

ISSN: 0976-8165

The Criterion

An International Journal in English

Vol. 7, Issue-5 (October 2016)

The Criterion 

7th Year of Open Access

Editor-in-Chief
Dr. Vishwanath Bite

www.the-criterion.com

About Us: <http://www.the-criterion.com/about/>

Archive: <http://www.the-criterion.com/archive/>

Contact Us: <http://www.the-criterion.com/contact/>

Editorial Board: <http://www.the-criterion.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.the-criterion.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.the-criterion.com/fa/>



ISSN 2278-9529

Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

www.galaxyimrj.com

Comparative Study of the Novel and Film Adaptation of Emma Donoghue's *Room*

Shikha Thakur

Assistant Professor,
Lovely Professional University.

The Comparative study refers to the comparison of one piece of art with the other. The present paper is an attempt to comparatively study Emma Donoghue's fiction *Room* (2010) with Lenny Abrahamson's directed movie *Room* (2015). The director Lenny Abrahamson, by conflating the prevalent contemporary elements of the age with the captivity of Ma and her son Jack in a suspenseful and horror narrative in the movie, has helped the readers to understand how the movie adaptation fits into different environment and time period, while still being true to various events, characters, ideas and themes in the novel. In the contemporary stage the image-based culture is prioritized over the text-based culture, where greater flux of people prefer watching movies to reading books. For that matter, the movie released in November 2015, after five years of the novel publication, aims at viewing and comprehending the prevalent social evils: multiple disrobement, forced women confinement, silent abduction, violent pregnancy, sexual assaults, and motherhood, through the enslaved victim's voice.

The vivid descriptions of symbolic meanings concerning the objects and important happenings in the novel: breast-feeding referential of mother-child kinship, still birth of first child to Ma referential of Ma's passivity, and the vast characterization referential of characters' roles and feelings towards the victim survivors, have been mitigated and dismissed from the movie. For the movie represents the present scenario of the society where the rape victim survivors are not rendered justice and the rape perpetrators are not castigated. As in the novel Ma and Jack, the victim survivors are rendered separate apartment, which proves that they had actually sought real freedom, “ ‘Ma's grinning. We can do anything now.’ ‘Why?’ ‘Because we're free’ (296), and Old Nick's incarceration is reiterated, unlike the movie where the victim survivors, Ma and Jack are seen staying in grandma's apartment post-liberation and little is discovered of Old Nick's fate, who is although caught by the police authority yet its aftermath remains undiscovered. Motherhood being the most important theme in the story, has been dealt individually and uniquely in the novel and the movie. The novel *Room*, in true sense portrays the best story of a child-mother bond representing the hardships and the resilience obtained to combat those hardships, as stated by Emma Donoghue in one of the interviews, when asked about the Ma-Jack relationship “Yes, ‘*Room*’ celebrates mother-love but painfully calculates those moments when Ma has to recognize that Jack needs something other than her protection. Those moments all parents come to when love takes the form of stepping back, letting go” (“The Q&A”). The novel exultantly celebrates this bond, where Jack is seen as an extension of Ma, who saved Ma from being condemned to mundane and monotonous lifelong imprisonment. Ma had none in the

world (eleven by eleven room) other than her son Jack, who is seen sobbing for his mother's ruination and ignorantly turns out to be an emotional partner to Ma. The two share an intense relationship of alliance and friendship. Ma develops inclination towards Jack and irrespective of the contingent circumstances safeguards and nurtures him with minimum resources she has, the iteration on breast feeding that perpetuates till Jack turns five corroborates the mother-child bond. Contrarily, the movie highlights the real aspects of motherhood of the age, where the mother-child bond is conditionally intensified, such that, mothers very often escape breastfeeding their children on grounds of deforming their figures.

Furthermore, the coherent characterization in the novel, where the important characters: Dora, Noreen, Paul, Deana and Bronwyn augment Jack's bildungsroman are absent in the movie. For in the novel, Dora is the cartoon character with whom he develops the bonding as with a best friend, "today I put my fingers on Dora's head for a hug and tell her about my superpowers now I'm five, she smiles" (12). Jack's personification of the inanimate and objectification of the animate, except Ma, is a powerful anti-narrative strategy employed by Donoghue to subvert the fixity of the real and the unreal and bring the possibility of a creative new experience of the world. Jack is best friends with Dora and although she is on television, he touches her head to greet her and walks along with her. He tells her about his, "superpowers now I'm five" (12). He is enamored by her explorations as he makes his own with the help of Ma and the various sub-texts around him. His growth is paralleled by Dora's on the screen and she acts as a facilitating bridge between the inside and the outside world. When Jack finds a Dora backpack in the mall, he "get[s] down to touch her face, she's smiling and dancing" (303), he is at once reassured by her presence and this lessens his trauma of adjusting to the outside. Noreen, a guide and a nurse gently guides and assists them to grow accustomed to life in the outside world, who also accompanies them to the zoo to entertain Jack when they (Ma and Jack) are marked down for being stalked by the media for interviews. Similarly, Paul, playing Ma's brother, Deana, playing Paul's wife, and Bronwyn, playing Ma's niece are noticed instilling the worldly ways of life in Jack's psyche in the novel, which the movie lacks, for its attempt to emphasize the nuclear family culture of the contemporary era. The movie centralizes grandma and steppa's contribution towards the betterment of Ma and Jack, and eliminates the other supportive characters of the fiction as mentioned above. Thus, novel results as an informative piece for its vast deployment of characters, roles and their emotive response towards Jack which remained folded in the movie, as reviewed by Tim Robey in one of the interviews on movie "somehow, it lacks the flooding emotional force Donoghue gave it on the page." (n. pag.) The exceptionally beautiful moments in the movie where Jack is introduced to a pet dog bought by steppa and his acquiesce to get his dear long hair cut in the hope that it will cheer up his mother, gives a frabjous tone to the movie, yet it fails to arouse the profound impact like novel, well stated in a review by Nigel M. Smith, "it fails to register on a level as profound as its source due to its director's sometimes shaky grip on the material." (n.pag.) Apparently, the movie adaptation which although got nominated for the best motion picture of the year(2015) and grabbed an Oscar award for the best performance by an actress in a leading role in 2016 successfully portrayed the social evils of the age, yet, could

not match up with the novel shortlisted for Man Booker prize (2010) for its vast characterization, unlimited imaginative zone, coherent roles, lucid angles, emotive dialogues, and profound impact. Hence, it is cogently concluded that movie has undoubtedly brought the whole world to life by making the characters living, breathing flesh and blood, but the novel let one live everything.

Works Cited:

Donoghue, Emma. *Room*. 2010. London: Picador, 2011. Print.

Donoghue, Emma. Interview. *The Q&A: Emma Donoghue, Author. The Economist*. More Intelligent Life, 17 November 2010. Web. 22 December 2015.

Robey, Tim. Rev. of *Room*: 'Less Powerful than the Book,' by Lenny Abrahamson. *Telegraph.co.uk*. Telegraph Media, 14 January 2016. Web. 6 April 2016.

Smith, Nigel M. Rev of *Room*: Brie Larson and Jacob Tremblay Escape confining Adaptation," by Lenny Abrahamson. *TheGaurdian.com*. Gaurdian News, 15January 2016. Web. 4 April 2016.