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The commodification of the traumatized voice: An exploration of communicative injustice in Emma Donoghue's *Room*

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Abstract:
Mass media is an indispensable part of modern society. It plays a crucial role in allowing rape victims to speak about their experiences through interviews and talk shows. But, this is not free from danger, as the media commodifies traumatic narratives by interpreting them to maximize profit. This disempowering tendency of media gives birth to communicative injustice. In Emma Donoghue's Room *(2010), after being rescued from seven years captivity at the hands of her rapist, Ma, the main character, becomes the victim of communicative injustice when her motherhood is interpreted as faulty in an interview. Her decision to keep Jack, her son, with her instead of giving him up for adoption is viewed as selfish. The interview retraumatizes her, and as a consequence, she attempts suicide. She fails to communicate her motherly feelings to the media. Through a textual analysis of* Room*, this article discusses the negative impact of media on Ma and her child by using the concept of communicative injustice explored by Jilly Boyce Kay in the book* Gender, Media and Voice: Communicative Injustice and Public Speech *(2020).*

Introduction

Breaking the silence regarding sexual abuse is the first step in healing from the trauma and "is central to recovery," where "you must speak of that which has caused the trauma in order to make sense of it, and so move beyond it" (Kay, 2020, p. 64). Articulation of one's voice shifts the status of the victim: "The act of speaking out in and of itself transforms power relations and subjectivities, or the very way in which we experience and define ourselves" (Alcoff and Gray, 1993, p. 260). The #MeToo movement would never have happened if silence had won the race. Bass and Davis also remark, "Speaking out is a powerful step toward personal liberation, healing, and social change" (Bass and Davis, 2008). It needs much courage to speak out because there is no turning back after the revelation as it moves from the "private realm to the public one" (Bass and Davis, 2008). Speaking out is a mutual understanding process: "Telling is transformative. When you let someone know what you have lived through and that person hears you with respect and genuine caring, you begin a process of change essential to healing" (Bass and Davis, 2008). The survivor has to be assured that the people to whom she is going to disclose her experience of sexual abuse are trustworthy and will not show disbelief in her words. Otherwise, their doubt can retraumatize her: "It is an enormous challenge to find safe places to express the pain of trauma" (Kolk, 2014). This communication gap is a new problem in the contemporary digitalized world.

The increased visibility of sexual violence against women has become possible due to the effect of digital technology and mass media, as "digital platforms give people an opportunity to voice previously hidden experiences of sexual violence, making sure they are seen, heard, and validated" (Mendes et al. 2019, p. 5). They play a crucial role in allowing rape victims to speak about their experiences through interviews and talk shows. But, this is also fraught with danger as their traumatized narratives have been commodified by the media, interpreted and circulated in order to maximize the media's ability to make a financial profit out of their stories: "Studies from across the globe have highlighted the ways in which news reports of rape and sexual assault sensationalize sexual violence, give a distorted view of its incidence and nature" (Gill, 2007). This disempowering tendency of media gives birth to communicative injustice.

Irish-Canadian author Emma Donoghue captures this new form of cruelty in her novel *Room* (2010). After being rescued from seven years of captivity at the hands of her rapist, Ma, the main character of the novel, becomes the victim of communicative injustice when her motherhood is interpreted as selfish in an interview. Ma wants to narrate her story through the

interview for two reasons. First, she does not want her life story to be distorted by the media, and second, she wants to arrange college funds for Jack through this interview. But, during the interview, instead of showing empathy, the media start to criticize her motherhood. They see her upbringing of Jack as faulty and consider giving away Jack for adoption a better option rather than keeping him with her in the Room. They also misinterpret her dependency on the rapist as an outcome of her emotional attachment to him. They do not even show any emotion towards her first child, who was born dead, and ignoring a prior agreement, they start asking questions regarding the first child only for commercial purposes. When she is criticized for not giving away Jack for adoption, and the female interviewer mocks her with a "little laugh," Ma feels "tears coming down her face," and after this event, she attempts suicide (Donoghue, 2010, p. 297). The decision to speak out does not go well for Ma, and the interview retraumatizes her. The listener is not empathetic enough to hear her traumatized voice, which throws her into a state of self-doubt. She fails to communicate her motherly feelings to the media.

