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Ideology and Oppression in Room and Frog Music by Emma Donoghue based on Althusser's Theory

Fatimah Harbi Hamad
Education Directorate of Thi-Qar. Ministry of Education, Iraq.
harbi.fatimah78@gmail.com

الإيديولوجيا والقمع في روايتي Room وFrog Music لإيما دوناغيو: دراسة في ضوء نظرية لويس ألتوسير

فاطمة حربي حمد
مديرية تربية ذي قار

Abstract
The present study aimed to depict a new outlook of Emma Donoghue's ideological world. Through reading Room (2010) and Frog Music (2014) in light of Louis Althusser's key concepts. The importance of this study can be traced through Althusser's viewpoints such as his definitions of "ideology," "ideological and repressive state apparatuses," "interpellation," "subjection," and "revolt". These concepts were applied to read Donoghue's selected novels wearing Althusserian glasses. Another reason which proves the importance of the present research is about the second critic who has been chosen to play her critical role regarding the selected novels. Actually, it can be said that, the main purpose of the present research was to portrait those ideological thoughts that make the main characters of the novels act according to their deepest internal instinct which was in fact their powerful maternal feelings. Consequently, the research methodology found its way through following the flow of events in both novels and paying enough attention to characters' decisions which have been made in some specific situations. The results can guide the reader to answer what have been asked at the beginning of the study. These findings can be helpful in many fields of study, expect their clear influence in literary world because of the new windows that they can open in the world of literature, they can be useful in social, psychological and feministic issues in order to propose some new ideas in these realms.
Keywords: Loius Althusser, ideology, interpellation, subjection, revolt, RSA

الخلاصه

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى تقديم منظور جديد للعالم الفكري والإيديولوجي لدى الكاتبة إما دوناغيو، وذلك من خلال قراءة روايتيها (٢٠١٠)Room و (٢٠١٤) Frog music في ضوء المفاهيم الأساسية عند لويس ألتوسير، وتبرز أهمية هذه الدراسة من خلال توظيف مفاهيمه ولا سيما: الأيديولوجيا، وأجهزة الدولة الأيديولوجية والقمعية، والاستدعاء الإيديولوجي (interpellation)، والخضوع، والتمرد، إذ تم اعتماد هذه المفاهيم بوصفها إطاراً نقدياً لتحليل الروايتين وكأنهما تُقرآن عبر منظور ألتوسيري، كما تنبع أهمية البحث أيضاً من توظيف ناقد ثانٍ أسهم في تعزيز الإطار التحليلي المتعلق بالأعمال المدروسة، ويمكن القول إن الهدف الرئيس للدراسة هو الكشف عن البنى الإيديولوجية التي توجه سلوك الشخصيات الرئيسة في الروايتين وفق دوافعها الداخلية العميقة، ولا سيما تلك المرتبطة بالمشاعر الأمومية القوية، وقد اعتمدت منهجية البحث على تتبع تسلسل الأحداث في الروايتين مع التركيز على قرارات الشخصيات في المواقف المفصلية والظروف الخاصة، أما النتائج فقد أسهمت في الإجابة عن تساؤلات الدراسة المطروحة في بدايتها، كما يمكن أن تكون ذات فائدة في مجالات متعددة، ولا سيما في الحقول الأدبية والاجتماعية والنفسية والدراسات النسوية، لما تتيحه من رؤى جديدة تسهم في إعادة قراءة هذه القضايا من زوايا مختلفة

