

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers the introduction of the present research. It consists of nine sections: background, reasons for choosing the topic, research questions, aims of the research, scope of the research, significance of the research, research method, research procedure and organization of the paper.

1.1. Background of the Research

Being a mother is one of the most powerful acts that a woman can perform. McDaniels (2004) states that “when one chooses the position of mother, one chooses to give a large percentage of one’s life to the process of producing, guiding, and managing others’ lives” (p.1). “Things related to being a mother, mothers as a collective group, and to the qualities attributed to mothers” refer to the term of motherhood (O’Reilly, 2010, p. 571). O’Reilly further states that it is “a set of ideals determined by the established traditions and inherited history of a society, which sees women as primarily responsible for meeting their children’s daily needs” (p. 571). Since the past 30 years ago, the subject of motherhood has emerged. Although now motherhood has been studied and developed by many scholars, motherhood research is widely influenced by Adrienne Rich and it indicates a significant shift in motherhood research as a legitimate and distinctive discipline.

Rich (1976) claims two superimposed understandings of motherhood: “the potential relationship of any woman to her powers of reproduction and to children; and the institution, which aims at ensuring that that potential—and all women—shall remain under male control” (p.13). As a result, motherhood studies have developed into two interrelated categories of study: motherhood as institution and motherhood as experience. She further identifies the significant differences between motherhood and mothering: motherhood consists of the strict expectations determined by a social order, while mothering is an individual woman’s approach to the experience of being a mother.

Motherhood cannot be separated from feminism. O'Reilly (2004) states that Umansky, in her study of feminism between 1968 and 1982, emphasizes two competing feminist views on motherhood. Umansky explains:

The “negative” discourse that “focus[ses] on motherhood as a social mandate, an oppressive institution, a compromise of woman’s independence,” and the “positive” discourse that argues that “motherhood minus ‘patriarchy’ [. . .] holds the truly spectacular potential to bond women to each other and to nature, to foster a liberating knowledge of self, to release the very creativity and generativity that the institution of motherhood denies to women.” (Umansky, n.d, as cited in O'Reilly, 2004, p. 2)

From Umansky’s statement, it can be seen that feminism does not see motherhood only in a positive way since motherhood is in a male-dominated society, which limits women. However, motherhood also has positive values when mothering is female-centered.

Motherhood has been a central theme in many works of literature, especially in novel. Many novels reflect varied portrayals of motherhood from children literature to adult literature novel. In recent decades, a number of critical approaches within literary studies started to create different images on how the characters of mother construct their identity within novels. For the literary theorist, fiction can provide several examples of motherhood. As Rye (n.d) delivers that English and American literature movement offer new insights into the representation of the mother-figure and throw new light on relations with the mother in, and through the creation of, literature. A number of novels put motherhood as their main topic in different kinds of perspectives. Since the theme of motherhood varies from time to time, it brings an idea that different circumstances create different characters of mother. Therefore, motherhood is constructed in various ways in the novel.

One of the young adult novels that has motherhood theme is *Room* (2010) by Emma Donoghue. Motherhood becomes the main issue in this novel that is narrated by a 5-year-old boy, Jack, who also becomes the main character. *Room* tells a story about Jack and his mother, Ma, who are imprisoned in a room by the kidnapper and the rapist of the mother, Old Nick.

Due to the complex issues presented in *Room*, several researchers analyze the novel in many perspectives. For instance, Punamiya (2014), with her research entitled “Thinking Borderlessness: Alternative Forms of Embodiment and Reconfiguration of Spatia; Realities in Emma Donoghue’s *Room*”, analyzes the issue of alternative forms of embodiment and reconfiguration of spatial realities in Emma Donoghue’s *Room*. Punamiya (2014) says:

Emma Donoghue's *Room* asserts a cross-border ethic that is not only understood as a transgressive force of resistance but also, at times, unavoidably complicit with certain global processes of the 21st century... This article strives to avoid the impression of a world without borders sustained by cosmopolitan elitism and global capitalism. It rather intends at "thinking borderlessness where there are all walls. (Punamiya, 2014, p.7).

From Punamiya's statement, it can be said that although Jack is isolated from the reality which makes him free from the control of the society, it cannot be denied that Jack's world in the room still has borders.