Previous research presents the text primarily as a resistance narrative relying on the power of motherhood. Scholars narrate Ma and Jack's lives as captives within and outside the Room. ALBAY and GÜLEŞCE analyse the novel from a "psychoanalytic perspective with a focus on the mother and child relationship" (Albay and GÜLEŞCE, 2023, p. 247). O'Reilly argues that Ma's "identity as a mother is self-created and sustained by reciprocal mother-child love" and that "Ma enacts resistance and achieves redemption in motherhood" (O'Reilly, 2017, p. 98). Desyara and Sahri focus on this novel as a captivity narrative and the several psychological disorders it causes (Desyara and Sahri, 2020, p. 131). Citra and Wulan highlight Ma's role as a mother in "educating, managing, and maintaining her son, Jack," even in captivity (Citra and Wulan, 2022, p. 130). Borham-Puyal shows "how maternity gives impulse to a woman's struggle for survival and meaning" and how this novel is "about motherhood and mother-child relationships, about women's identity and about survival based on maternal love and instinct" (Borham-Puyal, 2020, p. 86). Borham-Puyal also says that in this novel, "[m]otherhood seems to provide resilience in the face of trauma and abuse" (Borham-Puyal, 2020, p. 86). Ladrón presents the novel "as a superb exploration of the phenomenon of resilience, a psychological construct that explains how, under traumatic circumstances of distress, human beings might develop an unexpected capacity to cope with pain and suffering" (Ladrón, 2017, p. 83). She also indicates how the "mother-son dyad as the pillar" converts the novel into a "celebration of life rather than a dramatic story of the human struggle and agony of survival" (Ladrón, 2017, p. 84). At the time of discussing Ma's trauma both in private and

public spheres, though Lorenzi gives a hint about the negative impact of the media on Ma and how it causes Ma's emotional breakdown even after her release from captivity, she does not elaborate on it further (Lorenzi, 2016, p. 29). Jaime de Pablos underscores mass media as one of the negative powers which hinder Ma and Jack from being socially integrated easily (Jaime de Pablos, 2022, p. 49).

By taking cues from Lorenzi and Jaime de Pablos regarding the negative impact of mass media on Ma and Jack, this article tries to fill a research gap that has not been explored in a detailed manner. This novel indeed presents a woman as well as a mother's struggle to survive after being rescued from seven years of captivity at the hands of her rapist. But after liberation, how she, along with her child, becomes the victim of mass media and how her motherhood is criticized have not been given much focus in previous research. Speaking out, which is considered one of the foremost steps in healing from trauma, goes wrong for Ma. Instead of helping in her recovery, the disclosure of her sexual abuse through the interview retraumatizes her. Through a textual analysis of *Room*, this article discusses the negative impact of media on Ma by using the concept of communicative injustice explored by Jilly Boyce Kay in the book *Gender, Media and Voice: Communicative Injustice and Public Speech*.

The concept of communicative injustice

A victim of sexual abuse becomes the victim of communicative injustice when "certain kinds of communication become impossible" for her, and her story is exploited by the media (Beeby, 2011, p. 1). When survivors show courage to speak about their experience, the media exploits their narratives for their profit: "The media often use the presence of survivors for shock value and to pander to a sadistic voyeurism among viewers, focusing on the details of the violations with close-ups of survivors' anguished expressions. They often eroticize the depictions of survivors and of sexual violence to titillate and expand their audiences" (Alcoff and Gray, 1993, p. 262). Jilly Boyce Kay mentions,

> In the contemporary context, communicative injustice refers to the double-bind that women are in when it comes to public speech: they are pulled in opposite directions by the contradictions of a culture that impels them to speak out, but which also punishes them for doing so. . . . Communicative injustice also refers to the ways in which the act of public speech for women is at some level always shadowed and underpinned by the possibility of violence—although this possibility is differentially acute for different women. (Kay, 2020, p. 8)

