two parts: the imprisonment and after the escape. As Donoghue proclaims, these are two halves of the same story, each shedding a different light on the other ("Back Bay" 5). During the first half of the novel that takes place in the shed, Donoghue does not focus on the horrors of imprisonment. Instead, she concentrates on the relationship between mother and son, and their existence as a mini-tribe of two. Donoghue admits to giving the woman, 'Ma', "some superhero traits" and Jack "some larger-than-life qualities" ("Back Bay" 5). In the second half, she wanted to let them "relax into being human", showing the flaws in Jack and Ma and their relationship ("Back Bay" 5). The escape could have simply been their happy ending. Instead, however, she chose to showcase the faults of not only the characters but also the outside world.

Donoghue employs a remarkable narrative strategy in this novel by telling the whole story through the perspective of five-year-old Jack. Donoghue chose Jack's point of view in the hopes of making "such a horrifying premise original, involving, but also more bearable: his innocence would at least partly shield readers on their descent into the abyss" ("Back Bay" 2). The little garden shed is for Jack the only reality he has ever known. He has never been outside and never could have dreamed that beyond Room a whole other world exists. Every object in the shed has a name that starts with a capital letter because the notion that there are millions of other similar items is inconceivable to him. The capitalization of nouns signifies Jack's intimate relationship with the objects and is reinforced by referring to these objects with the personal nouns 'he' or 'she'. Jack loves his environment and through his mind we experience the simple pleasures of his daily life. Almost everything is a game to him. His only real complaints are food-related, such as when he has to eat 'yucky' green beans. Ma has purposely shielded Jack from her captor, who we only know by the name Old Nick (not coincidentally an old nickname

for the Devil). During Old Nick's visits, Jack has to stay in the wardrobe, not to be heard or seen, which in turn means that his experiences with Old Nick are very limited. Jack has only seen glimpses of him through the gap of the wardrobe door. He does not realize that Old Nick comes at night for sexual gratification. Instead, Old Nick has taken on the form of a bogeyman, a terrifying presence that visits at night.

Jack's limited experiences has shaped his mind; his only source of knowledge was his mother. Ma tried to create as much of a stimulating childhood as she could in a horrific environment. In some ways he is more advanced than his peers, such as his extensive vocabulary. Yet, often his naiveté and limited knowledge show through too, and the reader has to contemplate whether it is characteristic of an average five-year-old or whether it is a consequence of Jack's confinement. This young and unusual narrative voice "encourages us to revisit our concepts of what is normal, ordinary or human, and what is not" (Földváy 218). This especially comes forward in the second half of the novel. As Donoghue states, "I also knew that Jack would have some interesting things to say about our world, as a newcomer to it; the book's satire of modern mores and media, and interrogations of the nature of reality, grew out of Jack's perspective" ("Back Bay" 2). In this aspect, Jack can be seen as a modern day *l'ingenu*: the ingenuous child, an outsider uncontaminated by the prejudices of civilization, commenting on our society and what we have taken to be normal. As Šárka Bubíková mentions, "a child's voice or perspective as a narrative strategy" is often used "both as a narrative technique and as a way of subverting traditional 'adult' views on many issues" (263). She continues, "Although children might not rationally fully understand the world around them, they have the capability to reflect it without mediation, illusions or pretense" (265).

Donoghue has created a very interesting style for the novel, largely thanks to the authentic sounding voice of Jack. She has devised patterns and structures for him that stand out, creating the psychological effect of a young child's narrative. As Laurie Ricou remarks on child languages in literature: writers "must use enough child's language to give a consistent feel of what the child would say, yet exploit fully his mature technical resources to suggest the complexity of the child's mind" (2). This balance is hard to achieve, yet, Donoghue has managed it. Jack has a slightly more sophisticated and specific vocabulary compared to an average five-year-old due to his upbringing and Donoghue has granted him the gift of coherence. Yet, Jack does not come across as a necessarily precocious child. He still has that clumsy and awkward way of putting words together which is common in the speech of small children. According to Ricou, the most distinctive elements of child language is that "it is language in the *process of being learned*" and that it is "entirely a *spoken language*, a much freer creature than written language" (4; original emphasis). Therefore, Donoghue's use of intentional errors in Jack's speech contributes to the style of child-narrator. For example, there are many grammatical errors such as Jack's trouble with the irregularity of verbs: "You cutted the cord" (4); "I forgotted to have some" (7); "Old Nick brung a magic converter box" (12). Jack also has not yet quite got a full grasp on the superlative: "bare feet are grippier" (18); "I go even fasterer" (19); "in case he gets realer" (22). Another typical marker of child's speech is collocational mismatches. There are several instances to be found, such as "she doesn't like saying about him" (4); "I figure out to do off the knot" (5); "I flat the chairs" (9); "What's my tall?" (15). The high frequency use of onomatopoeic expressions common for the very young also contributes to the style: "switch on Lamp, he makes everything light up *whoosh*" (3); "then I *whee* back onto Duvet" (5); "spoons I can *cling clang clong*" (8); "a thing in the night *nnnnng nnnng nnnng* biting me" (10).

