

LACANIAN PSYCHOANALYSIS: MA'S DESIRE IN *ROOM* (2015)

Amelia Syarani^{1b}

Department of English Literature, Universitas Teknokrat Indonesia, Bandar Lampung-35132,
Indonesia

E-mail : syaraniaml2003@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the representation of Ma's desire in the film *Room* (2015) through a Lacanian psychoanalytic perspective. The study is based on Lacan's concept that desire emerges from a sense of lack and shapes human experience through three main realms: the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic. The film portrays Ma's psychological struggle as she lives in captivity with her son, Jack, creating a complex dynamic of desire as she attempts to survive and protect her child. This study applies an interpretive qualitative method with a Lacanian psychoanalytic approach to examine the film. The findings show that Ma's desire operates through Lacanian concepts such as desire as lack, desire of the Other, and objet petit a. Her desire is reflected in her efforts to construct a stable world for Jack, maintain psychological control, and survive traumatic conditions. Jack functions as the objet petit a that sustains Ma's desire and gives meaning to her actions, while her interaction with society after escaping reveals the influence of symbolic structures and the desire for recognition. Overall, desire functions as a psychological force that shapes Ma's actions, survival strategies, and identity development throughout the film.

Keywords: *desire; film analysis; lacanian psychoanalysis; representation; Room (2015)*

INTRODUCTION

In Lacanian psychoanalysis, desire is understood as a fundamental drive that arises from a sense of lack that can never be fully satisfied. This sense of lack shapes how individuals perceive themselves and their experiences (Panasiuk, 2025; Kaya & Zabcı, 2025). This condition is not only theoretical but also important in shaping human subjectivity, as it becomes a key factor that drives individuals to seek meaning and fulfillment. Lacan explains that human experience is structured through three interconnected realms: the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real (Lacan, 1977). These concepts continue to be widely applied in

contemporary psychoanalytic studies to explain how desire and subjectivity are formed within visual narratives (Yadlin-Gadot & Hadar, 2023).

Lacanian psychoanalysis provides an effective framework for examining how characters' desires and identities are represented through narrative, dialogue, and visual elements in film. Films often construct meaning through symbolic and imaginary processes that reflect unconscious desires and psychological conflicts (Suthaporn et al., 2022; Sawan, 2023). In addition, psychoanalytic perspectives suggest that films often create an "imaginary field," where desire is shown through images and story structure (Jones, 2025).

The film *Room* (2015) presents a relevant context for this study. It tells the story of Ma (Joy Newsome), who is held captive for years in a confined space by her captor, Old Nick, where she raises her son, Jack. The Room functions not only as a physical prison but also as a psychological space in which Ma constructs routines, meanings, and a sense of reality in order to survive. To protect Jack from traumatic reality, she creates a controlled and meaningful world that allows him to feel safe despite their limited environment.

Suthaporn et al. (2022) examine subjectivity through the interaction of the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real, while Kristiawan (2025) and Dewanti et al. (2025) focus on identity formation within these structures. In addition, Saputra and Anam (2019) analyze desire using a Lacanian approach in a literary work. Recent studies also explore desire in film through relational and power dynamics, highlighting how desire is constructed between characters and represented visually (Melo, 2024).

Although previous studies have discussed desire through Lacanian psychoanalysis, most of them primarily focus on identity formation, trauma, or relational dynamics. Studies that specifically examine desire as a continuous psychological structure operating through the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic in *Room* (2015) remain limited, particularly in relation to Lacanian concepts such as *objet petit a* and symbolic mediation (Shabrang & Seyfi, 2025; Bashir & Ahmad, 2026). This indicates a gap in understanding how desire functions as an ongoing structure within cinematic characters under extreme conditions.

