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**ABUSE AND NEGLECT: A CRITIQUE ON THE TRAUMATISED FEMALE CHARACTER OF CEE
IN MORRISON'S HOME**

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Abstract

Morrison's novels have addressed the most common themes in African-American literature: domestic violence, neglect and abuse. Although the characters in Morrison's books endure the pervasive problems of domestic violence, physiological, psychological, emotional, or sexual abuse, they also go through many positive transformations. This research attempts to elucidate the various forms of suffering blacks face through her novels and convey a message that if children are kept in that state, they will perish. Instead, they would lose their sanity and sense of self. She uses her novels to protect and safeguard children from being mistreated by pointing out child maltreatment. In her novel *Home*, Morrison depicts Cee's struggles with domestic abuse, ending in elopement. Morrison has brought to light the physically and verbally abusive behaviour of Lenore. Morrison went on to say that regardless of what you do to a person while he or she is still in their childhood, that person's life will be shaped by it. During the novel, she tried to rescue herself, but she was constantly placed in different kinds of situations where she had to suffer. Still, this novel "Home" deals with the themes of healing and child abuse, which can traumatise a life. This study looks at society's hidden realities, including the potential for abusive behaviour on the part of a mother towards her children and how that behaviour harms those children.

Keywords: Marginalisation, Domestic violence, neglect, Afro-American Literature, Home

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Almost everyone holds to the subtle and implied belief that we need to be protected and sheltered when children. We have an inbuilt need to be raised by our parents in a way that makes us feel like are their property. We always hope that our bigs will keep us safe from any harm and will not harm us in any form at any point in time. Morrison has been preaching this message throughout her life, both in her novels and public appearances. Morrison is adamant that children must be the essential thing in their parents' lives, above and above anything else in their lives. When children realise that they are not vital, it is just because their parents have not inculcated this phenomenon in their minds (Ansarey, 2015).

Hirsch (1989) described how Morrison's mothers consider their children to be an extension of their own beings (Morrison, 1989). They regard them as identifiers that reflect the nature of their relationship with the other person. They treat them as physical wounds on their bodies, which are the least desired and the most difficult to heal. It is possible to detect this theme throughout Morrison's

writings, lectures, and talks in which she has taken part and in her lectures and talks, she has delivered. As evidenced by her novels, Morrison has always been concerned with how people treat their children in general and their children in particular.

Child abuse is defined as the physical, sexual, psychological abuse and neglect of an infant or children by a figure or a caregiver, with the figure or caregiver being a parent or a caregiver. Children's abuse can be defined as any action or inaction by an adult figure or caregiver that results in actual or potential harm to a toddler. It can occur in a toddler's home and in the organisation and groups the child interacts with (Prabha, 2016). A poor lady named Cee, whose silence is yelling for motherly love, is the subject of *Home*. She has been a victim of child abuse, as well as psychological and physical maltreatment. She was neglected by her parents, who left her in the care of her grandmother. She abused her emotionally and physically regularly. Morrison wanted to tell her readers about the black children who were suffering from child abuse due to the negligence and cruelty of their parents, and she wanted to share this information with them.

Not only Cee, but we can also find the element of child abuse in all the eleven novels of Morrison where all the twenty mothers abandoned their children for some illogical reasons. By describing the condition of Cee, She beautifully indicated that the gist that comes as the result of child abuse is intolerable. Morrison told in her novels how this maltreatment is resulting in dismantling society. Cee's life in *Home* became a trauma because of all these events. Morrison described that the burden carried by child abuse is excruciating for an individual, not for the time being, but its effects are lifelong. The present research aims to evaluate the construction of child abuse with particular reference to the character of Cee and how her life became a trauma after facing and enduring the horrible episodes of her life.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Morrison's novels are an exclusive demonstration of one of the major themes of Afro-American society: child abuse. Her first novel was published in 1970 explaining the miserable life of a blue-black beautiful girl, Pecola. Followed by her first novel almost all of her novels tell the story of some child being abused by their parents and caretakers.

Nigro (1998) attempted to search the elements of frustration and self-denial in *Sula* whose protagonist faced many challenges during her stay in Ohio while confronting hostility against black people. *Sula* is the story of a girl who is the victim of violence just because she was black. He further established the viewpoint that the frustrating behaviours and alienation from the white contributed to the damage of the personality of Sula: the protagonist of the novel.