Patriarchal society assumes silence as "an idealised mode of communication for women" (Kay, 2020, p. 9), and whenever they try to break this norm, a new form of violence is imposed on them. Media culture encourages sexually abused women to come forward and make their voices reachable to everyone. However, this empowerment is entangled with risks as well. Kay mentions the double victimization of sexually abused women by pointing out the fact that while, on the one hand, media culture impels women "as subjects to self-define and self-promote through creating" their own public voice, on the other hand, having voice means acknowledging "the cruel ways in which this impulsion to have a voice is entangled with exposure to misogyny" (Kay, 2020, p. 9). Communicative injustice describes "the impossible situation that women are in when it comes to public speech," and it is also an instance of experiencing "shame, abuse and humiliation" (Kay, 2020, p. 9). In contemporary culture, having a voice is "not the solution to the crisis," but is the "problem" itself (Kay, 2020, p. 10). The central feature of communicative injustice is the "*irreconcilability*—the impossibility of escaping the cruel, gendered logics of media culture" (Kay, 2020, p. 61). The ancient cruelty of suppressing, negating and dismissing women's voices has not been "overcome but rather are *reconfigured* and *resignified* in the contemporary context," and the "contemporary twist" to this age-old injustice is that "while women were once compelled to stay silent, they are now increasingly encouraged to speak up—but the logics of speaking up are entangled with and productive of new forms of cruelty and abuse" (Kay, 2020, p. 61).

In *Room*, Ma is also encouraged to share her experience publicly through an interview. But when she starts, the media misinterprets her dependency on the rapist as an outcome of an emotional relationship. It criticizes her motherhood as faulty and selfish. It does not even maintain privacy regarding her first child, for which an agreement was signed before the interview. It is a new form of abuse, which humiliates her and gives her a feeling of shame regarding her motherhood.

Captive of the rapist

Emma Donoghue's *Room* (2010) is inspired by the real case of Elisabeth Fritzl, who was kept captive for 24 years by her father, Josef Fritzl, in a cellar underneath their house in Amstetten, Austria. It started in August 1984, at the age of 18. She was raped and sexually abused by her father from the second day of her captivity, and it continued until her release in April 2008. During this long period, he raped her almost 3,000 times, which resulted in seven babies. Though the babies are the source of her trauma, they also provide her company and a purpose to live instead of committing suicide, as she once contemplated.

The main character of Emma Donoghue's novel is only called "Ma". Though there are hints of her real name, it never comes into focus. After being kidnapped at the age of 19, Ma is held captive for almost seven years by the kidnapper-cum-rapist in a small room of 11-by-11 feet. During this period, the kidnapper molests her almost every night. The Room is soundproof, has a skylight, and the door has a unique lock system which is set by a secret code known only to the rapist. The Room has a bed, television, wardrobe, kitchen, and washroom all in one place. It is not out of any humane feeling but only for his sexual gratification that the kidnapper provides her with daily essentials, food and electricity to keep her alive. She could not do anything besides cry about her miserable condition. As he was providing her with daily necessities, she had to depend on him for her survival. She counts every second of time, and after he brings her a TV, she leaves it on, "twenty-four/seven," to spend the time and to forget her loneliness (Donoghue, 2010, p. 118). She used to sleep almost for the whole day to forget her cursed life: "'I used to be scared to go to sleep, in case he came back,' says Ma, 'but when I was asleep was the only time I wasn't crying, so I slept about sixteen hours a day'" (Donoghue, 2010, p. 118).

During her captivity, Ma tries almost all possible ways to escape from the Room, like digging a hole, screaming near the skylight, flashing lights and leaving notes in the trash bags. When she digs a hole, she finds a chain-like fence, which covers all the walls, floor joists and the roof of the Room so that she cannot cut through and escape (Donoghue, 2010, p. 120). When the rapist finds the hole, he laughs at her. She even tries to hurt the rapist with a toilet lid and a knife, but he overpowers her and threatens her by telling her that if she ever tries this type of act, she will be starved to death (Donoghue, 2010, pp. 120-121).

