

Childhood Trauma and the Quest for Self-Realization in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*

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Abstract

Character development is highly affected by the experiences people go through in their childhood. Children, who have been exposed to child abuse or neglect usually, suffer from psychological disorders, which often have a long-term effect. Childhood suffering has a serious impact on one's life that may lead to childhood trauma. Victims of childhood trauma have been (re)presented in many literary works, which shed light on their suffering and their attempts at healing. The Nobel Prize winner Toni Morrison (1931-2019) often shows through her novels the psychological problems of children and their impact through adulthood. Morrison focuses on the correlation between suffering in childhood and psychological trauma. In *God Help the Child*, Morrison reveals the trauma of the main character, Bride, as a result of her parents' rejection of her because of her skin color. This paper discusses the impact of childhood trauma on adults' lives as the main theme of *God Help the Child*. It further investigates how Morrison provides a proper environment for the novel's protagonist, which

allows her to attain recovery and self-realization. The paper aims to portray the causes of childhood trauma and its negative impact on the main character. It does this based on Judith Herman's insights in her book *Trauma and Recovery*.

Keywords: Childhood Trauma, Quest, Self-Realization, Judith Herman, Toni Morrison, *God Help the Child*.

1. Introduction

A child's experiences play a highly influential role in the formation of his character. Children face a variety of challenges in their lives; some caused by larger environmental factors, while others might be caused by dysfunctional family structures. Children who suffer from child abuse and neglect because of their parents or different melancholic events: death, or accidents, often suffer from physical, psychological, and behavioral consequences. Victimized children usually suffer from isolation, lack of self-confidence, fear and distrust. This often leads to psychological consequences such as depression, and failure to form new relations. Childhood trauma results from childhood suffering causing psychiatric disorders throughout adulthood, as victims of childhood trauma often avoid people, places, and events that trigger their suffering due to their fear, irritability, or mood changes.

Judith Herman is a renowned author in the field of psychology, who has written several books explaining the causes, types, symptoms, and consequences of childhood trauma. Throughout her book, *Trauma and Recovery*, she illustrates the impact of childhood suffering and trauma on adulthood. Herman elucidates the stages of recovery that help the traumatized individual to cope with his/her suffering. She states that voicing childhood trauma is the main reason that leads to healing and inner peace.

Trauma in childhood forms and deforms the personality. The child trapped in an abusive environment is faced with formidable tasks of adaptation. She must find a way to preserve a sense of trust in people who are untrustworthy, safety in a situation that is unsafe, control in a situation that is terrifyingly unpredictable, power in a situation of helplessness (Herman, 1992, p.70).

Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child* deals with the impact of childhood trauma and provides its readers, through plot and character development, with clues for the means of recovery. The main character in the novel constantly

searches for love, care, and safety. When she is offered the proper environment, she becomes able to heal from her childhood trauma and finally attain her quest for self-realization.

2. The Objective of the Paper

The paper aims to investigate the impact of childhood trauma through a discussion of its causes and symptoms, as they are explicitly represented in Toni Morrison's fiction. Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child* deals with the consequences of childhood trauma and its impact on the main protagonist, Bride. The paper examines Bride's behavior and her character development with reference to Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery*.

3. Theoretical Background

3.1. Trauma Theory

According to *The Center for Treatment of Anxiety and Mood Disorders*, Trauma is a psychological and emotional response to an event or an experience that is deeply disturbing and highly stressing. Examples of such events or experiences may include having an illness or injury, losing a loved one, and being involved in an accident. People who suffer from trauma usually pass through severe experiences that cause psychological disorders. Two people can face some noxious situations, while one person may suffer from trauma, the other may remain safe. Jon Allen defines Trauma as:

The subjective experience of the objective events...The more you believe you are endangered, the more traumatized you will be... Psychologically, the bottom line of trauma is overwhelming emotion and a feeling of utter helplessness. There may or may not be bodily injury, but psychological trauma is coupled with physiological upheaval that plays a leading role in the long-range effects (Allen, 1995, p.14).

A traumatic event or situation creates psychological trauma when it overwhelms the individual's ability to cope leaving that person fearful of mutilation and may even cause his/her death. Trauma comes in different forms, but its severity depends on the response of the person himself, whether to be a victim or a survivor.

Trauma is often human-made; Heather Merrell explains that a person being under stress for a long time can be more difficult than being exposed to accidents

and natural disasters. Some examples of human-made violence are human rights abuses, rape and sexual abuse, criminal violence, wars and political violence, child abuse, and domestic violence (Merrell, 2013, p.12). More often than not, the traumatic event leaves its imprint on the person's psyche and reactions long after it has ended.