Prabha (2016) marked that most of the characters of Morrison were rejected by their mothers. In *The Bluest Eye*, it was Pecola whose aches remained unheard by her mother when she was sexually abused by her father, Seneca, in *Paradise* who had to live alone as her mother and sister abandoned her at an early age, Sorrow, in *A Mercy*, Margaret in *Tar Baby* and Rain and Hannah in *God Help the Child* unveiled a range of child abuse in her novels that eventually devastated the whole life of these children. Some of them even turned neurotic and psychotic at the end of their life. The final and irreversible results were always the destruction of an individual who could hardly help themselves relish the blessings of life even though, being an optimist, Morrison showed the aspect of healing of wounds of child abuse and neglect of the victims.

Ansarey (2017) deliberated the various types of child abuse and its effects on the life of Pecola in *The Bluest Eye*. He maintained that the work is thematically linked with different issues of the story's text that included racism, self and identity, social injustice, and the very construct of beauty and alienation.

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He concluded that the principal forms of child abuse in this novel are the verbal, sexual, psychological and physical abuse that steered the life of the blue-black girl to entire devastation and desolation

God Help the Child narrated the story of Lula Ann was born to a lighter-skinned mother and father, and both are horrified at the dark skin of their newborn child daughter. Her mother stated that she is so black that she scared her. Depriving her daughter of all private and public affection and affiliation to the family, Lula Ann was left alone to her own to face the traumas of life. She grew up unloved. She witnessed an event in her neighbourhood where a baby was abused by someone (Ramirez & Palancia, 2016).

Home (2102) is seen and studied from several different perspectives. A lot of talk on newspapers, social and electronic media, and book reviews written focused on the view of the traumatic soldier and the protagonist of the novel: Frank Money and his returning his home from war (Muneer, Shahzad & Sibtain, 2020), but little is written on one of the central characters of Morrison in this novel. It was Cee, the sister of Frank money. The present study attempts to evaluate the effects of maltreatment and neglect on Cee's character and how she suffered all of her life due to this trauma.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY\

The current research is a textual analysis of the novel *Home*. The novel's text is read carefully and content supporting thematic implication of the text regarding social psychological and the role of caregiver or parents in child abuse and neglect as suggested by Belsky (1978) while discussing the comprehensive framework for the research in maltreatment and neglect. The study was purely academic and qualitative. The main objective of this research was to nominate the sufferings of a rejected and abandoned child, Cee who, in the absence of her biological parents, was being ignored, ill-treated and abused in a home that is entirely her own and in a place where she was supposed to be protected and sheltered. The primary source for the analysis is the text of the novel *Home*, and the secondary resources include several research articles, novels, newspapers, and general book reviews.

4.0 DISCUSSION

The themes of child maltreatment and neglect have been very famous in Morrison's fiction. In Morrison's novels, characters are badly trapped and unable to adjust because of their parents' absence and the negligence of their caretaker.

The title, *Home*, itself believes in the convolution of the narrative perspective to which this concept refers. This novel is centred upon the basic need to get recognition and a sense of belongingness that Morrison's writings always missing. She has profoundly deconstructed the ironic title of the novel by telling that it did not even have basic facilities and ease. The plot revolved around the story of Frank Money but it focused on the sufferings and misfortune of the girl, Cee. Cee, who was one of the family members of that home, cannot live in peace and love there. According to Morrison, Home isn't about walls. It's about love and belongingness, which is absent in this novel *Home*.

"Whose house is this?

Whose night keeps out the light?

In here?

Say, who owns this house?

It's not mine." (p.1)

Prabha (2016) claimed that all the female characters of Morrison's novels reflected her very first created the character in *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola. So, it is quite right to say that Cee was Pecola of *Home*. Pecola was a child when her father abused her and her mother neglected her and refused to listen to

her. Pecola was raped by his father and became pregnant. Now again, Morrison indicates through her character Pecola that she was a child and powerless, that is why she has to suffer from sexual abuse by his father. The same is the case with Cee, who was rejected by her parents because they couldn't feed her well. They handed her to Lenore. Lenore was her grandmother. Cee was suppressed in her own home and was cursed by Lenore all the time.

Morrison relates her novel to the fairy tale when she describes the grandmother, Lenore, who, as the traditional "wicked witch," epitomises evil. Morrison herself narrated that "monstrous grandmother Lenore verges on fairytale caricature" (p. 32). She was one of Morrison's true villainous characters, a rich widow who escaped from Alabama and married a Lotus widower called Salem out of fear of living alone and who, unwillingly, let her husband's ragged and homeless relatives settled with them. Morrison fused in Lenore the fairytale stepmother and the wicked witch of the forest. Lenore exemplified the collapse of African Americans' traditional moral values, focusing on one of the main themes of fairy tales, child abuse. Through her, Morrison mentioned white oppression and violence as the ultimate root cause for the erosion of black citizens' ethical principles, since "Racism corrodes love between black men and women, fractures families, and destroys mothers' dreams for their children" (p. 33). Lenore was irritating and deceitful since she hid her cruelties from Cee's parents. She unburdened all her resentment and displeasure at accepting the discomfort of a crowded house on the children but, especially, on the girl, a howling baby at the time. Lenore believed that her birth in the street was an omen, a "prelude to a sinful, worthless life" (p.36) and she continuously undervalued and berated the little girl, calling her "gutter child" at every mistake. Frank, her brother, tried to save her and consoled her every time Lenore rebuked her, but Cee fell apart after he left for war.