1.Introduction

Emma Donoghue is an Irish novelist, dramatis, and literary historian was born in Dublin in October, 1969. Her parents, Frances and Denis Donoghue, were also literary critics. She graduated honorably in English and French from the University of Dublin with the highest grades. In 1997, she moved to England in order to get her PhD from Cambridge University. She began writing when she was twenty-three years old and chose it as her profession. Currently, she lives in Canada with her family. Although Donoghue believes that such a maternal relation differs in these novels, it should be noted that the essence of this relation is the same to some extent. Donoghue presents two different kinds of mothers in these novels; In *Room* (2010), she depicts Ma as a symbol of a devotee and mentally powerful mother who does everything for her little son to make him feel comfortable in their unusual captive life conditions. *In Frog Music (2014), Donoghue* presents Blanche as a symbol of an undeserving and disgraceful mother who does not feel to be responsible for her son P'tite. However, her mental attitude start changing dramatically as the novel proceeds its way to the end. Therefore, it can be said that through using various literary styles in her different novels, she attempts to demonstrate different ideological changes in a more understandable way for critical readers.*Room* is a novel about a five-year-old boy named Jack and his mother who is called Ma. In fact, Ma was kidnapped by a guy named Old Nick in Jack's narration and was kept in a confined space called Room for seven years. Ma represents a compassionate mother in the novel who tries her best to make their living space as comfortable for her son as possible. Almost in the middle of the story, Ma attempts their escape plan which could be carried it out successfully. Consequently, they find their way to the outside world. However, Jack has some difficulties when he faces the facts of the outside world; gradually, he tries to adopt himself with the new condition. He and Ma visit the Room for the last time and Jack says farewell to everything which once was one of his friends in Room, then return to the outside world with his Ma forever.*Frog Music* is another novel which is analyzed in the present study. Blanche represents a sort of mother who is preoccupied by her own tempting desire for her lover Arthur and his friend Ernest. Just an accident with a bicycle driver named Jenny Bonnet was enough for Blanche to pave the way of her ideological revolution. After Jennie's murder in San Miguel Station, Blanch finds the truth through the process of her ideological metamorphosis, and her maternal instinct shakes up and she acquires a better understanding of herself in the new created ideological world.

3.Research Questions

1.What are the fundamental features which are common between Althusser's critical viewpoints and both of these two works and how are these similarities explained?

2- Considering both novels, what is the relationship between subjectivity and interpellation in Althusser's viewpoint?

3- Considering the characters of the selected novels, how can the characters be interpreted through using ISA?

4. Literature Review

Renata Brosch from the university of Stuttgart has paid more attention to the role of empathy and the ability of mutual understanding which exists between mother and child in her paper titled as "Counterfocalization and Empathy: The example of Emma Donoghue's *Room*". It was delivered at 2nd international Network Conference in Durham University (2014). Somehow, her paper functions as a basis for Sullivan's viewpoint about the existence of a kind of mental relationship between mom and kid. Moreover, she has paid attention to the concept of "counterfocalization" as well.Furthermore, another critic named Marco Caracciolo has concentrated on the role of empathy by using a reader response approach and has established a kind of comparative relation between *Room* and another novel whose narrator is also a kid in his work named *Semiotica* (2014) which is titled as "Two child narrators: defamiliariozation, empathy and reader-response in Mark Hddon's *The Curious Incident* and Emma Donoghue's *Room*".In spite of the fact that *Room* is the name of novel, it can be considered as a space by itself. In addition, there is also another space which is dominant in the story. A closet where Jack was sleeping in it at night when Old Nick was at home at the same night. Relationship between these spaces and the characters is interesting. Libe Garcia Zarrnaz and Moynagh Sullivan have considered the concept of place and its relationship with protagonists' and antagonists' bodies in their researches (2013).Libe Garcia Zarrnaz has concerned this concept throughout her work titled as a "Corporeal Citizenship: Unruly Bodies and Closet spaces in Emma Donoghue's Room" that was presented in "Queer TransCandian Women's Writing in the 21st Century: Assembling a New Cross-Border Ethic" in university of Alberta (2013). Meanwhile, Moynagh Sullivan deliveres her paper with the title of "Lactation, Lactation, Lactation: Places, Bodies and In between in Emma Donoghue's Room" at between bodies /bodies between conference, in National University of Ireland in Maynooth (2013). In her paper titled "Blame the Mother: Jungian Analysis of the Media's Role in Affecting Further Trauma to the Individual, as exemplified in Emma Donoghue's *Room* (2010) and Lionel Shriver's We

Need to Talk about Kevin" delivered at Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association National Conference in Washington DC, (2013) Jacklyn Guay views *Room* from Jung's point of view and compares it with another novel using psychoanalytic critical approach.