Kai Erikson, a famous American sociologist, is the first to define trauma on a larger scale focusing on its social dimensions. He believes that trauma can result from "a constellation of life experiences" and "a discrete happening" from "a persisting condition" and "an acute event". Erikson introduces the concepts of "individual trauma" and "collective trauma". He defines individual trauma as "the state or condition produced" by a "stress or blow that may produce disordered feelings or behavior" (Erikson, 1995, p.185). It happens due to either shocking short-term events or long-term unbearable happenings. It is the reason for of something hidden by the person who perpetrated it, which leads most of the time to isolation and community denial. Erikson defines collective trauma as follows:

The collective trauma works its way slowly and even insidiously into the awareness of those who suffer from it, so it does not have the quality of suddenness normally associated with "trauma." But it is a form of shock all the same, a gradual realization that the community no longer exists as an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared (1995, p.187).

Individual Trauma is a result of the blow of the individual psyche, which sometimes leads to the Collective Trauma that forms damage to the bonds between people.

Michelle Balaev defines trauma as "a person's emotional response to an overwhelming event that disrupts previous ideas of an individual's sense of self and the standards by which one evaluates society" (2014, p.2). She adds another aspect to trauma, which is the important role of place. Balaev elucidates that analyzing the role of place acknowledges the cultural and sociopolitical forces that cause trauma. She writes that place is "[t]he locus where nature and culture converge to construct meaning and inform both individual and collective identity" (2014, p.8). This highlights the importance of the geographical place in portraying the impact of trauma on the victim's psyche as he/she relates the dramatic events to the surrounding place and environment.

3.2. Childhood Trauma and Suffering

Children, who have been exposed to child abuse or neglect, suffer from trauma, which may have a long-term effect. Victimized children usually see the world as an unsafe place; they often experience distrust that leads them to be isolated, and depressed. A traumatic event sends an external stimulus to the brain; afterwards, the brain is attacked and becomes unable to realize the situation happening. As a result, the brain shows some various psychological and emotional responses. Psychologists have developed categories to differentiate between the forms of Trauma, namely: Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Complex-Post traumatic Stress Disorder (C-PTSD), Borderline Personality Disorder (DPD), and Dissociative Disorder (DD). Trauma develops after a person gets exposed to a severe physical or psychological harm, which leads to frightening memories and thoughts.

3.3. Judith Herman's Contribution to Trauma Theory

¹Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* is one of the pioneering books that deal with trauma. It is divided into two parts; Part I, "Traumatic Disorder" and Part II, "Stages of Recovery". Herman's work focuses on the way in which the trauma of violence is experienced on a personal level. She explains that what forms a traumatized victim is the link between people who suffer, the political and social violence, and the sense of captivity that is rooted due to the experience of battering and attack. This illustrates the idea that trauma links sexual and political violence. "Traumatic events generally involve threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death" (Herman, 1992, p.23). Herman explains that when a human being feels danger, he only tries to respond to it, whether by confronting or escaping, ignoring any other feelings like hunger or cold.

Traumatic events confuse and overwhelm people as they prevent them from confronting or to running away, affecting their feelings, cognition, and psychology negatively. In addition, when people suffer from a traumatic experience, they are highly influenced by the response of their family, friends and community members. If they become supportive, the victim will feel much better, and if they become critical and give harsh feedback and comments, the victim's

¹Judith Lewis Herman (born 1942) is an American psychiatrist, researcher, teacher, and author who has focused on the understanding and treatment of incest and traumatic stress.

behavior and attitude will be affected negatively to the extent of isolating himself from the surroundings.

Sharing the traumatic experience with others is a precondition for the restitution of a sense of a meaningful world. In this process, the survivor seeks assistance not only from those closest to her but also from the wider community. The response of the community has a powerful influence on the ultimate resolution of the trauma (1992, p.51).

4. Quest for Self-Realization

4.1. The Concept of Self-Realization

Humanistic psychology has provided a series of theories about human personality and its development. Human personality is very complicated to understand as usually people are overwhelmed by different emotions. That is why the concept of Self-realization is a complex process that needs to be addressed from a number of perspectives. Carl Jung is the one who introduced the term "self-realization," which has been analyzed later by the humanistic psychological movement. According to Jung, Self-realization is a balance between various opposing forces of personality. It has two different standpoints: psychological and religious. By practicing the psychological functions of thinking, feeling and intuition, they gradually pass under the conscious control of the self, which shapes the ego, thus, the person attains self-realization, and feels psychic fulfillment. Furthermore, in religion, and self-realization depends on connecting the truest self with transcending the mind and body. The self is not confined to the physical space of someone's mind or body. Generally, self-realization is defined as the activation of one's full potential of abilities and talents.