In this context, Ma's relationship with Jack can be understood through the concept of *objet petit a*, which refers to the object that triggers and sustains desire. Jack becomes the central element that motivates Ma's actions, including her efforts to protect him, construct a meaningful world, and plan their escape. These actions reflect how desire functions as a driving force in her psychological survival.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the representation of Ma's desire in *Room* (2015) through the concepts of the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. This study specifically addresses how Ma's desire operates and shifts through the Imaginary, the Real, and the

Symbolic throughout the narrative. The study analyzes Ma's actions, dialogue, and interactions to explain how desire shapes her survival strategies, decisions, and psychological condition throughout the film. The findings are expected to contribute to Lacanian psychoanalytic studies in film and provide insight into how desire operates as a psychological force in extreme situations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous Studies

Previous studies have applied Lacanian psychoanalysis to examine psychological structures, subjectivity, and identity in literary and film narratives. Suthaporn, Thongpibul, and Sakulsriprasert (2022) analyze how the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic reveal unconscious dimensions through visual and symbolic elements in film. Similarly, Kristiawan (2025) explores the role of the Symbolic order in shaping identity and character relationships in *We Need to Talk About Kevin*, while Dewanti, Rusfandi, and Sari (2025) examine identity formation through the interaction of the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic in *Turning Red*. These studies demonstrate the relevance of Lacanian theory in understanding psychological structures and cinematic representation.

Discussions of desire within Lacanian studies have also appeared in literary and film analysis. Saputra and Anam (2019) examine desire as a psychological drive shaped through the interaction of the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic in *The Setting Sun*. Meanwhile, Melo (2024) discusses desire through relational and power dynamics between characters in film. These studies show that desire can be understood as a significant psychological force within narrative texts and cinematic representation.

However, studies that specifically analyze desire in *Room* (2015) through the interaction of the Imaginary, the Real, and the Symbolic remain limited. Most previous studies focus more on identity formation, subjectivity, or relational dynamics, while the present study emphasizes desire as a continuous psychological structure that shapes Ma's survival strategies, emotional behavior, and relationship with Jack throughout the film.

Lacanian Psychoanalysis

Lacanian psychoanalysis emphasizes that human subjectivity is shaped by language, symbols, and social structures (Lacan, 1977). In some studies, Lacanian psychoanalysis is also used to explain that identity can change through psychological experiences (Dimitrijovska-Jankulovska & Denkovska, 2025). Individuals do not fully control their identities, as they are constructed through external systems such as language and social relations (Evans, 1996;

Bracher, 1993). This approach is widely used in literary and film analysis to interpret characters' psychological conditions through actions, dialogue, and symbols.

In this study, Lacanian psychoanalysis is used to examine Ma's psychological condition in *Room* (2015), particularly how her desire is formed and operates under conditions of confinement and trauma. This approach explains how meaning, identity, and survival strategies are constructed through her relationship with Jack and her environment (Kristiawan, 2025).

Lacan divides human experience into three interrelated orders: the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic (Lacan, 1977). These three realms explain how human subjectivity is formed through images, language, and unconscious processes (Fink, 1995). Furthermore, Lacanian theory emphasizes that subjectivity is always connected to desire, where individuals are shaped through unconscious structures that influence how they interpret reality and themselves (Sheikh, 2017).

The Imaginary

The Imaginary relates to self-image and identification formed through reflection and perception (Lacan, 1977). Individuals construct an ideal image of themselves that appears whole and stable. However, the gap between this ideal image and reality produces internal tension and conflict. This realm emphasizes identification, illusion, and the formation of ego through images.

The Real

The Real refers to what cannot be fully represented in language (Lacan, 1977). It appears as something disruptive, traumatic, and beyond understanding. Because it cannot be symbolized, the Real often produces anxiety and instability when it emerges.

The Symbolic

The Symbolic is structured through language, rules, and social norms that shape how individuals understand the world and their position within it. It is closely connected to social structure and meaning-making systems that organize human experience (Åsvoll, 2025). Identity is formed within this system, making individuals dependent on external structures such as language and social relations. The Symbolic order also reflects how meaning is shaped through social systems and human practices (Karadima, 2022).

Desire

In Lacanian psychoanalysis, desire is understood as a continuous psychological drive that arises from a fundamental sense of lack (Lacan, 1977; Floroiu, 2025). Desire can also be understood as a psychological process that cannot be fully satisfied and continuously shifts

from one object to another. This process is often reflected in repeated actions, emotional tension, and continuous efforts to reach something that remains unattainable (Saputra & Anam, 2019; Wang, 2025). Furthermore, desire is not purely individual but is shaped through symbolic structures such as language and social interaction (Tyson, 2006; Jasim & Benny, 2025; Palm, 2023). Desire is also influenced by social roles and cultural expectations in society (Maharramov & Shahhuseynbayova, 2025).