5.Methodology and Approach

This study tries to incorporate Althusser's influential concepts with the flow of events of both novels through analyzing the mental conditions of the main characters of the novels under the pressure of "ideological and repressive state apparatuses". Meanwhile, the present research seeks to stay as far away from other realized concepts of famous critical approaches as possible. Consequently, through creating a kind of analogy between Althusserian regarding of the concept of "interpellative" subjection, the present research makes its final conclusion. Moreover, it is possible to say that this method of reading the novels aims to view them from general and then detailed points of view. Hence, it is possible to put the flow of the events of both novels in a way in which they can be accounted for based on Althusser's critical approach; to do so, all the promoter factors which are known as helpful elements in the novels are being involved and the present research attends to interpret these factors through using a method which was explained previously. Therefore, it can be said that the text itself provides the basis for the chosen critical methodology in this research and the research intends to follow the events of the novels in order to reach to the final goal.

6. Discussion

6.1. Ideological Formation, Misrepresentation, and the Role of Family ISA in Room

In Althusser's critical world, ideological pressure has its own source which should be located in state apparatuses of each society. These apparatuses have their direct and indirect influences on everybody. Althusser believes that almost all of the social institutions in each society have powerful ideological influence and can guide the people in a way that is desirable for bourgeois. Some of these ideological centers begin their impression from everybody's childhood in which family and schools are the most obvious examples of these kinds of institutions. Actually, Althusser believes that family should be considered as one the most important apparatuses among the introduced "ISA"s since, family is somehow the first social institution in which everybody participates before experiencing a bigger social community such as school, social groups, and society. Therefore, it is clear that family should be considered as a kind of "ISA" which has a basic role in shaping every body's ideological world and is essential for laying the ideological foundations in each society. Everybody enters to a bigger social environment and gets familiar with a more expanded "ISA" and easily accepts new rules and values, because his/her family prepares that person to come across with more complicated ideological issues and accept them as part of his/her beliefs and values in life. Such beliefs are determined by the upper class; therefore, yielding to bourgeois dominance will be internalized in everybody since his/her childhood and from the first moments of life in family.The presence of family can be seen in both of the novels. Although, it can be said that the reader is faced with two abnormal types of families in each novel, the maternal feelings of Ma towards Jack in *Room* and also the same feelings which rise in Blanche that motivate her to find P'tit can be explained only in bounds of the relations and feelings which exist between a mother and her kid in each family. Therefore, it can be said that both novels contains some family basis that are helpful in order to analyze them based on their family ISAs. Ma is responsible for maintaining the ideological atmosphere in *Room*, whereas Old Nick is represented as a repressive element in the novel. As the heroine of the novel Ma has a fundamental role in making Jack's ideological world in their living environment. She created her desirable type of world for Jack, a world which is limited in their living space called room. She makes him imagine that: Forests are TV and also jungles and deserts and streets and skyscrapers and cars. Animals are TV except ants and Spider and Mouse, but he's gone back now. Germs are real, and blood. Boys are TV but they kind of look like me, the me in Mirror that isn't real either, just a picture. Sometimes I like to undo my ponytail and put all my hair over and worm my tongue through, then stick say boo. (*Room* 18)All Ma's instructions refer to the role of misrepresentation which is done by Ma; she is trying to show the world differently and gives an image which is not based on reality. Now, the question is why as the basic factor of family "ISA", Ma wants Jack to have such understanding of the outside world. The answer can be found in the character of Old Nick who represents "repressive state apparatus" for Ma and Jack. In other words, it can be said that Ma's role as "ISA" is shaped by Old Nick's force through their life conditions and before their escape. Jack's fear of Old Nick as a man who can separate him from his Ma is evident where he describes his horrors in form the old childish story of *Jack the Giant Killer* (1711) and narrates:Giants can be just as bad, be he alive or be he dead I'll grind his bones to make my bread, but Jack ran away with the golden hen and he was slithering down the Beanstalk quick quick. The Giant was climbing down after him but Jack shouted to his Ma for the ax, that's like our knives but bigger, and his Ma was too scared to

