



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH & REVIEWS

journal homepage: www.ijmrr.online/index.php/home



The Portrayal of Child Abuse in Toni Morrison's God Help the Child

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How to Cite the Article: Dahiya Y. (2022). The Portrayal of Child Abuse in Toni Morrison's God Help the Child. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews , 1(4), 34-37.

Keyword

Childhood, Trauma, Abuse, Influence, Present.

Abstract

God Help the Child by Toni Morrison, published in 2016, offers a glimpse into the struggles that African American girls and women face on a daily basis while also taking into account their outward looks. Because Morrison's viewpoint is external to the novel, it hasn't been mentioned in the dialogue between the reader and the author. The work emphasizes the difficulty of the task at hand and places special emphasis on how it should be interpreted. The role of the mother serves as the work's central theme, and the work's disordering effects on and shock-inducing repercussions from a past incident are highlighted. This essay focuses on how the novel's expressive structure connects data unrelated to the Bride's transformation into a particular story of secrecy and shock. Black feminism, racism, trauma, and gender studies all influence the novel's point of view. The essay discusses the strategies Morrison uses in his book to address themes of personal trauma and memory's harsh forces. This essay's main objective is to reveal the mechanisms of the past in the remembrance technique used by Toni Morrison in her work by using Paul Ricoeur's paradigms on how a solitary memory transforms into a part of a group. Additionally, the Bride's earlier memories now serve as a collective memory for all African Americans. As her point of view is not there in the narrative, Toni Morrison's own words are not present to bridge the gap between the reader and the novel. In her writing, Toni Morrison discusses historical events and how they have shaped the present. Since Toni Morrison's parents had a significant influence on her writing, they are also a factor in the non-linear familial past memories that are inserted into her novels, according to Morrison. By developing her individuality, every girl is in charge of nourishing her own feelings and emotional growth.

Introduction

Since they are still growing and dependent on their parents and carers, children under the age of eight are more accessible to experiencing traumatic situations. Trauma is most prevalent in early infancy when it is brought on by traumatic events such as verbal and physical abuse, kidnapping, physical and sexual rape, gang rape, parental neglect, chronic disease, and parental conflict. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), Trauma in Children and Adolescents, and Presidential Task Force on Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), traumatic events include domestic violence, sexual assault, community violence, accidental deaths, natural disasters, and man-made calamities. Young children in particular experience trauma as a result of physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and domestic violence.

The term "trauma" has been used in research and psychoanalysis in a variety of ways. For instance, Jacques Lacan claims that trauma causes the entire psyche to deteriorate. He claims, "We see here a point that the subject



can approach only by dividing himself into a certain number of agencies. One might say what is said of the divided kingdom, that any conception of the unity of the psyche, of the supposed totalizing, synthesizing psyche, ascending towards consciousness, perishes there” (Lacan 44).

Children up to the age of eight have been found to experience trauma for a variety of causes, including medical mistreatment, neglect, witnessing a massacre, racism, kidnapping, and rape of a loved one. According to research, trauma in early life is caused by a byzantine parent-child relationship. Also contributing to early childhood psychosis are additional elements like poverty, being raised by a single parent, being a member of a minority group, having uneducated parents, and teenage parenting. Trauma in young children is additionally caused by parental stress and home instability. According to studies, children are traumatized even only by seeing horrific events like murders, domestic abuse, and rapes of family members or complete strangers. Even when a youngster isn't being physically or sexually abused, they might still experience trauma if they witness a horrific event.

Because every child has a unique notion, traumatic reactions vary from child to child. Young children who have experienced trauma often exhibit symptoms like suffocation, panic, crying, shouting, trembling, psychic disturbance, abomination, pain, hysteria, submissiveness, inferiority complex, nightmares, collective trauma, scary-fuss, feeling of impending death, fear, guilt, flashbacks to prior traumatic incidents, loss of appetite and thirst, feeling of complete depravity and untouchability, bleakness, metamorphosis.

Ohio's Lorain is where Toni Morrison was born on February 18, 1931. Her grandfather was the product of a slave mother, and after losing their property, they were made to work in the mines and milk of the industrialized North. Morrison wrote masterfully and wisely. She relies on the slaves for the majority of her writings. With her book *Beloved*, she won the Pulitzer Prize. a woman of African descent who won it for the first time. She comes from a working-class household and goes by the name Chloe Anthony Wofford.

The primary features of Toni Morrison's novels—epic subjects, magnificent language, and highly developed African American characters—are those of her narratives. Ramah and George Wofford are Toni Morrison's parents; she is one of their four children. She is the second child in her family, and Toni Morrison's parents supported her early interest in English literature. Toni Morrison's novel is described as reminiscing, which may be understood as the creative and natural process related to past happenings and is regarded as a conscious act. The level of trauma experienced by the victim when a kid is harmed by his or her primary carers is greatly increased by the breach of the trust that is the foundation of the child's relationship with the outside world. The neighborhood and family members' pasts have a big impact on domestic violence. Growing up in dysfunctional households increases a child's risk of developing a variety of psychological, emotional, and social issues that will persist into adulthood. Due to the dread of being mistreated or dominated, domestic violence can cause children to have trouble establishing relationships or engage in harmful partnerships. The era of slavery and the cruel treatment that blacks endured at the hands of their white owners are directly responsible for domestic violence in African American families today. Slavery was a terrible experience for both black males and girls. However, because of their race and gender, black women experienced double discrimination. Morrison appears frustrated with the extreme suffering and abuse many children undergo. As Hope Wabuke writes: “Why do adults hurt children? Why do we, as a society, stand back and let it happen, ignoring our responsibility to do something, anything, to help these most precious little lives? And what can we do to help, if we choose to care?” (Wabuke 5). The maltreatment black female children endured both within and outside the family is particularly shocking. Bell Hooks holds that male supremacy promotes the use of violent force in order to maintain the dominance of women in the home.