In film analysis, desire can be identified through characters' actions, dialogue, relationships, and narrative goals (Suthaporn et al., 2022). In this study, desire is used to examine Ma's psychological structure. Her actions are therefore interpreted not merely as responses to trauma, but as expressions of deeper psychological drives shaped by the interaction of the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic.

Types of Desire

In Lacanian theory, desire operates through several interrelated forms. Desire of the Other refers to how desire is shaped by external influences such as social expectations and relationships with others, where individuals seek recognition and acceptance (Lacan, 1977). Desire as lack emphasizes that desire emerges from a fundamental absence that can never be fully satisfied, causing desire to continuously shift from one object to another. *Objet petit a* functions as the cause of desire, acting as a motivating element that sustains the movement of desire without ever fulfilling it completely. These forms show that desire is dynamic and continuously constructed through interaction with symbolic structures and the subject's sense of lack, which is reflected in patterns of repetition and attachment, where individuals continuously seek objects or meanings that can never fully satisfy them (Swales, 2012).

Film Analysis

Film analysis understands film as a narrative form that conveys meaning through visual elements and structure (Sikov, 2010). Films can be examined through characters, plot, dialogue, and visual elements to understand deeper meanings and social context (Monaco, 2009). Film analysis also involves examining how cinematic techniques such as camera movement, framing, and narrative structure contribute to meaning-making and audience interpretation (Ryan & Lenos, 2020).

In this study, film analysis is used to examine how desire is represented through narrative and visual elements. Narrative analysis focuses on plot and character development, while semiotic analysis interprets objects, gestures, and settings as symbols that convey meaning within the film (Bateman & Schmidt, 2012). Representation in film is shaped by the combination of

narrative and visual elements, such as setting, expressions, and cinematic techniques, which help show characters' psychological conditions.

Film narratives may also contain deeper psychological meanings that reflect unconscious processes, allowing desire to be expressed indirectly through visual and narrative elements (Pederson, 2018). In contemporary contexts, visual media also reflects desire, as audiences are drawn to narratives that create emotional engagement (Öztürk, 2025).

METHODS

Research Design

This study uses an interpretive qualitative design to examine the representation of Ma's desire in *Room* (2015). An interpretive approach is appropriate because Lacanian psychoanalysis focuses on uncovering unconscious meanings, symbolic structures, and psychological tensions represented through narrative and visual elements (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative method is used because the data consist of dialogues, scenes, character expressions, and visual representations that reflect the psychological condition of the characters throughout the film. A psychoanalytic approach, specifically Lacanian psychoanalysis, is applied as the theoretical framework. Lacan's theory is used to analyze the structure of desire through three main realms: the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic (Lacan, 1977). The film is treated not only as a narrative text but also as a cinematic representation in which visual and symbolic elements contribute to the construction of meaning. Therefore, the analysis focuses on dialogues, character interactions, scenes, and cinematic elements that reflect Ma's psychological dynamics and desire throughout the film (Ryan & Lenos, 2020).

Data Source

The main data source is the film *Room* (2015), directed by Lenny Abrahamson. The data consist of dialogues, monologues, scenes, character actions, and visual symbols that show the representation of Ma's desire in the film. Cinematic elements such as framing, lighting, camera movement, facial expressions, and spatial composition were also considered in the analysis because they contribute to the representation of psychological meaning and desire in film (Ryan & Lenos, 2020).

Secondary data sources include books, journal articles, and previous studies related to Lacanian psychoanalytic theory and its application in literary and film studies. These sources support the theoretical framework and help explain the concepts of desire, the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic (Lacan, 1977).

Data Collection

The data were collected through several steps. First, the author watched the film *Room* (2015) several times to understand the storyline, character development, and the situations experienced by Ma.

Second, the author identified and recorded dialogues, monologues, character actions, and visual symbols related to the representation of Ma's desire. Third, the selected data were classified based on Lacanian psychoanalytic concepts: the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic in order to make the analysis more organized.