Cee's misfortune did not stop here. After a long time of emotional and psychological abuse from the home, her destiny had now decided to get her abused from society. Frank, who had always served as her safeguard, had to leave for Korea and, fascinated by his richness, Cee eloped with Prince, a man from Atlanta. They married, and he took her back to his home town in his esteemed motor car: Ford. The car was his conceit and ecstasy, far more than Cee, his wife. Her husband once again rejected Cee, and after only a month of marriage, her Prince chose the car to live with, and Cee was left in Atlanta, alone, abandoned, and desolated. The man she relied on at the age of fourteen betrayed her. She thought of her husband as her survivor, but he proved to be selfish and an opportunist.

Cee's desire to get self-recognition took her to Dr Beau who, despite his gentleman's deportments, turns out to be a 'Dr. Frankenstein—even if his wife claims he is not— another intersexual element in the novel that underlines dismemberment' (p.60). He is a Faustian scientist who stands for the unethical pursuits of science, which may transgress natural, human, and divine boundaries. Dr. Beau, connected with the school of eugenics, conducted abominable experiments on people. Hence, he embodied the 'unspeakable abuses and violations on the black body by the Western patriarchal medical system' (p.61). Cee, who is ill-prepared to defend her, surrendered to his rapacious and immoral practices. The doctor, as a Faustian scientist, can be compared with the witch, Cee's step- grandmother, Lenore. Like Lenore, the evil physician is a fairytale caricature. His surgical procedures also hint at sexual politics, the dominant relationship between the paternal figure and the maiden, the young woman's patriarchal rape. Vickroy (2004) deliberated that Morrison, in *Home*, desired her reader to "share the victim's experience from the victim's point of view [], whether our guilt takes the form of direct responsibility or complicity" (p.65).

The brutal and inhuman experiments that were conducted on the abdomen of the poor girl, whom she was unaware of, made her seriously ill and badly infected. It was the time when her brother, Frank received a message to save her sister. The experiments destroyed her womb. She became infertile, barren forever. She had become prone to the pain so much that the words 'your womb can't ever bear fruit' (p. 86) left her as senseless as a dead person. It was the height of pain to think about the past and

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relate it to the present when she considered herself "Branded early as an unlovable, barely tolerated "gutter child" by Lenore, the only one whose opinion mattered to her parents" (p. 88). It was again a hurting process of healing those wounds physically, emotionally, and psychologically. The feeling of hollowness is the actual wound that could not heal at any cost and there was a question in her mind every time, "What in this World Cee love?" (p. 81). When Frank felt sorry for that, she spoke those words to make the reader feel her pain. She said, "I didn't feel anything at first when Miss Ethel told me, but now I think about it all the time. It's like a baby girl down here waiting to be born. She is somewhere close by in the air, in this house and she picked me to be born to. And now she had to find some other mother" (p. 81).

Morrison has given the shreds of evidence of child abuse, especially when a child is powerless and so neglected by the parents and caregivers. Throughout her novel, Morrison described her as a weak and lonely character suffering from different kinds of child abuse by her so-called relations. The traumatic journey of Ycindra Cee Frank as being abused by her people, society, and so-called doctor (healer) seemed to end here. Still, the scars of those wounds and cuts remained open to remind her of all the misfortunes and catastrophes of her life.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Children who are homeless are more exposed to distress and misery. Cee had a difficult time finding a place to call her own throughout her youth. The punishment she received when she first moved in with her grandma amounted to mental anguish for her. She was punished from the beginning of her time there. Her grandma blamed her for every small mistake she made and referred to her as a "gutter child" simply because her mother gave birth to her on the side of the road. It has always been a new form of abuse every time she has attempted to locate the shelter. She regarded Dr Beau as her protector, but he turned out to be the worst option she could have made for herself and her family. Cee was subjected to a variety of forms of child abuse. In addition to being neglected by her parents, she was also subjected to mental and psychological abuse at the hands of her grandmother and husband and sexual and physical assault at the hands of Dr Beau. The danger of child abuse and the terrible consequences for individuals and society were addressed in practically every novel, not only *Home*, written by Morrison. Instead, she emphasised the importance of protecting children from being abused.

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