While living in the shed, Jack cheerfully describes his life with much enthusiasm. This can only be a great testament to Ma's intense care and dedication. Even though Jack seems not to be fully aware of the horrific situation he is in, the reader can see the sacrifices Ma has made and the great distress she is in every day. Their food supplies are limited, but still Ma tries to make the meals as varied and healthy as possible. Their rations do not last long, so Ma portions her own meals to equal Jack's child portions. Sometimes she even foregoes a snack or meal altogether in favour of giving it to her growing boy. At age five, Jack still occasionally breastfeeds. On the outside, this phenomenon seems strange to many, however, whilst in captivity it is a means to provide sustenance and comfort to her boy. Since she cannot procure food for Jack herself, and Old Nick is an unreliable source, the only way she can provide for Jack is by breastfeeding at the expense of her own body. The breastfeeding robs Ma of her already limited source of nutrients and, as a result, her teeth are decaying at an alarmingly rapid speed. Breastfeeding in *Room* can be seen as a symbol of Ma's motherly love and commitment to Jack.

To the reader, it is palpable that Ma feels trapped and longs for freedom. She often wakes up in the middle of the night in order to send Morse code to the outside world by using the lights: "Ma standing beside Lamp and everything bright, then snap and dark again. Light again, she makes it last three seconds then dark, then light for just a second. Ma's staring up at Skylight. Dark again. She does this in the night, I think it helps her to get to sleep again" (34). Many of the escape attempts she disguises as a game for Jack. They play 'Scream' - "After nap we do Scream every day but not Saturdays or Sundays. We clear our throats and climb up on Table to be nearer Skylight [...] we open wide our teeth and shout holler howl yowl shriek screech scream the loudest possible" (50) - and a game called 'Keypad' - "I play Keypad, that's I stand on my chair by Door and usually Ma says the numbers but today I have to make them up. I press them on

Keypad quick quick no mistakes” (70). Even though Ma tries to keep everything positive for Jack, once in a while the life of captivity overwhelms her. On those days she falls into a depressive state which Jack calls ‘Gone’.

Jack does not seem to be traumatised by his living conditions. His mother has made great efforts to shield Jack from physical and psychological harm. As Sandra Dinter point out, Jack’s misinterpretations of traumatic experiences is a reflection of his moral innocence. She describes him as an “optimistic, curious and creative explorer who is fascinated by objects in his modest and hostile environment” (55). Jack has been able to thrive due to his mother providing him with a stable environment. Part of being able to provide her son the stability he needed was to conceal some truths from him. Up until his fifth year, Ma never mentioned outside life to Jack and told him that the TV contains fictional stories. Jack had a very narrow frame of reference and all his knowledge relied completely on his mother. His distinction between reality and fiction, or ‘real’ and ‘TV’, relied on the object being materially present in Room. During Ma’s television interview, the female interviewer states the following: “Now, you’d come to what some experts are calling a strange decision, to teach Jack that the world measured eleven foot by eleven, and everything else - everything he saw on TV, or heard about from his handful of books - was just fantasy. Did you feel bad about deceiving him?” Whereupon Ma answers, “What was I meant to tell him - Hey, there’s a world of fun out there and you can’t have any of it?” (293). Ma had made an understandable decision by shrinking the world to the only dimensions Jack knew. In this novel, the already limited perspective of the child narrator is thus narrowed down even more by the fact that Jack has never been outside of Room nor was he aware that an outside world existed.

