

## Shadows Redeemed: Myth and Intertextuality in the Novel and Film *Room*

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### ABSTRACT

Lenny Abrahamson's 2015 film *Room*, based on the 2010 novel of the same title by Emma Donoghue, tells the story of Ma, a young victim of abduction and rape, who is raising her son, Jack, in captivity. Their home is a 10x10-foot shed, and it is the only world five-year-old Jack has ever known. Nonetheless, Jack's reality is a relatively rich one, due in large part to Ma's narratives, which are often informed by various stories, such as *Alice in Wonderland* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*. In addition to these stories the film retains the rich mythological and allegorical resonances that structure Donoghue's novel, particularly with the myths of Danaë, Persephone, and the prisoners of Plato's cave. This paper will examine how the interplay of these stories contributes to the film's message about the parent-child dynamic characterized by cycles of death and new life. The result of reading *Room* through the lens of these layered myths is the transformation of Plato's cave as a realm of shadowy and limited understanding into a domain of imagination, from which Ma's narratives emerge to save both Jack and her.