Data Analysis

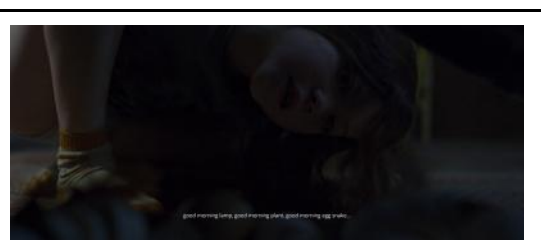
The data were analyzed using interpretive qualitative analysis based on Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. After the relevant data were collected and classified, the author analyzed dialogues, scenes, and visual elements that represent Ma's desire in the film (Lacan, 1977).

Each selected data was then interpreted using the concept of desire and the three Lacanian realms: the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic. The analysis focuses on how Ma's actions, dialogues, and interactions with other characters reflect the structure of her desire. The results explain how Ma's desire functions as a psychological drive that influences her actions, survival strategies, and identity throughout the film.

RESULTS

Ma's Desire in the Imaginary


Scene 1: Jack Greeting Objects in the Room Jack greets objects inside the Room as part of his daily routine

	<p>The Imaginary realm refers to how individuals understand reality through images and identification (Lacan, 1977).</p>
<p>Figure 1. Jack greets objects inside the Room <i>Source: Room (2015)</i></p>	

<p>Dialogue</p> <p>Jack : “Good morning lamp, good morning plant, good morning egg snake, good morning rug, good morning wardrobe, good morning TV...”</p>	
--	--

In this scene, Jack greets various objects in the Room, indicating that he perceives the Room as a complete and meaningful world. This reflects the Imaginary realm, where reality is constructed through images and identification. The objects function as stable references that shape Jack’s understanding of his environment. Although this scene focuses on Jack’s behavior, his perception is shaped by the environment constructed by Ma. Through her consistent guidance and the way she introduces the objects as meaningful, Ma indirectly forms Jack’s understanding of reality. Therefore, Jack’s behavior reflects Ma’s desire to create a structured and meaningful world in order to protect him from the harsh reality.


Scene 2: Ma creates a birthday celebration to simulate a normal family experience

 <p>Figure 2. Ma prepares a birthday celebration inside the Room</p> <p><i>Source: Room (2015)</i></p> <p>Dialogue</p> <p>Ma : “We are going to bake a birthday cake.”</p> <p>Jack : “A birthday cake like in TV?”</p> <p>Ma : “But for real.”</p>	<p>In the Imaginary realm, individuals create images that make their reality feel normal and complete (Lacan, 1977).</p>
--	--

This scene shows Ma organizing a birthday celebration to imitate a normal family experience inside the confined space of the Room. This reflects the Imaginary realm, where individuals construct ideal images to create a sense of wholeness. Through this act, Ma attempts to

maintain a coherent and “normal” reality for Jack despite their actual condition. This shows her desire to provide a sense of normal life for her child.


Scene 3: Jack distinguishes between real objects and television representations

 <p>Figure 3. Jack explains his understanding of reality and television <i>Source: Room (2015)</i></p> <p>Dialogue Jack : “Plant is real but not trees... TV persons are flat and made of colors but me and you are real.”</p>	<p>The Imaginary shapes how individuals see and understand reality through images and representations (Lacan, 1977).</p>
--	--

In this scene, Jack explains his understanding of reality based on objects he interacts with and images from television. This reflects the Imaginary realm, where reality is constructed through representations and identification. His perception shows that his understanding of the world is shaped by a limited but structured image. This reflects Ma’s desire to control how Jack perceives reality in order to keep him psychologically safe.

Ma’s Desire in the Real


Scene 1: Ma experiences pressure when interacting with Old Nick

 <p>Figure 4. Jack greets objects inside the Room <i>Source: Room (2015)</i></p>	<p>The Real refers to experiences that cannot be fully expressed in language and often appear as trauma or pressure (Lacan, 1977).</p>
--	--

<p>Dialogue</p> <p>Old Nick : “So, how did he like his truck? yeah?”</p> <p>Ma : (Silent)</p>	
---	--

In this scene, Ma remains silent when Old Nick speaks to her, showing a moment of psychological pressure. Although the interaction appears simple, her silence reflects an experience that cannot be expressed verbally. This represents the Real, where experience exceeds language. It also reflects Ma’s desire to protect herself and maintain control in a threatening situation.