The eleventh book by Toni Morrison, *God Help the Child*, highlights numerous of the topics she first examined in her first book, including racism, child sexual exploitation, and the pernicious beauty standards that are especially harmful to African American women. *God Help the Child's* main themes and points of emphasis in this tale, are family conflicts and sufferings grow increasingly uncontrollable, and parents frequently mistreat their black children. *Bride-Lula Ann* makes the impression that she is not related to her. Due to the Bride's hardships in both workplaces to lead a decent life, *Lula Ann's* family's experience is comparable to her perception of race in the general public. She forbids her from even calling her parents "Father" and "Mother" because they are so shocked by *Lula Ann's* race. The bride has a hard time loving herself because everyone around her thinks she's much less deserving than they are. The bride yearns for approval but is unsure of how to achieve it. The viewer is aware that her community is where the problems are.

Everybody has experienced a bad or dreadful occurrence, and it is always a good idea to keep re-introducing it to yourself whenever something disturbs you. In order to defeat the terrible emotional experience, it is very normal to block out the memory and use self-defense. The Bride and Brooklyn in Toni Morrison's "God Help the child" play similar roles in that sometimes neglect and leaving might be a fantastic way to forget. Lula Ann is taken on a journey by author Toni Morrison from reality—a child who identifies with adulthood—to a woman who begins to define herself as a human type. Toni Morrison brings this sketch to life by letting her bride confront the problem she struggled with as a child and bring intelligence to the situation that she had worked so hard to suppress and forget. Being in denial in the past for sheering seems impossible. The memory's ability to recall a past event is crucial and is dependent on spatial relationships that are not permanent on both the individual and communal levels of memory.

For the majority of the book, Toni Morrison noted historical events and how they affected the present. Morrison describes her own inspiration for including the historical memories in her book. This book was influenced by Morrison's family background as well. Each woman was in charge of fostering her own emotional growth by defining herself, upholding their dignity, and being charitable.

Toni Morrison's "God Help the child" uses magical realism to metaphorically return Bride to childhood. Bride, the book's protagonist, may be seen steadily reverting back to adolescence in "God Help the child". Her diminishing display of secondary sex indicators such as visible breasts and hair. The novels discuss a number of hot-button issues, with racism and the dilemmas of childhood being particularly frequent.

In "God Help the child", the childhood issue and how it affects its victim as an adult are two of the key themes. Every character has a unique story about adversity and trauma they experienced as children. Numerous jobs had to do with sexual assault and incidents on children. Although each character accepts their ability to influence it, the struggle they face in their lives is clear. The devastated lives of Morrison's characters are historically resonant with the horrors of slavery and its legacy. "The scars inflicted on Bride and Booker by their childhoods are metaphors of sorts for the calamities of history and the hold they can exert over a country's or a people's dreams" (Kakutani 2).

Despite being Lula Ann, she lived as a bride and had a distasteful and neglected childhood. Lula Ann was subjected to severe physical torture and was deprived of both physical contact and consciousness. Sweetness pushed Lula Ann's at a distance, refusing to allow her to get close to her. With a mother who not only avoids her daughter but also reinforces misogynistic stereotypes, Lula Ann forces her to navigate girlhood in a sexist world. Hard memories are triggered by key moments in Lula Ann's development as a girl and in her life.

Because of her mother's color, she has rejected intimacy with her. Instead of calling me "Mother" or "Mama," I urged her to call me "sweetness." It was secure. "Calling me "Mama" would confuse people since I was so black and had what I believed to be too-thick lips" (Morrison 25). Because of her pigmentation, she was forbidden from even calling her mother by that name. Because of their skin color, black children like Lula Ann and many others were forced to mature more quickly than other kids. As black children, they must navigate a variety of hazards and responsibilities. Rules were imparted by Lula Ann to prevent victims of racism a perspective on sweetness rule was imparted by Lula Ann to prevent victims of racism. A perspective on sweetness Dark black hue of Lula Ann is a curse.

The challenges faced by black women, such as those related to sexuality, child labor, a lack of education, a lack of a home and food supply, a loss of identity, and a lack of employment, are supported and emphasized by Toni Morrison. Black people, who are also human beings with a variety of ambitions for their lives, are treated with a lack of respect, according to Toni Morrison. The bride experiences greater hardships throughout her early years as a girl and later in life, and she also has more issues at work and in her neighborhood. Black women are only imprisoned because of their dark skin, according to Morrison, who asserts that everyone has a unique existence in the world. African-American ladies have dark skin, naturally. The mother is completely ignored by the father in the book God Help the Child because they despise the daughter's dark skin tone. She lacks knowledge of society and was not well-educated as a child. The world over, a mother's love is unconditional, but in the book God Help the Child, it's completely different because the mother mistreated her daughter because of Bride's dark skin tone.

Conclusion

Toni Morrison frequently addresses the racial divide between African Americans and American-Africans in her writing. In the period depicted in Morrison's works, individuals of color from black families experienced several issues, injustices, and slavery. Another recurring element in the book is how the key characters struggle to discover who they really are. Numerous characters written by Toni Morrison are shown as serial killers or as having sexual issues and are often incarcerated. The principal characters in Morrison's books are all black people; white people do not play the leading roles in any of her works. Morrison did not label her writing as feminist and noted that it focused primarily on black women (those with dark skin). The character of Morrison becomes the focal point of many generations of black women's yearning for a spouse, guardian, and friends. Toni Morrison documents the historical, economic, and cultural shifts that harm African Americans.

In her writings and works, she vehemently opposes both slavery and the problems of African-American women. She also mentions that black children desire to receive a proper education and guidance because education is the foundation of everyone's existence.

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