When she starts losing hope of being saved, Jack is born. Surprisingly, instead of hating him, she finds a means of living through Jack, her child: "For Ma, Jack is the only spark of hope, love, and life" (Albay and Gülеşce, 2023, p. 260). She begins to be polite to her captor to keep the baby safe. It is not until the end of the novel that readers come to know that Jack is her second child, and her first baby, who was born dead, was a girl. The rapist denies proper medical assistance when the baby gets tangled in the umbilical cord, and thus, she loses her first baby. Unlike the first child, who is born dead, she saves the second child and protects him from the rapist. Within the 11-by-11-feet Room, she keeps Jack in a wardrobe and keeps him safe from the evil looks of the rapist. She does not want the rapist to look at his face, which is as pure and innocent as an angel's: "I just don't want him looking at you. Even when you were a baby, I always wrapped you up in Blanket before he came in" (Donoghue, 2010, p. 32).

A mother can do everything for her child under any circumstances. The small size of the Room cannot create any hindrance to the motherly duty to her son. She tries to make a normal environment out of the hellish and suffocating atmosphere of the Room by creating a small but organized world for her child. She tries every possible means to educate her son from scant resources like storytelling, reading, workouts, and watching TV. She teaches him to read texts from the TV screen and the cereal boxes, thus introducing him to letters and words. She divides the whole week into a routine: Monday and Thursday are laundry days, Tuesday is the Room cleaning day, Wednesday and Saturday are hair washing days, Friday is mattress time, and Sunday is a day on which they get something extra as per their wish which is named "Sunday treat." Ma also involves Jack in creative activities like reading, storytelling, drawing, singing and playing. As there is no sketchbook for drawing, they use toilet paper, utiliszing it in two ways. Through these educational strategies, Ma tries to make Jack "capable of performing many tasks which help preserve his physical and mental health in the precarious life conditions they face" (Jaime de Pablos, 2022, p. 39).

Ma never gives up her escape plan and "never stops mentally rejecting her captor's control" (Jaime de Pablos, 2022, p. 36). Ma reads Jack some books, such as *The Runaway Bunny*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, and *Alice in Wonderland*. These books are not random choices, but she shares the stories of these books with Jack repeatedly. Most of the books are about escaping and adventures to the unknown world. She wants to make Jack aware of the outside world. Through stories of escape, she wants to ignite the wish to break free from the Room in Jack's mind.

When she comes to know that her captor has been out of work for six months, she has a premonition that he might kill them both. She also realizes that Jack needs something more than her motherly protection. She wants her son to live a normal life, so she makes a plan for Jack to be the first one to leave the Room. She wants to free him from this hell-like situation. She knows that if Jack fails and her plan does not work, she may not escape, but she feels a little relief thinking about her son's escape. She makes an escape plan to get out of the Room as soon as possible. One day, she invents a story regarding Jack's illness, and when the rapist does not show any compassion, she changes her first plan and informs him that Jack died because of the absence of proper treatment. She has difficulty convincing Jack to escape from the Room, and she tells him that without his help, she cannot escape as well. The rapist folds Jack's body in a rug and removes him from the Room to dispose of his body. As per his mother's suggestion, Jack escapes from his grasp when the truck stops at a signal. Though

Jack finds it difficult to tell the police about the Room's exact location, he succeeds, and Ma is finally freed.

This novel depicts the trauma and struggle of a mother who tries every possible aspect to keep her child safe within the limited space of the Room. Her struggle is not over even after her rescue. Her long-cherished wish to lead a free life is shattered when she becomes the prey of the media. Even when she shows the courage to talk about her experience in an interview, her sacrifice and motherhood are criticized. After being rescued from the rapist's seven-year-captivity, she becomes a captive of the media.

