

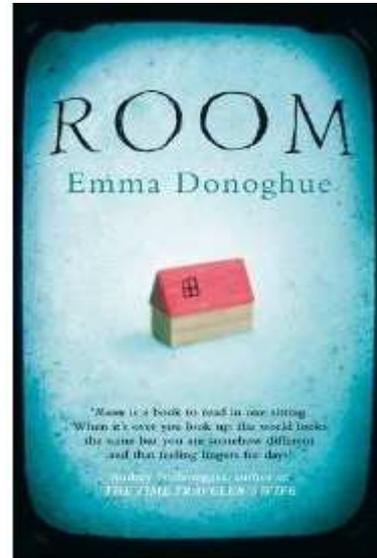
Book of the Month August 2010

Emma Donoghue: "Room" (Picador)

Emma Donoghue's latest novel "Room" reached both the UK bestselling fiction list and the long-list of the Man Booker Prize.

Half of the story takes place within an 11-foot-square room, in which a young woman has spent her last seven years. Raped repeatedly by her captor, she gives birth to a son named Jack, who takes the small world of the basement as the only one that exists.

The author herself describes her approach in a matter of fact way: "Jack and Ma live in a locked room that measures eleven foot by eleven. When he turns five, he starts to ask questions, and his mother reveals to him that there is a world outside. Told entirely in Jack's voice, ROOM is no horror story or tearjerker, but a celebration of resilience and the love between parent and child."



Obviously, the novel draws from recent cases of child abuse that received worldwide media attention, notably the stories about Elizabeth Fritzl in Austria and Jaycee Lee Dugard in California. And yet, the book is far away from lurid sensationalism. Donoghue doesn't comment on each horrible detail of the case as it appeared in the papers. Instead, the story focuses on the intimate relationship between Ma and Jack.

The novel received outstanding critical acclaim, as for instance Boyd Tonkin wrote in the Independent in London: "Good novels have a habit of reading their critics' minds". And Jonathan Gibbs, book critic of the Telegraph, thinks that Donoghue treats the strange existence of her doomed cast with a sensitive imagination.

Irish born and Canada based Emma Donoghue has been labeled as a lesbian fiction writer, working in different genres such as historical fiction (for instance "Slammerki", released in 2000 by Virago Press, about an 18th-century prostitute), short stories and drama for stage and radio. "Room" is her first bestselling novel and her first book after a break of six years.

Prior to release in August, a struggle for the publishing rights has already earned broad media attention. Picador had paid £200,000 (€224,000) for the UK rights, including Ireland, Australia and New Zealand. Little, Brown acquired the US rights for €800,000. Translation rights have been sold into French, Italian and Dutch and ten other languages.

Picador features its website with special tools such as a floor plan for *Room* to get a realistic feeling for the book. Little, Brown will release the book in September in the US. The dedicated website www.roomthebook.com is linked to a discussion forum and offers information about the marketing and publicity campaign.

Additional information is to be found at the authors' website at
<http://www.emmadonoghue.com/room.htm>