Jack's narrative voice and style heighten our engagement in the traumatic experience. His narration functions as a metaphor for traumatic memory. The majority of the trauma is not fully understood or processed by Jack. To a certain extent, Jack's narration protects the reader from the trauma by obstructing the full narrative of Ma's trauma. As mentioned earlier, Donoghue hoped that his innocence would partly shield readers and make the horrifying premise more bearable. Yet, readers know that there is more to the story than Jack is able to understand and convey. At times, the omission can even heighten the scenes and tension for readers. This is particularly true during the recounting of the rape scene, where Jack's lack of comprehension combined with indications of anxiety creates a disturbing tension. "*Beep beep*, that's Door. Ma jumps up [...] Door makes his *thump* that means Old Nick's in now. I'm not sleepy anymore" (44). Just as Ma and Jack immediately stand at attention, this description immediately makes the reader uneasy. When Old Nick addresses Jack, his "chest starts to go *dung dung dung*" making the tension palpable to both Jack and the reader (45). Then "Lamp goes off *snap*, that makes me jump" and he hears the bed creak (46). Jack's compulsive counting is especially disturbing, "I always have to count till he makes that gaspy sound and stops. I don't know what would happen if I didn't count, because I always do" (46). This scene portrays Jack's innocence, yet shows how he is affected by the trauma to which he is a witness.

Whereas the memoirs provided a literal experience of trauma, as a novel *Room* provides a traumatic experience that can be read metaphorically. Hanson points out that "As a work of fiction, *Room* achieves that which cannot be done in a real or non-fiction accounts of captivity trauma, an articulation of trauma with metaphorical and symbolic levels, and, even more surprising and appealing to readers, the eventual redemption of that trauma" (49).

Jack's whole world changes when he turns five. In the second part called 'Unlying', Ma reveals the existence of an outside world to Jack in preparation for their escape: "'Listen. What we see on TV is ... it's pictures of real things.' That's the most astonishing I ever heard" (73). It is hard for Jack to wrap his mind around this new concept of reality. He basically has to alter his whole perception of the world. When trying to fit his former assumptions of reality together with this new knowledge he begins to question his own existentialism:

Whenever I think of a thing now like skis or fireworks or islands or elevators or yoyos, I have to remember they're real, they're actually happening in Outside all together. It makes my head tired. And people too, firefighters teachers burglars babies saints soccer players and all sorts, they're all really in Outside. I'm not there, though, me and Ma, we're the only ones not there. Are we still real? (88)

Jack's perception of the world can be seen as a modernized version of Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" from *The Republic*. In this hypothetical cave, men have been imprisoned since they were little children. They are chained and fastened in such a way that they can only face the blank wall. All they can see is the shadows projected on the wall by a fire behind them. They have never seen anything besides that blank wall and the shadows cast upon it, thus "in every way such prisoners would deem reality to be nothing else than the shadows of the artificial objects" (Plato 123). Once freed from their chains and able to look around, the former prisoners come to understand that they were looking at mere shadows on the wall. Plato's cave illustrates the mind's ascent from ignorance. The former prisoners reach a new level of knowledge which completely alters their perception of reality and the way they perceive the world.

For Jack, however, there is an intermediate step between observing the shadow world and observing reality. Ma tries to explain the outside world to young Jack, but she does this on a

purely theoretical level. Without having seen any evidence of a world existing outside of Room, the concept proves overwhelming and unimaginable for the boy. Unsurprisingly, Jack falls into a phase of denial. One day a leaf lands on their skylight and Ma points it out as physical proof of an outside world where trees and leaves exist. Excited about this little piece of the outside world, Jack tries to look through the skylight for more visual proof of a whole world existing outside their shed: “I’m staring and staring but all I see is sky. There’s nothing in it like ships or trains or horses or girls or skyscrapers zooming by. [...] ‘Liar, liar, pants on fire, there’s no Outside.’ She starts explaining more but I put my fingers in my ears and shout, ‘Blah blah blah blah blah.’” (108). Then one day Ma and Jack put their escape plan into action and Jack has to pretend to be dead in order to leave the premises. For the first time in his life, he steps foot outside of the shed and is exposed to the wider world. It marks the end of Jack’s life in captivity, his naiveté and ignorance.