Captive of the media's communicative injustice

"Room" symbolizes the seclusion and loneliness that a rape victim has to endure. This novel is not only about "the horror of life in captivity," but it also deals with "the uneasy transition back into the world after escape" (Lorenzi, 2016, p. 19) and "external factors, such as excessive medical intervention and extremely sensationalist mass media coverage, and internal factors such as mental and emotional instability or lack of abilities to relate to other human beings" (Jaime de Pablos, 2022, p. 34). Ma goes through a traumatic experience within the Room through repeated rapes for almost seven years, but even after escaping from it, the outside world also has something cruel in store for her. The disturbing interference of the media casts her into another captivity. The media operatives are called "vultures" by a police officer when taking pictures of both Ma and Jack without seeking anybody's permission (Donoghue, 2010, p. 197). The paparazzi restrict their movement because wherever they go, they are followed like prey to "steal pictures of them and obtain an economic benefit" (Jaime de Pablos, 2022, p. 45). They are nothing but delicious media content. Pablos says, "TV shows and newspaper articles exploit their image and their tragedy to gain audience or readership" (Jaime de Pablos, 2022, p. 45).

Though she is not free of her trauma and is under medical treatment at the Cumberland Clinic, Ma decides to give an interview because she wants to prevent the media from intervening in their lives in the future: "I just need to answer their questions once and for all, so they'll stop asking" (Donoghue, 2010, p. 286). When the interview starts, the interviewer lady expresses her gratitude in a matter-of-fact manner: "Let me first express my gratitude, and the gratitude of all our viewers, for talking to us a mere six days after your release. For refusing to be silenced any longer" (Donoghue, 2010, p. 289). It is more to increase their Target Rating Point (TRP) that they want her to speak about this matter. They want to be the first news channel to broadcast her story and make a profit out of it: "And we're honored that

you've chosen this show to tell it" (Donoghue, 2010, p. 290). Ma tells the interviewer that she does not like being portrayed as a saintly figure, an "angel", or "a talisman of goodness", because she is not the only woman who has gone through this traumatic experience: "'All this reverential – I'm not a saint.'. . . 'I wish people would stop treating us like we're the only ones who ever lived through something terrible. I've been finding stuff on the Internet you wouldn't believe" (Donoghue, 2010, p. 294). By telling her this, Ma indicates the growing number of sexual violence cases around the world and also tries to raise awareness regarding some traumatic experiences that remain unheard and unnoticed. Ma does not want her story distorted by the media. She wants to be the author of her own story. But instead of showing respect for her struggle, she becomes the victim of communicative injustice. By highlighting Jack's underdeveloped growth, her motherhood is criticized. Communicative injustice is done to her by humiliating her motherhood through the interview process. As the central feature of communicative injustice is the "*irreconcilability*—the impossibility of escaping the cruel, gendered logics of media culture" (Kay, 2020, p. 61), Ma also cannot escape the cruel clasp of the gendered society where instead of chastising the rapist, her motherhood becomes the topic of criticism.

Although Ma loves Jack unconditionally, society considers him nothing more than "the grotesque son of a rapist" (Ladrón, 2017, p. 89). Society questions the manner and behaviour of Jack and questions her motherhood. In a nutshell, society welcomes them in a crude and judgmental way. A newspaper article bearing the headline, "HOPE FOR BONSAI BOY", portrays Jack in a dehumanized way:

> He is 'Miracle Jack' to the staff at the exclusive Cumberland Clinic who have already lost their hearts to the pint-sized hero who awakened Saturday night to a brave new world. The haunting, long-haired Little Prince is the product of his beautiful young mother's serial abuse at the hands of the Garden-shed Ogre (captured by state troopers in a dramatic standoff Sunday at two a.m.). Jack says everything is 'nice' and adores Easter eggs but still goes up and down stairs on all fours like a monkey. He was sealed up for all his five years in a rotting cork-lined dungeon, and experts cannot yet say what kind or degree of long-term developmental retardation. (Donoghue, 2010, p. 269)

