

BOOK REVIEW

'The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo'

Reviewed by Sky Friedlander
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

In "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo" by Stieg Larsson, Mikael Blomkvist is asked by aging industrialist Henrik Vanger to live for one year in a remote spot in the Swedish countryside to solve a decades-old mystery. That's about how long it feels like it takes to read. For real.

For a mystery-thriller, it doesn't hold attention well. It rounds out at 590 pages (not including the excerpt from Larsson's next book), and only about two hundred of those can hold the reader's interest.

Blomkvist is a journalist, and at the beginning of the book he is found guilty of libel and spends a short time in jail. If only that was the end of that plot — but no, Blomkvist refuses to call it quits and launches an attack against the same man he libeled in the first place.

The novel ends with this plot, and it's a real shame. It's by far the duller portion of the book, and it almost erases the good parts.

The good stuff is the plot. The mystery Blomkvist is commissioned to solve concerns the disappearance of Vanger's beloved grand-niece, Harriet, who many believe.

In finding the truth about Harriet, Blomkvist is joined by Lisbeth Salander (the girl with the dragon tattoo). Salander was by far the best character. At one point she is described as "a taciturn girl with hostile vibrations."

That being said, even the mystery drags at points. It's simply too long. The Vanger family is a complicated web that is hard to keep track of.

Plus, the novel is just too wordy. There is one passage where Larsson describes the contents of a little cabin, down to the type and year of the magazines inside.

It's kind of hard to characterize a book like this, with long boring parts that I just wanted to skip, but also with parts so gripping I couldn't stop reading. And then there were the gruesome parts that made me gasp out loud.

I know, I know — this book is super popular (it's the No. 1 trade paperback super on the New York Times bestseller list), with a Swedish movie based on the book already out (a pretty good one, too, by the way). And I see why. There is a good mystery buried in here between all the boring stuff, the reader just has to wade through it.

Grade: C+

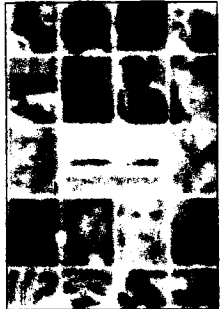
To e-mail reporter: saf5148@psu.edu

MOVIE REVIEW

'Mother and Child'

Reviewed by Lauren Ingono
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Finally, a movie has arrived that portrays women neither as witches nor saints, but as real people.



Courtesy of imdb.com

In director Rodrigo Garcia's newest film, "Mother and Child," the emotions and actions of three women, the main characters, are so intense and so heartbreaking that you can't help but be bumped around on the emotional ride.

The film portrays the lives of three women who are each grappling with issues of motherhood. The

story centers around Karen (Annette Bening), who had her daughter when she was 19 and gave her up for adoption. Now a middle-aged woman, who never married or had any other children, Karen works at a rehabilitation center in Los Angeles. She spends most of her time taking care of her elderly mother Nora (Eileen Ryan). Karen is scarred by the thought of her unknown daughter to whom she writes unsent letters. The film then cuts to her daughter, Elizabeth (Naomi Watts), who is now 37 and interviewing for a job at a law firm, also in LA. It is undeniable that the two characters are related — both determined not to bare emotions to strangers, both cold and smart.

"I'm a difficult person," Karen admits to her male coworker when he tries to break her shell.

Difficult may be an understatement, as Karen often blows small situations out of proportion.

But Bening is such an incredible actress that is impossible not to sympathize with her character, haunted by the daughter she gave up.

Watts may be an even colder and more compelling character. She is powerful and knows exactly what she wants.

In a scene where Watts is making love to her new boss, she gives a performance so compelling it is hard to not feel a little voyeuristic — and not a single article of clothing is removed from either actor.

The third story receives significantly less air-time than the other two, but it is just as interesting. Lucy (Kerry Washington) is a wife going through the stressful and often agonizing process of trying to adopt a child. While she seems insignificant at the beginning of the film, she is more dynamic and interesting by the end of the film. The three women's stories intertwine beautifully, in twists of fate and tragedy. By the end of the movie come quiet tears and a breath of hopefulness.

The director and actresses achieve to make a film in which the audience feels so intimately connected to these women and their stories that the film will stay burned in audience's minds for a long while.

Grade: A

To email reporter: lm15018@psu.edu



Film strays from book

Reviewed by Hannah Rishel
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Adapting books to film is always a challenge.

On occasion, the movie usurps the book's fame, such as "Gone with the Wind" or "The Godfather" — but more often than not, the film falls flat compared to its written word.

Such is the case with "Eat, Pray, Love," based on the 2006 memoir by Elizabeth Gilbert.

The story follows Liz Gilbert (Julia Roberts) as she visits Italy, India and the Indonesian island of Bali to get away from her difficult relationships with her ex-husband (Billy Crudup) and romantic interest David (James Franco), a younger man with whom Liz had a fling.

In India, Liz visits the ashram, or temple, of David's Hindu guru to

heighten her spirituality.

In Bali, she begins teaching English to a medicine man named Ketut (Hadi Subiyanto), and in return he teaches her everything he knows about living a balanced life.

While in Bali she meets the charming, albeit sapphy, Felipe (Javier Bardem) and must figure out how to factor romance into her life without losing her identity, as she did with her ex-husband and David.

While Roberts retains her "America's sweetheart" appeal, the real star of the movie is the scenery. The ruins of Rome, slums of India and lush landscapes of Bali steal every scene and often overshadow the actors. But beautiful scenery — which can be viewed online or on the Travel

Channel — does not a good movie make.