In the last sections of the novel, called ‘After’ and ‘Living’, Jack and Ma have finally escaped and they now have to adjust to living in the outside world. The transition is not an easy one for either of them. Ma struggles to reclaim her own identity. She was taken as a nineteen-year-old university student, and now she returns as a twenty-six-year-old mother who experienced a horrific ordeal. She must attempt to reconcile these two parts of her life in this new beginning: “I keep messing up. I know you need me to be your ma but I’m having to remember how to be me as well at the same time and it’s ...” (277). The media only complicates matters for Ma. Her story has attracted a lot of attention and both she and Jack have fallen under the scrutiny of the world. During a television interview, Ma gets confronted with the judgements and misconceptions of the public. The interviewer suggests that she might have acted selfishly in keeping Jack with her in captivity rather than asking Old Nick to take him away and leave him at

a hospital so he could be adopted, “It would have been a sacrifice, of course – the ultimate sacrifice – but if Jack could have had a normal, happy childhood with a loving family?” (297). This criticism undermines Ma’s belief that she has been a good mother to Jack and was able to provide for him even under those dire circumstances. Overwhelmed by the media attacks on top of her own struggles, Ma falls into a depression again and attempts to commit suicide by overdosing on pills. As Hanson points out: “Ma’s attempted suicide is a striking deviation from the structure of traditional captivity narratives in that Jack’s most traumatic moment in the novel comes after his release from captivity” (60).

Jack’s struggles are various. There are several physical issues that Jack has to deal with as a result of having grown up in captivity. Doctor Clay sums most of them up in a conversation with Ma: “As well as immune issues, there are likely to be challenges in the areas of, let’s see, social adjustment, obviously, sensory modulation - filtering and sorting all the stimuli barraging him - plus difficulties with spatial perception ...” (226). And there are minor things, such as having to learn how to walk the stairs and his skin having to get used to UV rays.

In this aspect, Jack seems reminiscent of Kaspar Hauser, a parallel that the novel itself also draws. Whilst at his Grandmother’s house, Jack catches on the television a glimpse of an earnest discussion by academics concerning his case and his exposure to a new reality: “‘Of course Kaspar Hauser famously claimed he’d been happy in his dungeon, but perhaps he really meant that nineteenth century German society was just a bigger dungeon.’ ‘At least Jack had TV.’ Another man laughs. ‘Culture as a shadow on the wall of Plato’s cave.’” (*Room* 367). Just as in the cases of Kaspar Hauser, Genie, and many of the other hidden and forsaken children, Jack has caught the interest of many theorists who have taken the prerogative to offer their own interpretation his case. As Sandra Dinter infers, “Jack is an object to be analysed in a discussion

he cannot participate in. This particular moment reveals the novel's self-reflexive quality as the text now openly refers to various epistemological and literary precursors it echoes throughout its story but names at no other instance" (67).

More challenging are Jack's psychological issues. The young boy shows some signs of separation anxiety in regards to his mother. On several occasions Jack is unwilling to leave his mother's side: he has to be inside the cubicle with her when she takes a shower, they have to share the one-person bed together, and he literally clings on to her when it is time for her television appearance (287). As M.D. Helen Farrell analyzes, the relationship between Jack and his mother after their escape is a complicated one: "Jack's belief system and knowledge of the world are turned upside down, while his mother strives to reclaim her own identity. Jack is forced to grapple with the concept of being a separate entity from his mother. Ma's own conflicts in their new world prohibit her from providing Jack with much needed mirroring and reassurance". Jack is trying to make sense of this new world and turns to his mother for answers; however, her answers often prove unsatisfactory to the boy. Until their escape, his world was governed by routine and rules, but now none of those apply anymore. Jack is desperate for some structure to cling on to, yet is unable to find any in this strange new world.

The fact that Jack turns to his mother in this uncertain and frightening period of time in his life is completely normal from the attachment theorists' point of view. According to Mary Ainsworth, one of the pioneers on attachment theory, behaviour like this indicates the manifestation of a secure attachment (Mooney 28). Infants use their primary caregiver "as a safe haven when in a strange situation" and "as a secure base to depart from and return to in their explorations of the world" (Mooney 28). Though Jack is no longer an infant, he has never

encountered new situations and this is his first time exploring the world. Therefore, in light of his history, Jack's behaviour does not appear to be abnormal.

Gradually, Donoghue shows how Jack acclimates to his new world and life. While his mother is recovering from her suicide attempt, Jack goes to live with his grandmother and step-grandfather. Their temporary separation proves to be difficult at first, but ultimately healthy. He learns to cope with new experiences and situations with the help of his extended family. In the meantime, Ma can contemplate her new life and work on her own issues in solitude without having to worry about Jack. They both slowly adapt to their lives outside Room and eventually move to an independent living residence. In the end, they return to the shed one last time and are able to say goodbye to Room and their old lives. They are able to find closure. In this work of fiction, Donoghue can provide a satisfactory resolution by making clear that Jack will successfully adjust to a life in the outside world. The reader is assured that Jack will not be permanently marked by the trauma; a happy ending that the memoirs cannot provide.