The focus of the article is more on Jack's poor condition rather than on the crime itself. He is portrayed in such a way that it is as if he were an extraordinary example of Nature's creation that needs public attention. TV NEWS describes him as a "malnourished boy, unable to walk" (Donoghue, 2010, p. 205). The media do not let them lead a free and peaceful life. Whenever Ma and Jack step out of the clinic for a walk, paparazzi chase them and make them

uncomfortable. In the interview session, Ma even proclaims that it was easier to control their lives in the Room because, in the outside world, the media makes their lives uncontrollable: "'When our world was eleven foot square it was easier to control. Lots of things are freaking Jack out right now. But I hate the way the media call *him* a freak, or an idiot savant, or feral, that word —'" (Donoghue, 2010, p. 295).

The interviewer does not even care about agreement signed before the show. The negative impact of too much media interference has been captured in this novel by showing how the media becomes unemotional and intervenes in Ma's trauma without caring for her mental condition. The interviewer asks her about her first child, who was born dead. When she realizes this contravenes the agreement, she gives an excuse: "Oh, we're not going into any detail, but it feels crucial to establish the sequence" (Donoghue, 2010, p. 290). The media understands only business and cares little about Ma's emotions. The outside world is interested only in listening to her story to be entertained for a few days. Noémi Albert mentions that during the interview, "the journalist deliberately provokes Ma by asking her questions that were previously agreed upon as excluded from the topics to be discussed, such as the stillbirth previous to giving birth to Jack" (Albert, 2019, p. 402).

The interview session is traumatic for Ma. The female interviewer does not let go of any chance to retraumatize her. She even dares to ask her if she feels any emotional attachment to the rapist (Donoghue, 2010, p. 290). Regarding Jack, the interviewer asks her if she feels bad for bearing the rapist's child. Ma says that after Jack's birth, she felt saved. The people of the outside world do not want to believe that she has tried her best to raise her son in captivity without a father figure. They assume that she became emotionally dependent on her rapist as he is the biological father of her son and provided them with the daily essentials. But Ma "wants to purify Jack's existence by denying Old Nick" (Albay and Güleşce, 2023, p. 262). The interviewer's series of disturbing questions only reflects the cruelty of society:

> "Escape," right, and the arrest of the, ah, the alleged captor. Now, did you get the sense, over the years, that this man cared — at some basic human level, even in a warped way — for his son?
> Ma's eyes have gone skinny. "Jack's nobody's son but mine."
> "That's so true, in a very real sense," says the woman. "I was just wondering whether, in your view, the genetic, the biological relationship—"
> "There was no *relationship*." She's talking through her teeth.
> "And you never found that looking at Jack painfully reminded you of his origins?"
> Ma's eyes go even tighter. "He reminds me of nothing but himself". (Donoghue, 2010, pp. 293-294)

Sara Ruddick argues that maternal practice is characterized by three "demands" – "*preservation*, *growth*, and *social acceptability*" and "to be a mother is to be committed to meeting these demands by works of preservative love, nurturance, and training" (Ruddick, 1995, p. 17). Dependence on adults for the "safety and well-being" of human children is prolonged because they "share prolonged physical fragility," and the survival of children depends upon protective care (Ruddick, 1995, p. 18). Every demand is linked with the other: "The demand to preserve a child's life is quickly supplemented by the second demand, to nurture its emotional and intellectual growth" (Ruddick, 1995, p. 19). Ma performs all the three demands in her captivity and freedom. However, society finds Ma's upbringing of Jack "deficient and wrong" (Ladrón, 2017, p. 93). O'Reilly mentions how Ma's strategies of preserving and caring for her child, Jack – "in particular keeping her son with her in Room, her close bond with her son, and her act of extended breastfeeding—are reconstructed as bad mothering upon freedom as the first strategy is read as maternal selfishness and the second two are read as violations of social acceptability, particularly for a male child" (O'Reilly, 2017, p. 89).