chop the Beanstalk on her own but when Jack got to the ground they did it together and the Giant went smash with all his insides coming out, ha ha . Then Jack was Jack the Giant Killer. (*Room* 7)Considering above narration makes clear that, Donoghue desires to show the upper class repressive institutions in a form of giants which intend to put everybody under the control of their ideal thinking methods. In this way, they can easily control them. Donoghue's other purpose dealing with proletariats' final revolt can also be extracted from the mentioned narration. Actually, through telling the story of *Jack the Giant Killer*, Donoghue wants to depict the final revolution of the working class against the "Giant Killer" of their society that are bourgeoisies. It might directly refer to the waking call of the working class and acquiring consciousness to liberate them from the chains of slavery and indirectly it highlights the role of liberation from ideological imprisonment which can be fought back and resisted.By getting closer to the *Dying* chapter of the novel, Ma attempts to change the foundations of family "ISA" which he has laid for her son since the beginning of the story. Actually, she has the power for doing so, since she is the only source of influence on her son; moreover, she makes reality for Jack and makes him think about this issue. The matter is not easy for Jack to accept at first, because it is against what has been internalized in his mind. Jack has some difficulties in changing his viewpoints about the real "Outside" world and this dilemma horrifies him since he does not have any familiarity with the outside world. His life is confined to his mother – Ma – and their limited room.

6.2. Ideological Interpellation and the Pressure of the Outside World in *Room* and *Frog Music*

Facing the "Outside" world is another challenge which can be considered as the pressure of "ISA"s. Ideological atmosphere of the outside world expects them to act and behave according to their social regulations and values. Actually, Jack has his own particular problems facing the new environment since he thinks that: "Outsiders are not like us, they've got a million of things and different kinds of each thing, like all different chocolate bars and machines and shoes"(*Room* 82). "Outside" world has its own new rules and people who are completely different from his Ma. Those who compare Jack's acts and behaviors with what is common among them and the result of this comparison is a new ideological realm which opens in front of him. Grandma can be considered as a kind of an outside 'ISA' institution for Jack.Moreover, "ideological and repressive state apparatuses" can be traceable in *Frog Music* (2014). Donoghue shows the ideological atmosphere of San Francisco in 1876. A kind of ideological pressure which controls the social position of females in the society of San Francisco in those days. This kind of social looking to females is clear when the author introduces a character named as Jenny Bonnet who can be considered as a symbol of revolt and a way of thought which is not based on what is accepted in that society regarding women. The most vivid evident of the mentioned issue can be found in Jennie's clothing which was illegal on those days and Jenny was arrested for this crime once. In her conversation with Blanche, she points out her punishment of her unusual clothes and says “It's usually a fine…The cops been catching me and letting me go every month or two for a couple of years now, all very cat and mouse” (*Frog Music* 21). Actually, Jenny believes that it is every woman's right to act and behave in her own desirable way. In Jennie's point of view, everybody should be free to choose what to wear and where to go and no difference should be there between men and women. Actually, Jennie's attitude was not acceptable by the dominant "ISA"s in San Francisco 1876.Hence, it can be mentioned that Jenny plays a role of a new "ISA" for Blanche. In her conversation with Blanche, Jenny intends to change Blanche's ideological beliefs which are completely under the control of Arthur and Ernest who represent both "ideological and repressive state apparatuses" for her. As a matter of fact, by talking about her lost child,'P'tit, Jenny rises the forgotten maternal feelings in Blanche and this is a beginning of a completely different era in Blanche's life. The impact of this ideological "interpellation" can be traced in both novels. In spite of the fact that, the nature and the source of this ideological force is different in either of the novels; however, the final reactions of heroines are the same. "Interpellation" gets a family origin in *Room* which is formed under Old Nick's pressure. Whereas in *Frog Music*, the female characters are under the pressure of a kind of ideological hailing that originates from social sources. In other worlds, Blanche and Jenny were hailed by a dominant viewpoint towards women which was common in San Francisco in 1876.Even though, Ma herself is hailed by a kind of forcible "interpellation" which originates from a repressive state apparatus; however, she should be considered as an ideological source for Jack. In other words, as the only character that is in direct communication with Jack, Ma should be considered as the main factor that is responsible for shaping Jack's vision of his world. Therefore, Jack's ideological dependence on Ma is evident till the end of the novel. Actually, he believes that: "Ma knows everything except the things she doesn’t remember right, or sometimes she says I'm too young for her to explain a thing" (*Room* 3). Jack's complete reliance on Ma is a key factor which helps Ma sharing her ideological ideas with him.