This isn't Roberts' fault, nor does the blame belong to director Ryan Murphy, the creator of "Glee." The original memoir dealt with Liz's feelings and spirituality, which are intangible things that are often hard to depict on film. The audience sees Roberts smile, cry and meditate, but it all leaves the viewer wondering if that translates to inner peace and balance in her life.

But spiritual journeys are often riddled with potholes. In the book, where Gilbert could explain her feelings, it felt more realistic — but in the movie it seems like Liz just falls into inner peace after only failing a handful of times.

Even "Richard from Texas" (Richard Jenkins), whom Liz meets at the ashram in India, doesn't help much. His past is tragically altered from the book to make things more dramatic, though he still "speaks in bumper stickers" to Liz.

As he did in the memoir, Richard tells Liz she has "the power to love the whole world" if she stops obsessing about David. It's a very moving part of the book. In the movie it comes off as cheesy.

During her trip to Italy, sitting around a table piled with Italian food, Liz tells her new friends the word that describes her is "writer." But in the film she only writing she does involves e-mails to David and her friends. An



article she's writing and a book she is publishing are mentioned merely in passing and never touched upon again.

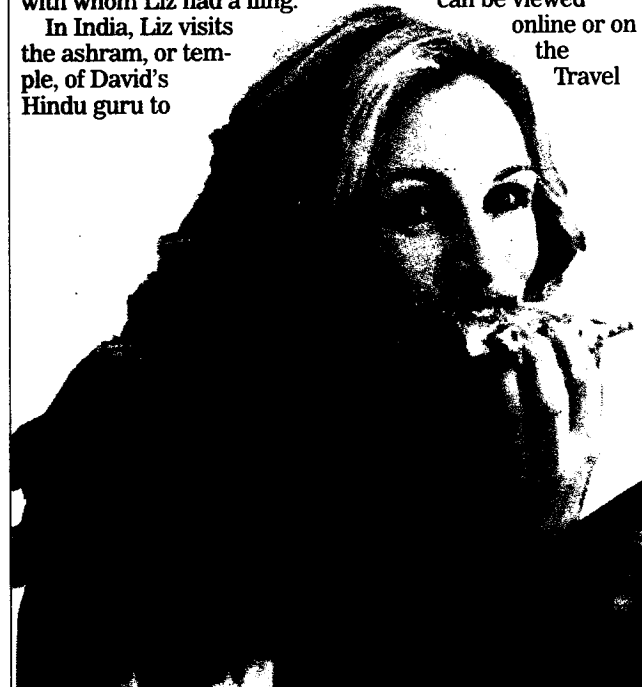
The memoir is not mentioned at all in the movie. In the beginning of the film, during Liz's first visit to Bali, Ketut tells her that she will lose all her money, but then get it back.

The movie touches upon her losing her money in her divorce, but does not mention the book Gilbert promised to her publisher upon the return of her trip that became "Eat, Pray, Love." It was this book deal that allowed Gilbert to take her trip in the first place, so it seems odd that it was left out of the film. The movie makes it appear that Gilbert has endless funds to take this world-round journey.

While "Eat, Pray, Love" is beautifully filmed, the story is probably best left on the page.

Grade: B-

To e-mail reporter: hmr5027@psu.edu



SWITCHING IT UP

Movie plot trite, use

Reviewed by Lauren Ingono
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Hollywood seems to have wrapped a recent obsession with pregnancy — with titles like "Juno," "Baby Mama" and "Knocked Up" — in an even more recent obsession with artificial and in vitro insemination — like "The Back-up Plan" and "The Kids Are All

Here the topic is certainly more relevant than ever, as more and more women are choosing different ways to have children. Questions of ethics surrounding in vitro insemination makes a family is debated.

But this material is already old news on the big screen. With this in mind, I can't help but feel that the movie is a bit predictable when

went to go see "The Switch," a movie that turned out almost how I expected it to: not completely awful, yet forgettable.

In the movie, New Yorker Kassie (Jennifer Aniston) is a 30-something single who wants to get pregnant. She decides on a whim to give up searching for a husband and get pregnant with a donor's sperm, though she manages to hurt best friend Wally's (Jason Bateman) feelings when she turns down his offer for donation, also calling him un-dateable.

Instead, Kassie decides to use the sperm of Roland (Patrick Wilson), a good-looking, married stranger.

During Kassie's insemination party (do these things actually happen?), an inebriated Wally decides to take matters in his own hands. He dumps the donor's sperm out of the sample cup, (conveniently located right on the bathroom counter) and replaces it with his own.

Flash forward eight years to when the movie finally picks up. Kassie, who since moved with her son to Minnesota, is coming back to New York.

When Wally meets Kassie's son Sebastian (Thomas Robinson), he starts noticing similarities between himself and the child. Eventually, Wally figures out Sebastian is his.

Despite his unforgivable actions, Kassie finally decides she was meant to be with her neurotic best friend — the three can happily ever after in this twisted family triangle.

The plot could make for an all right movie. The problem with "The Switch" lies in the script. The few funny jokes are repeated many times that the movie is sucked right out of the

It's funny the first time that Wally's "love sweaters" is mentioned by the twentieth time the gag gets old. Aniston is charming, as usual, but difficult to care much about her character, especially when she keeps dumping

her kid off to his

The movie of "The Switch" and hilarious scenes with an exception between the