Through the interview, society finds fault in her breastfeeding her son even at the age of five: "You breastfeed him. In fact, this may startle some of our viewers" (Donoghue, 2010, p. 292). The free people of that society do not understand that in the unhealthy condition of the Room, where she has limited access to nutritious food both for herself and her child, she breastfeeds to keep her child healthy. The sacrifice of her own health does not grab the attention of the people. It had never occurred to her before that she brought up her child in the wrong way, deceived him, could not give him a proper education, and was selfish for not giving Jack up for adoption. To her, the presence of a mother, her love and protection are essential for a child. Social acceptability, the third demand of maternal practice, "is made not by children's needs but by the social groups of which a mother is a member. Social groups require that mothers shape their children's growth in 'acceptable' ways" (Ruddick, 1995, p. 21). Sara Ruddick says, "The demand for acceptability, however, does not vary, nor does there seem to be much dissent from the belief that children cannot 'naturally' develop in socially correct ways but must be 'trained'" (Ruddick, 1995, p. 21).

> The interviewer asks whether it ever occurs to her mind to
> leave him outside a hospital, say, so he could be adopted. . . .
> I can see Ma swallow. "Why would I have done that?"
> "Well, so he could be free."
> "Free away from me?"

> "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?"
> "He had me." Ma says it one word at a time. "He had a childhood with me, whether you'd call it *normal* or not."
> "But you knew what he was missing," says the woman. "Every day he needed a wider world, and the only one you could give him got narrower. You must have been tortured by the memory of everything Jack didn't even know to want. Friends, school, grass, swimming, rides at the fair . . ."
> "Why does everyone go on about fairs?" Ma's voice is all hoarse. "When I was a kid I hated fairs."
> The woman does a little laugh.
> Ma's got tears coming down her face, she puts up her hands to catch them. (Donoghue, 2010, p. 297).

The ultimate attack on her emotions is complete through this question-answer session. Her tears indicate the wounding power of the media. Pablos says that by "acting this way, by presenting Ma and Jack as abject beings, mass media are contributing to Ma's and Jack's sense of vulnerability, magnifying their suffering and, at the same time, hindering their social reintegration" (Jaime de Pablos, 2022, p. 45). Society cares little about her trauma and well-being. It projects her as a bad and selfish mother by not allowing Jack a free life without her. Indirectly, society accuses her of using Jack to protect her own well-being. As if when she loses all hope of being saved, she utilizes Jack's presence as her coping strategy. After the disturbing questions from the interviewer, she starts to doubt her motherhood, and "she has a breakdown and collapses" (Ladrón, 2017, p. 93). It is the mental pressure of the interview session which makes her upset, and she attempts suicide. By the media, Ma is "deemed a bad mother in her decision to keep Jack with her in captivity" (O'Reilly, 2017, p. 96). However, it is not so much her traumatic stress but the media's judgmental comments which make her reconsider her decision, doubt her motherhood, and start to see her motherhood through society's lens. In the outside world, where freedom should be boundless, the questioning attitude of the others makes her feel guilty and "causes her to lose the confidence she had as a mother while in Room and to doubt the values and perceptions that sustained her maternal practice while in captivity" (O'Reilly, 2017, p. 96). She never finds it difficult to be Jack's mother and never thinks about deserting him, but the media's judgmental behaviour makes her feel broken.

It is worth noting that she agrees to give the interview to arrange Jack's college fund (Donoghue, 2010, p. 287). Though she does not recover wholly, thinking about Jack's well-being, she neglects her own poor condition. Society and the media do not know that in the Room, she never even lets the rapist look at Jack, even after his repeated attempts. One day,

when the rapist says, "'I figure there must be something wrong,'. . . 'you've never let me get a good look since the day he was born. Poor little freak's got two heads or something?'" Ma invites him to bed to divert his attention from Jack (Donoghue, 2010, p. 90). To protect her son from the grasp of the evil man, she sacrifices herself. Whether society accepts it or not, Ma succeeds in her role as a mother. Even with the limited resources within the Room, she brings Jack up in a way that enables him to help his mother escape from hell. Lucia Lorenzi rightly says,

> By the end of the scene, it becomes clear that it is not necessarily Ma's trauma that pushes her to the point of emotional breakdown, but rather the trauma induced by the interviewer's violent attempts to shape, control, and manipulate Ma's narrative. As Donoghue's novel makes clear in this scene in particular, it is not only perpetrators or perpetrator narratives that can enact violence against victims' stories and subjectivities, but also those who have other forms of narrative control and power, such as the media who enact a kind of public violence. (Lorenzi, 2016, p. 29).