6.3. Repressive Authority and Ideological Conflict in *Room* and *Frog Music*

Moreover, it should not be forgotten that as the symbol of repressive state apparatus, Old Nick has his indirect influence on forming Jack's ideological world. Jack's understanding of Old Nick as a source of force and terror is evident throughout the novel. In his descriptions of Old Nick which are presented especially at the beginning of the novel, the features of a "repressive state apparatus" can be found. A compelling multilateral shadow of force which keeps Ma and Jack in their bounded space called Room. Considering Old Nick as an agent of the "repressive state apparatus" can be noticed from Jack's imaginations where he describes Old Nick:Nothing makes Ma scared. Except Old Nick maybe. Mostly she calls him just *him*, I didn't even know the name for him till I saw a cartoon about a guy that comes in the night called Old Nick. I call the real one that because he comes in the night, but he doesn't look like the TV guy with a beard and homs and stuff. I asked Ma once is he old, and she said he's nearly double her which is pretty old. (*Room* 3)As it can be understood from the above narration, the presence of the source of force and compulsion is evident as an unknown factor. This confirms Althusser's viewpoint regarding the nature of "interpellation". In his book titled as *Althusser and his contemporaries: Philosophy's Perpetual War* (2013), Warren Montag declares a difference between the process of ideological recognition and ideological "interpellation". As a matter of fact, Montage believes that, these are in front of each other. In his point of view, interpellation is combined with force which makes everybody to obey just like the reaction of a person who is hailed by a policeman (137-138). Therefore, it can be said that Jack is under the pressure of a kind of forceful hailing power. The presence of Old Nick should be considered as the origin for producing "interpellation". Moreover, it should be mentioned that, Old Nick has a complete repressive power over Ma that makes Ma create a particular form of ideology in Jack's life. A kind of ideology which attends to make their unusual life conditions happier, easier, and of course more comfortable for a five year-old boy called Jack.From Blanche's point of view, during the years of their friendship, Ernest was melted in Arthur's ideological thoughts. After Jennie's murder, the mentioned fact gets more vivid to Blanche. Signs of Ernest's ideological submission to Arthur can be found in *Frog Music* through Blanche's thoughts, she guesses that Ernest is the main suspect of that painful event in San Miguel station, since " she knows it was Ernest, acting on Arthur's orders, but she needs to fill in the whole appalling story, put it back together, like broken glass forming a pane"(*Frog Music* 173)As the origin of Ernest's desirable ideology, Arthur means everything for him. Blanche knows this and believes that by Arthur's death, Ernest will be destroyed too. Actually, from Blanche's viewpoint, " Ernest's already lost everything he loves best: Arthur and Arthur's son"(*Frog Music* 182). Hence, Ernest decides to begin his fight against whatever that attends to make a distance between him and the ideological source which hails him. He finds that Jenny is his main rival in the battle of ideologies. As an agent of "repressive state apparatus," Ernest decides to force Blanche who should be considered as the agent of working class, remains royal to the dominant ideology which was defined by Arthur.What happened between Jenny and Blanche can be viewed from Althusser's point of view regarding the relation which exists between unconscious and ideology. Applying Althusser's viewpoint in this regard makes clear that, Jennie's key instrument for conquering Blanche's ideological identity was playing with Blanche's unconscious. In other words, through her questions about Blanche's missed son and also by showing some manly behaviors which was evident from her clothing, Jenny could wake Blanche's feminine unconscious.Following Jennie's attitude which is evident in her actions reveals that she believes in the valuable position of females in the society of San Francisco 1876. In her point of view, every female has her independent identity that is respectable and because of this independence, females are allowed to share social responsibilities with males, take part in their society, and be as effective as males. Jennie's main goal was making Blanche believe that she is not like an instrument in male's hands which is used only to satisfy their sexual desires. Blanche found her lost feminine nature in Jennie's being. Through involving in different situations, Blanche was attracted by Jennie's behavior toward others. Blanche understood that, submission to males has no place in Jennie's mind, rather, she tries her best to resist them and defy their sexual views regarding the females which were common those days. In her conversations with Arthur and Ernest, Jenny attempts to motivate Blanche to rise against the two guys and change her present life conditions. One of the most evident examples which can prove the above claim shows itself in Jennie's statements in their quarrel with Ernest when: Jenny cuts in relaxedly before Blanche can answer. 'I declare, you fellows are the limpest pair of leeches I've ever encountered. You sponge off Blanche for the full of a year, then sulk like cast-off mistresses the minute she decides to go solo. Castor and Pollux!'. She lets out a snort of mirth. (*Frog Music* 114)Through her behaviors and her special method of treatment with males, Jenny could make Blanche thinking about her real identity and role as a female in the society. Gradually, some signs of doubt show themselves in Blanche's ideological thoughts which open a new way in her life. A new ideological way that was completely in an opposite direction of her existing dominant ideology. Hence,