Scene 2: Ma asks Jack to pretend to be dead

 <p>Figure 5. Ma wraps Jack in a rug <i>Source: Room (2015)</i></p> <p>Dialogue</p> <p>Ma : “Pretending to be sick because you’re gonna play dead folding over.”</p> <p>Jack : “I don’t wanna be dead.”</p> <p>Ma : “You’re just pretending to be dead...”</p>	<p>The Real appears as something shocking and difficult to understand, often connected to traumatic experience (Lacan, 1977).</p>
---	---

This scene shows an extreme situation in which Ma asks Jack to pretend to be dead as part of an escape plan. This action goes beyond normal logic and reflects the intensity of her traumatic condition. It represents the Real, where individuals are pushed into situations that are difficult to comprehend but necessary for survival, it shows how Ma is forced into an unbearable situation in order to survive. This reflects her desire to escape and protect her child.

Scene 3: Ma expresses despair inside the Room



Figure 6. Ma shows a look of despair in the Room

Source: Room (2015)

Dialogue

Ma : (Crying, no clear verbal expression)

The Real refers to experiences that cannot be fully expressed through language and often appear through intense emotions or non-verbal expressions (Lacan, 1977).

In this scene, Ma breaks down emotionally after the first escape attempt fails. She expresses her distress through crying rather than words, indicating an experience that cannot be fully articulated. This reflects the Real, where emotional intensity exceeds language and appears in a raw and unstructured form. It also shows Ma's desire to survive despite overwhelming emotional pressure.

Scene 4: Ma shows emotional frustration after leaving the Room



Figure 7. Ma argues with her mother at home after leaving the Room

Source: Room (2015)

Dialogue

Ma : "I don't know what's wrong with me, I'm supposed to be happy."

The Real refers to experiences that cannot be fully expressed through language and often appear as emotional conflict or distress (Lacan, 1977).

In this scene, Ma expresses confusion and frustration. Although she uses language, her emotional state shows something deeper that cannot be fully explained. This reflects the Real,

where trauma continues even after the physical situation changes. It shows Ma's desire to feel normal again, but she is unable to fully achieve it.

Ma's Desire in the Symbolic

Scene 1: Ma establishes daily routines through structured activities



Figure 8. Ma and Jack perform their morning routine inside the Room

Source: Room (2015)

Dialogue

Ma : "Let's start with some stretch."

The Symbolic refers to systems of rules, structure, and language that organize human experience (Lacan, 1977).

In this scene, Ma begins the day by asking Jack to do stretching, creating a simple daily routine. This routine shows a structured pattern that helps organize their life inside the Room. Ma's use of language ("let's start...") reflects the Symbolic realm, where life is shaped by rules and repeated actions. Her effort to create this routine shows her desire to maintain a sense of normality and control for Jack.

Scene 2: Ma hides Jack in the wardrobe when Old Nick comes



Figure 9. Jack hides inside the wardrobe when Old Nick comes

Source: Room (2015)


Dialogue

The Symbolic realm involves language, rules, and power relations (Lacan, 1977).

Old Nick	: “Hey there.”	
Ma	: “He’s asleep.”	
Old Nick	: “I don’t think so...”	

In this scene, Ma hides Jack in the wardrobe as a repeated rule to protect him when Old Nick comes. This shows a structured pattern used to manage a dangerous situation. The interaction also reflects a power imbalance, where Old Nick controls the situation and questions Ma’s actions. This reflects the Symbolic realm, where behavior is shaped by rules and authority. Ma’s desire is shown in her effort to protect Jack by maintaining this system.

Scene 3: Ma negotiates with Old Nick

	<p>The Symbolic realm involves structured relationships formed through language, including power and authority (Lacan, 1977).</p>
<p>Figure 10. Ma communicates with Old Nick <i>Source: Room (2015)</i></p>	
<p>Dialogue</p> <p>Ma : “The vitamins.”</p> <p>Old Nick : “It’s a waste of money, there’s nothing in them.”</p>	

In this scene, Ma asks Old Nick about the vitamins, but her request is dismissed. This interaction reflects an unequal power structure in which Old Nick controls resources and decisions. Ma’s desire is shown through her attempt to negotiate within this system in order to meet her and Jack’s needs, even though her position remains limited.