4.3 *The Boy from the Basement*

Susan Shaw's *The Boy from the Basement* tells the story of twelve-year-old Charlie who calls the cold, and dark basement home. His father has locked him in there as a punishment. Without food or sanitation available in the daytime, Charlie sneaks out at night in order to fulfil both those needs. He never intends to leave the house, but one night when he is relieving himself in the backyard, the wind slams the door shut and Charlie finds himself locked outside. Terrified at the thought of his father discovering him outside he runs down the street. The alien surroundings increase his anxiety, and exhausted he finally collapses underneath a lamp post. There he is found by a passerby and soon after he is rushed to the hospital. The boy first believes

that he must have been sent to this place by his father as a punishment, but it soon becomes clear to him that his parents have no idea where he disappeared to. In the hospital he meets his first friend, a boy named Aaron, and his psychologist Dr. Leidy. These two people help to start Charlie on his road to recovery. After his abuse has come to light, Charlie goes to live with a foster family: Mrs. Harrigan and seven-year-old Ambrose. In this loving and safe environment, Charlie embarks on his journey towards healing.

The narrative technique for *The Boy from the Basement* is similar to that from *Room* in that the novel uses a child as narrator and focalizer. In this case it is twelve-year-old Charlie. Since this novel involves an older child, we do not see any of the stylistic features that were used to create Jack's language. However, since Charlie grew up in solitary confinement, his language use is not as sophisticated as Jack's. He never went to school nor came into contact with books or media such as television or radio. As a result, his vocabulary is fairly limited and his psychological age is not nearly as advanced as his biological age.

Susan Shaw, similar to Donoghue, also splits the novel into two parts. The first half deals with Charlie's accidental escape and its aftermath while he is recovering in the hospital; the second half concentrates on Charlie's healing process while he lives with a foster family. While the two memoirs that have been discussed focused on the horrific ordeal of life in confinement, these fictional novels also examine the children's lives after their escape. Though unconventional, the novels do have a happy ending. In *Room*, Jack and Ma are slowly adjusting to their outside lives with the help of therapy and we leave them at a point in time where they can live in independent housing, hopeful for a full recovery and bright future. Charlie has grown to be a well-adjusted boy with the help of his foster family. He stands up for himself in the

confrontation with his father, and he might be able to live with his mother again after the positive outcome of the court case.

There are several psychological consequences for Charlie after spending the majority of his childhood in solitary confinement. Shaw does not describe any of the physical consequences Charlie might have suffered, although one would assume that living in a dark basement without proper sustenance would have some severe results. What stands out in Charlie's psychological health is his overall fear and illogical self-blame. One of the phobias that Charlie suffers from is agoraphobia. This can be subdivided into two instances: his fear for the vast openness of the outside and his fear regarding big groups of older children. During his 'punishment', Charlie would be anxious to be outside due to the fear of his father discovering him breaking the rules. However, being in the open air itself was not a problem, as he would step outside to relieve himself every night. Yet, when Charlie gets discharged from the hospital and is wheeled outside by Dr. Leidy, he experiences a full-blown panic attack: "Wa-O-OW! OUTSIDE! OUTSIDE! It pushes hard against my skin. *Ihmm-ma-ihmmmmmm!* Sunshine, and everything is - is - A hill bright with grass and trees and people - People and cars and - and - I can't breathe. My eyes hurt. My skin hurts. I CAN'T BREATHE!" (91). This is Charlie's first time consciously being outside again since his unintentional escape. He has started to associate the outside world with the danger of being discovered by his enraged father. Being outside he also runs the risk of encountering the bad 'big kids'.

Perhaps the most overwhelming fear for Charlie is his arachnophobia. Though it starts as a general fear for spiders, when he becomes ill and escapes the basement, Charlie's arachnophobia comes to signify so much more. Charlie's high fever induces hallucinations, most of them involving the red and black spider that shared the basement with him. The giant spider is

a symbolic representation for his father and shows up whenever Charlie is breaking any of his father's 'rules'. Traditionally, however, spiders have been gendered as female, used to represent a mother figure. This can be seen for example in the works of Louise Bourgeois, such as 'Maman' (1999) or in the title of Manuel Puig's *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (1976). Here, subverting this, the man is identified in the spider. There are two moments in the novel where the spider and his father become a hybrid form. The first time occurs on the night Charlie has fallen ill, while the second time transpires in the hospital when the authorities have brought Charlie's parents over. The vision of the spider eventually turns into a sound, a "long, spider's note", that he hears whenever something is happening that would displease his father.