Captivity "is a human experience of any situation in which an individual is subjected to the control, will of another person or entity, and surrender power, autonomy, and independence. The victim has his or her will controlled by the other person and complies as a consequence of his actions of this other person or entity" (Desyara and Sahri, 2020, p. 130). Inside the Room, both Ma and Jack are under the control of the rapist, and outside of the Room, the situation does not change. They are taken under the control of the so-called normal and civilized people of society. Jack feels they have exchanged one form of captivity for another, and he does not find the freedom that his mother made him dream about: "Why is it better out than in? Ma said we'd be free, but this doesn't feel like free" (Donoghue, 2010, p. 320). The media makes their lives so uncomfortable that Jack has to go out in disguise. He thinks that he was freer in the Room compared to his present freedom.

Conclusion

Communicative injustice is a new form of suppressing a victim's voice not by silencing her but by encouraging her to speak out and then criticizing her (Kay, 2020, p. 61). Ma is encouraged to share her experience by the media, but when she shares her story, she is criticized so severely that she attempts to commit suicide. Becoming free from the grasp of her rapist, Ma does not feel actual freedom as there occurs a clash between her "idealized vision of her life outside and the realization that re-integration is highly difficult" (Albert,

2019, p. 401). Unless a traumatized victim is ready to share her experience through verbal words, she should not be forced to express that. Though Ma had not been prepared to talk about her hellish experience in the Room, due to the sharing of distorted news by the media, she was forced to do so. She wanted to put a full stop to the discussion and curiosity related to her and her child. She feels irritated when the media makes their lives uncomfortable by chasing them everywhere they go. Ma tries to protect Jack from the paparazzi as she protected him from the rapist. However, at the time of the interview, a close-up picture of Jack was taken without anyone's knowledge, and later, it was circulated online. Jack's grandmother comes to know about this from one of her friends:

> "Oh, no, the close-ups, from when they were doing the interview with . . ."
> "My daughter, yes. But close-ups of Jack?" She sounds furious.
> "Oh, honey, they're all over the Internet," says another voice.
> Then lots are talking all at once. "Didn't you know?"
> "Everything gets leaked, these days." (Donoghue, 2010, p. 349)

As Pablos rightly mentions, the mass media "also contribute to Ma's and Jack's perception of being constantly monitored, judged and rejected by issuing a series of news that offers a distorted image of them and by addressing them injurious speech" (Jaime de Pablos, 2022, p. 49). Escaping from the Room to the outside world, where they should feel safe, the constant media interference makes Jack feel captive again: "In Room I was safe and Outside is the scary" (Donoghue, 2010, p. 273). It can be said that Ma and Jack have been through a lot both within and outside of the Room, but all of these hardships make them stronger. After a lot of struggle, Ma and Jack manage to survive. The name of the last chapter, "Living", is significant as moving to independent living facilities is a kind of rebirth for both of them, especially Ma, who had shut down psychologically because of the long-term abuse. At the time of visiting the Room for the last time, Jack takes only one thing from the Room – a sketch of him, which Ma gifted him on his fifth birthday. This indicates that no matter what happens to them, their parent-child bond remains intact: "In the dark there's the picture of me Ma did for my birthday, . . . I pull the me picture down and zip it into my jacket" (Donoghue, 2010, p. 401). Thus, the last sign of their staying in the Room has been removed. It is a wiping off the bad memories from their new lives. Though the communication gap between Ma and the media makes her the victim of communicative injustice, the healthy communication between Ma and Jack gives her the impetus to start her life afresh.

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