Scene 4: Ma explains the existence of the outside world to Jack inside the Room

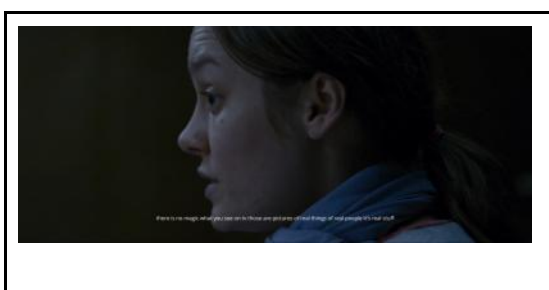
	<p>The Symbolic shapes understanding through language and shared meaning (Lacan, 1977).</p>
---	---

Figure 11. Ma explains to Jack that there is a world outside the Room

Source: Room (2015)

Dialogue

Ma : “There is no magic what you see on TV, those are pictures of real things of real people, it's real stuff.”

In this scene, Ma uses language to reconstruct Jack’s understanding of reality. She introduces new meanings that go beyond Jack’s previous perception. This reflects the Symbolic realm, where language functions as a system that shapes knowledge and belief. Ma’s explanation shows her desire to prepare Jack for a broader reality by gradually introducing him to new concepts.

Scene 5: Ma argues with her mother after leaving the room



Figure 12. Ma in an emotional conversation with her mother

Source: Room (2015)

Dialogue

Ma : “Oh I'm sorry”
Ma’s Mother : “No you’re not sorry”
Ma : “Yeah, I'm not sorry. You have no idea what’s going on in my head.”

The Symbolic involves language and social interaction (Lacan, 1977)..

In this scene, Ma and her mother use language, but they fail to understand each other. This shows a breakdown in communication. This reflects the Symbolic realm, where communication is expected to follow shared meaning. However, Ma struggles to express herself and to fit into this social interaction. Ma’s desire is shown in her attempt to express her feelings, even though she feels misunderstood.

DISCUSSION

Desire as Lack

Ma's desire in *Room* (2015) emerges from different forms of loss, including freedom, social connection, and psychological stability. These forms of lack continuously shape her actions inside the Room, particularly through the routines she creates for Jack. When Ma says, "Let's start with some stretch," the routine functions not merely as a daily activity, but as an effort to maintain stability and create a sense of normal life for Jack inside the Room. The scene suggests that Ma uses routine as a psychological strategy to manage fear and maintain control within an unstable environment. Through these repetitive actions, she attempts to preserve emotional stability despite the traumatic conditions surrounding her.

These psychological tensions also appear in moments of interaction with Old Nick. When Ma says, "He's asleep," her response indicates an anxiety that cannot be fully expressed directly. Rather than openly resisting, Ma relies on controlled language and repeated behavioral patterns to protect Jack and maintain stability within the confined space. The repeated safety routines and rules demonstrate her effort to preserve a sense of order in an environment dominated by fear and uncertainty. This condition reveals that Ma's desire for freedom and emotional stability continuously shapes her survival strategies throughout the film.

Objet Petit a

According to Lacan, objet petit a functions as the cause of desire that sustains the subject's motivation without ever being fully achieved. In many psychoanalytic readings, it is often represented through relational figures that give meaning to a character's survival and emotional attachment (Jasim & Benny, 2025). In this film, Jack functions as Ma's objet petit a, becoming the central motivation behind her actions. Ma's actions are consistently centered on Jack, including her efforts to explain the outside world. When she says, "There is no magic... it's real stuff," she is not only providing information, but also shaping Jack's understanding of reality. This suggests that Jack becomes the primary reason for Ma to continue surviving and to give meaning to her situation. However, his presence does not eliminate Ma's sense of lack. Instead, it sustains and directs her desire.