resistance to the agent of the "repressive state apparatus" of the dominant ideology is inevitable. A type of severe resistance leads to the terrible scene of murder in San Miguel station.Actually, it can be mentioned that Jennie's death should not be considered as killing a human; rather, it reveals the clear competition which was there between two different attitudes. A kind of battle between the bourgeoisie and their dominant ruling ideology and the proletariat and their new ideological beliefs which aim to compete with the dominant ideology and define some new values which are opposed to what have been believed and obeyed in the society. This contradiction leads to a kind of revolt for better life conditions for the proletariat that is defined as the base for the ideological beliefs which can be understood from their acts, their ideas and artistic works such as their literary works. However, the mentioned concept is going to be clarified as the last subject of the present chapter and will be discussed in order to justify the reason of their revolutionary act.

7. Conclusion

Through analyzing the character of Jenny Bonnet in *Frog Music*, the researcher aims to focus on a social issue which leads to a kind of revolution. As a matter of fact, it can be mentioned that individuals like Jenny intend to see others in a humanly manner, regardless of their sexes. Hence, based on the nature of either of the novels which lay on women as their main characters, it should be noticed that the main result of the present research can be understand as a kind of ideological analysis of women social conditions. Although, the selected novels belong to different temporal periods and describe different ideological situations, however the end of either of them is the same. Therefore, without entering to the feministic issues in a sense of considering females as slaves who are under the domination of men, the researcher aims to view the aforementioned subordination from its ideological point of view. Thus, through applying ideological viewpoints, who is also known as a feminist critic, and placing them opposed to Althusserian ideological ideas, the researcher tries to discuss female's situation and their final revolutionary act in a male dominated society. According to what has been offered throughout the research, the research's questions that were presented in chapter one can be answered to make a more tangible view for readers. 1. As it was described in chapter three, Althusser's ideological viewpoints can be applied in order to re-read *Room* (2010) and *Frog Music* (2014) since there are some traces in either of the novels that can be views based on Althusserian concepts such as "ideological state apparatus," "repressive state apparatus," ideological "interpellation" and the ideological "revolt" and also Althusser's definition of the concept of ideology itself. Because of the similar situation of the female characters in both novels, who are under the complete domination of males and also the ideological revolt of these characters which occur at the end of both novels, the researcher aims to explain the relation that is there between the flow of accidents of either of the novels with Althusser's fundamental notions through presenting some practical examples which are extracted from the aforementioned situations and that final revolutionary act.

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