A perplexing though not uncommon symptom among abuse victims is the amount of self-blame they experience. Cecil Reynolds and Elaine Fletcher-Janzen note how

Abused children often feel at fault for their experience of child abuse. They live with much guilt, shame, self-blame, and self-loathing. Often their abusers told them it was their fault. [...] parents who physically beat their children do so in the name of discipline. Yet, abused children mentally make their parents correct and good. (7)

This is also the case for young Charlie. Charlie keeps pointing out from the start how all these people in the outside world keep getting their facts wrong concerning his situation. He firmly believes that he deserves to be locked up in the basement because he is being punished for his bad behaviour by his father. Charlie never faulted his father for anything: "They think my parents are terrible. But they aren't. I love my parents, and I know they love me. I'm bad, that's all. I'm being punished, but my parents would never hurt me" (25). Kenneth Rosenthal offers an explanation why self-blame is so common among abused children: "Children tend to be

egocentric in their understanding of events which include them, and in many cases there is a precipitating 'reason' why a parent has abused them" (116). During one of their therapy session, Dr. Leidy tries to clarify the difference between a disciplinary action and abuse. It is hard to accept for Charlie that it was actually abuse and not just a punishment; children always try to see the good in their parents. Charlie's little foster brother Ambrose helps him to realize that parents do in fact abuse their children for no good reason. Sweet little Ambrose was abused by his mother. Thus, even though he misses his mother, he realizes that he cannot return to an abusive home. Ambrose's situation helps Charlie realize that it is not okay for parents to hurt their children and that his father's behaviour was inexcusable.

Charlie was not the only victim of abuse in the house. His mother was never able to help him because of fear of retaliation from her husband. Charlie describes overhearing the physical abuse his mother was subjected to and how he wished he could keep her safe with him in the basement too. She tried in little ways to help her boy out, such as by sneaking food to him. The novel ends with the prospect of a happily ever after for Charlie. His father is convicted in court and his mother will be on probation with the possibility of being reunited with her son in the future. In the meantime, Charlie lives happily with his foster mother, and is finally able to play outside with great joy.

CONCLUSION

By looking at these cases of children who grew up in solitary confinement, we see the importance of having an attachment figure for the development of children. Children have an innate need to attach themselves to people, and the lack of such a figure impedes not only their social development but also their emotional and even physical development. The notable historical cases showed the devastating effects of privation and the trauma that the children have to endure. In addition to this, Genie's case highlights the need for attachment in order to heal from the trauma. The memoirs reflect on the traumatic time Natascha and Jaycee spent in captivity, and the need they felt as children to connect with their captors for lack of other attachment options.

Society has always been fascinated by these unimaginable cases, perhaps the scientific community even more so. But the morbid curiosity has too often failed these vulnerable children. The fascination with these cases and other traumatic works are palpable in the sales figures of misery literature. Trauma narratives are written in abundance as part of a therapeutic healing process. But the exact reason why people are so fascinated with reading misery lit remains unclear. Some quote the horror-like anxiety to be the reason, others find the books inspirational.

The memoirs portray a heightened and literal version of the trauma. With the help of captivity narratives, we get an insider's perspective of growing up in solitary confinement and the substantial amount of related trauma. The writing style of the memoirs reflects the trauma of the authors, for example through the mirroring of the dissonance of traumatic memory.

Additionally, the memoirs shed some light on the process of developing Graham's Stockholm

syndrome. They explore the almost inevitable outcome of children attaching themselves to their captors, despite how unimaginable such a connection initially might seem.

As works of fiction, the novels can achieve several things the documented cases could not. For example, by comparing *Room* and *The Boy from the Basement*, we can see worked out in fiction the difference having an attachment figure in times of stress has on the development of children. Jack had his mother there as an attachment figure to provide security and a sensitive response. Charlie, on the other hand, had no reliable caretaker to depend upon, something that is vital for a child's social and emotional development. As a result, we notice that Charlie developed more psychological issues. However, with the help of the stable environment his foster family provides, Charlie is able to work through his issues. The writers have the power to provide a satisfactory resolution for the children, and both boys are able to find closure in the end.

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