In addition, Ma's role as a mother also shapes her identity, enabling her to maintain psychological stability under traumatic conditions (Kim, 2021; Fani et al., 2025). This supports the idea that objet petit a functions as a driving force of desire rather than its fulfillment (Evans, 1996). From this perspective, Ma's desire is sustained and directed by Jack as her objet petit a, which continues to give meaning to her actions without fully resolving her sense of lack.

Desire of the Other

According to Jacques Lacan, desire is related to the Other, particularly through language and relationships with others (Lacan, 1977). This becomes clearer after Ma leaves the Room.

After returning to society, Ma faces new situations that affect her emotional state. This change highlights the tension between her past experiences and her present reality. In her conversation with her mother, Ma says, “You have no idea what’s going on in my head,” which suggests that she has difficulty expressing her inner experiences to others. In the Symbolic realm, language is expected to help build shared understanding. In this case, communication does not function effectively. This reflects a gap between Ma’s inner experience and her ability to express it through language. Meanwhile, the Real appears through emotions that cannot be fully explained. As a result, Ma’s desire to regain stability and meaning in her life is shaped by the interaction between her internal experiences and her relationships with others.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that Ma’s desire in *Room* (2015) emerges from a fundamental sense of lack and operates through the Imaginary, the Real, and the Symbolic. Her desire drives her to construct a protective world for Jack, manage trauma, and maintain control through routines. Jack functions as the objet petit a that sustains and directs her desire. After escaping, her desire continues to be shaped by social expectations and symbolic structures, showing that desire is both internally driven and socially constructed (Kaya & Zabcı, 2025; Wang, 2025).

The study also suggests that, in traumatic situations, desire is not focused on complete fulfillment, but on maintaining psychological stability and meaning under unstable conditions. Overall, the study demonstrates that desire functions as a dynamic psychological structure that shapes Ma’s survival, identity, and relationship with reality throughout the film.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the academic advisor and the lecturers of the English Literature Department at Universitas Teknokrat Indonesia for the guidance, support, and constructive feedback provided during the completion of this study. Special thanks are extended to parents and friends for their continuous encouragement and moral support throughout the writing process. Finally, appreciation is given to Emma Donoghue as the writer of *Room* (2015) and to Lenny Abrahamson as the director of the film adaptation, whose work has offered meaningful inspiration and valuable material for this study.

REFERENCES

- Åsvoll, H. (2025). *Desire, education and teaching: A Lacanian perspective* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003508120>
- Bashir, S., & Ahmad, J. (2026). Reclaiming the self: Lacanian psychoanalysis and the trauma of identity in *The Color Purple*. *Annals of Human and Social Sciences*, 7(1), 18–28. [https://doi.org/10.35484/ahss.2026\(7-1\)03](https://doi.org/10.35484/ahss.2026(7-1)03)
- Bateman, J. A., & Schmidt, K. H. (2012). *Multimodal film analysis: How films mean*. Routledge.
- Bracher, M. (1993). *Lacan, discourse, and social change*. Cornell University Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- De Martini Melo, H. (2024). The triangulation of desire: A psychoanalytic three-part structure of desire and power in film. *Comunicación & Métodos – Communication & Methods*, 6(2), 34–51. <https://doi.org/10.35951/v6i2.232>
- Dewanti, R., Rusfandi, D., & Sari, M. (2025). Unmasking Mei: A Lacanian psychoanalytic study of identity formation in *Turning Red* movie. *Celtic: A Journal of Culture, English Language Teaching, Literature & Linguistics*, 12(2). <https://doi.org/10.22219/celtic.v12i2.41813>
- Dimitrijovska-Jankulovska, A., & Denkovska, M. (2025). Erigon and Hermes: A comparative Jungian and Lacanian psychoanalysis of identity, spirituality, guidance, and transformation. *Science International Journal*, 4(3), 101–104. <https://doi.org/10.35120/sciencej0403101d>
- Donoghue, E. (2010). *Room*. Little, Brown and Company.
- Evans, D. (1996). *An introductory dictionary of Lacanian psychoanalysis*. Routledge.
- Fani, M., Bicknell, M., & Fenton, E. (2025). The value of desire: With Lacan to the new hidden abode of knowledge valorisation. *Organization*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13505084251352956>
- Fink, B. (1995). *The Lacanian subject: Between language and jouissance*. Princeton University Press.
- Floroiu, I. (2025). Desire, lack, and the symbolic: Toward a Lacanian-Hegelian pedagogy. *PhilArchive*. <https://philarchive.org/rec/FLODLA-2>