Another researcher compared *Room* with another novel. A research entitled "[Two child narrators: Defamiliarization, empathy, and reader-response in Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident* and Emma Donoghue's *Room*](#)" by Caracciolo (2014) compares *Room* with Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. Based on the analysis, it is found that "the narrators are affected by developmental disorders: Christopher, the protagonist of *The Curious Incident*, is on the autistic spectrum, whereas Jack – the five-year-old narrator of *Room* – was born and brought up in captivity. I also show how empathetic perspective-taking can work in tandem with sympathy (feeling for a character from an observer position)" (para.1). From Caracciolo's statement, it can be said that the narrator of a novel can affect the reader's feeling in sighting the story.

Based on the aforementioned research studies, it can be seen that those studies do not focus on motherhood issue in Emma Donoghue's *Room*. Therefore, the research aims to analyze the categories of motherhood which are constructed in the novel.

1.2. Research Question

Based on the focus of the issue that has been explained in the background of the research section, there is one following question that is proposed to reach the purpose of the research. The research tries to address the following question:

1. What categories of motherhood are constructed in *Room*?

1.3. Aims of the Research

In line with the research question mentioned above, the research aims to analyze the issue of motherhood in Emma Donoghue's *Room*, especially to reveal the categories of motherhood which are constructed in the novel.

1.4. Scope of the Research

The analysis of categories of motherhood presented in Emma Donoghue's *Room* is limited around the attitude of the mother character, Ma. The analysis focuses on the area of Ma's life starting from her attitude to her son, the rapist, and the people whom she just met. Ma's attitude towards the supporting characters is presented briefly to support the analysis of the central character, not to be included as the focus of the research. The categories of motherhood are divided into several indicators and further they are connected to the theory of motherhood that is proposed by Rich (1976). Shortly, the research is simply focused on statements and dialogues from the novel which hold motherhood issues and later to derive some meanings from the categories of motherhood.

1.5. Significance of the Research

The findings of the research are expected to allow readers to understand and to comprehend the motherhood phenomena. In addition, the research could give the readers beneficial and new knowledge of how to analyze a motherhood topic using Rich's theory of motherhood.

1.6. Methodology

The issue of motherhood that appears in the novel *Room* is the center of analysis of the research. The research examines each category of motherhood that is proposed by Rich (1976), then examines the result of categories of motherhood that are found on the novel *Room*.

The data are in the form of a novel *Room* by Emma Donoghue which was published in 2010. The data were collected after doing a close reading on the novel, and they are in the form of words, phrases, and sentences. They were gathered by identifying the series of events that are experienced by the mother character and they were limited on the event that contains the issue of motherhood that relates to the mother character. In examining categories of motherhood, Rich's theory divides motherhood into two categories, which are motherhood as institution and motherhood as experience. Each category has indicators that signify its determination of motherhood. The indicators of each category of motherhood that are proposed by Harwood et al

(1999, as cited in Cavalcante and Magalhaes, 2013), Chang (2007), and O'Reilly (2010) are used as a tool to analyze categories of motherhood which are constructed in the novel.

1.7. Clarification of Key Terms

Here are some clarifications of key terms that are used mostly in this paper:

1. Motherhood: “A set of ideals determined by the established traditions and inherited history of a society, which sees women as primarily responsible for meeting their children’s daily needs” (O’Reilly, 2010, p.571).

2. Motherhood as institution: “A principle, a key component in the political and social order of communities: an institution” (O’Reilly, 2010, p.571).

3. Motherhood as experience: The role woman does as a mother which implements individual agency in their approach to mothering and deny the institutional version

of motherhood (O'Reilly, 2010).

1.8. Organization of the Paper

This paper is composed in this following organization:

1. Abstract

This section functions as summary of the paper presenting brief information about the content that is elaborated further in the next sections.

2. Introduction

This chapter deals with background of the research which explains what drives the writer to analyze the chosen topic, the purpose or personal intention of the writer in writing the research, the significance of the research describing that becomes the research's contribution in an individual or a society, and presentation of research questions.

3. Literature Review

This part of the research examines the bases of theories (theoretical framework) used in the research and also what other researchers have found in the earlier research.

4. Methodology

This section presents the methods used in the research and also the details such as: who are involved, where the data are obtained, and how the data are collected.

5. Findings and Discussion

This chapter deals with the findings when the research or analysis is finished. The findings are transcribed, analyzed, and finally discussed to answer the research question.

6. Conclusion

This section sums up all the information from the chapters and concludes an idea as the result of the analysis. In this section, suggestions for further research are also presented.