- Jasim, A. K., & Benny, N. S. (2025). Desire, lack, and the objet petit a: Gregor Samsa's transformation and the Lacanian dialectic of desire. *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*, 10(5), 202–207. <https://doi.org/10.22161/ijels.105.37>
- Jones, A. (2025). *Re-imagining the Algorithmic Imaginary Through Psychoanalysis, Cinema and Sludge* (Doctoral dissertation, University of York).
- Kaya, G., & Zabcı, N. (2025). Shaping reality: An interplay of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis. *AYNA Klinik Psikoloji Dergisi*, 12(2), 165–189. <https://doi.org/10.31682/ayna.1456274>
- Karadima, D. (2022). Design and commons: A Lacanian approach. In G. Bruyns & S. Kousoulas (Eds.), *Design commons: Design research foundations*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-95057-6_12
- Kristiawan, V. (2025). The symbolic stage of desire: An exploration of Lacan's theory in the context of *We Need to Talk About Kevin*. *Litera Kultura*. <https://ejournal.unesa.ac.id/index.php/litera-kultura/article/view/65539>
- Lacan, J. (1977). *Écrits: A selection* (A. Sheridan, Trans.). Routledge.
- Maharramov, B., & Shahhuseynbayova, N. (2025). Lacanian and Freudian psychoanalytic perspectives on advertising analysis: Desire and social roles. *Universum: Psychology and Education*, 2(3), 24–28. <https://doi.org/10.32743/UniPsy.2025.129.3.19503>
- Monaco, J. (2009). *How to read a film: Movies, media, and beyond*. Oxford University Press.
- Öztürk, E. (2025). Binge-Watching and the Theory of Desire: A Lacanian Perspective on Netflix Consumption Patterns. *CINEJ Cinema Journal*, 13(1), 262–287. <https://doi.org/10.5195/cinej.2025.682>
- Palm, F. (2023). Lacanian psychoanalysis, addiction and enjoyment. *Body & Society*, 29(1), 56–78. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1357034X221134438>
- Panasiuk, M. (2025). The concept of lack in Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory: An exploration of manque as constitutive absence. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5888962>
- Pederson, T.C. (2018). *Psychoanalysis and Hidden Narrative in Film: Reading the Symptom* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315142234>

- Ryan, M., & Lenos, M. (2020). *An introduction to film analysis: Technique and meaning in narrative film*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.
- Saputra, R., & Anam, K. (2019). Psychoanalytic reading of desire for freedom in Osamu Dazai's *The Setting Sun*. *Rainbow: Journal of Literature, Linguistics and Culture Studies*, 14(1). <https://doi.org/10.15294/rainbow.v14i.30056>
- Sawan, K. (2023). Lacanian psychoanalysis and literature. *The SPL Journal of Literary Hermeneutics*, 3(1), 34–47.
- Sheikh, F. A. (2017). Subjectivity, desire and theory: Reading Lacan. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2017.1299565>
- Shabrang, H., & Seyfi, N. (2025). Lacanian repetition and recollection: From trauma to fantasy in Emma Donoghue's *Room*. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, 25(3).
- Sikov, E. (2010). *Film studies: An introduction*. Columbia University Press.
- Suthaporn, P., Thongpibul, K., & Sakulsriprasert, C. (2022). Lacanian psychoanalytic analysis of film director's psychological process and subjectivity through filmmaking. *Journal of Behavioral Science for Development*, 14(1), 75–96.
- Swales, S. S. (2012). *Perversion: A Lacanian psychoanalytic approach to the subject*. Routledge.
- Tyson, L. (2006). *Critical theory today: A user-friendly guide* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Wang, Y. (2025). Desire and emptiness: Rethinking fantasy through the Diamond Sutra and Lacanian psychoanalysis. *Philosophies*, 10(6), 131. <https://doi.org/10.3390/philosophies10060131>
- Yadlin-Gadot, S., & Hadar, U. (2023). *Lacanian psychoanalysis: A contemporary introduction*. Routledge.