4.2. The Concept of Quest for Self-Realization

The willingness to experience the surrounding world searching for wisdom, identity and self-realization is known as 'Quest'. According to the Dictionary of Literary terms, *quest* is defined as a journey that someone takes in order to achieve a goal or complete an important task. It has a Latin origin that means "to search" or "to inquire". In literature, a quest is a journey of self-discovery in an attempt to reach maturity; it is a physical journey, but in reality, it has a direct psychological and mental impact on the traveler himself. The outward journey is mostly connected with an inner one that has a great impact on

re-shaping the personality of the traveler. Dr. Kanna Muthiah, Professor of English Literature explains in her article entitled "Quest for Self-Realization - Physical Mobility, Displacement, Purposeful Journey, Travel and Explorations in Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope*" that the quest starts with a departure from the common, the ordinary, and the accepted order and ends with a new harmonizing character characterized by courage and freedom. Travel literature records the experiences of the authors or their protagonists traveling to other places for different reasons to enlighten the idea of self-transformation and development, focusing on the characters' search for their identities from youth to adulthood. That is why one's physical journey leads to a moral and psychological transformation. This quest depends mainly on the traveler's relationships with the surrounding people who are the source of motivation for taking that journey.

5. Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child* (2015)

Childhood Trauma, and its consequences, is one of the main themes of *God Help the Child*. The main character of the novel, Bride, suffers from a psychological disorder as a result of her parents' rejection of her because of her skin color. Most of the other characters are likewise victims of racism, abuse, molestation or parents' neglect during childhood; as a result, most of them have lasting scars that continue into adulthood affecting their psyche, behavior and personalities.

In *God Help the Child*, Morrison reveals that the main character, Bride, suffers from what Herman defines in her book as Psychological Distress Symptoms. It is "[s]ymptoms of traumatized people simultaneously call attention to the existence of an unspeakable secret and deflect attention from it. This is most apparent in the way traumatized people alternate between feeling numb and reliving the event" (1992, p.1). The novel deals with the negative impact of child abuse that leads to "chronic" childhood trauma, affecting children in adulthood and how the victims are able to attain self-realization following a quest for identity and inner peace.

5.1. Bride as a Traumatized Character

The main protagonist of *God Help the Child* is Bride, a dark-skinned girl, who is the daughter of two light-skinned parents. When Bride is born, the father is shocked by her appearance to the extent that he never touches her. He forsakes his family on account of the daughter's color of skin. He even accuses the mother

of being responsible for such “disaster” (Morrison, 2015, p.5). Bride’s mother is equally shocked by the color of her daughter. As a result of such shock, she almost disowns her daughter by insisting that the girl calls her “Sweetness” instead of “mom”, or any other term for a mother. “I told her to call me ‘Sweetness’ instead of ‘Mother’ or ‘Mama’ . “It was safer” (2015, p.6). The mother’s negative feelings towards her daughter can be read as the main reason for Bride's psychological disorder that shows later in the novel.

Morrison begins her novel with the negative emotions of “Sweetness” towards her daughter, which can be interpreted as the first cause of Bride’s “complex-Post Traumatic Stress Disorder” (c-PTSD). In *Trauma and Recovery*, Herman differentiates between people who have been exposed to single trauma that will keep causing a self-change for a while and those who are subjected to repeated trauma, who most probably feel lost. According to Herman, if the victim suffers from “additional symptoms” due to passing through a series of events, he/she is a victim of “complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder”; as a result, he/she experiences many difficulties in his/her relationships with others.

Sweetness is not able to overcome her horror at her daughter’s skin color, and she spends all her energy trying to justify the unjustifiable. “It’s not my fault. It is not my fault. It’s not” (2015, p.3). Besides, Sweetness believes that her daughter will be rejected from society, as people will discover that the light-skinned parents have black origins and that is exactly what she is afraid of. “I didn’t take her outside much anyway because when I pushed her in the baby carriage, friends or strangers would lean down and peek in to say something nice and then give a start or jump back before frowning. That hurt. I could have been the babysitter if our skin colors were reversed” (2015, p.13).

Herman clarifies in *Trauma and Recovery* that the unsecured attachment between the child and her/his family is the common reason for child abuse that affects the emotional state of the child causing psychological disorders. Bride’s relationship with her mother has been so complicated since her birth. Bride is not able to forgive her mother as she grows up; memories always chase her in every step throughout her life. She always remembers the way Sweetness used to punish her; “I made little mistakes deliberately, but she had ways to punish me without touching the skin she hated – bed without supper, lock me in my room – but her screaming at me was the worst” (Morrison, 2015, p.31). Bride's inner feelings towards her mother reflect Herman's words; "In the abusive family environment,

the exercise of parental power is arbitrary, capricious, and absolute" (Herman, 1997, p.71).

The incident that has a major negative impact on Bride as a child is being obliged by her mother to go for a false testimony in the court. "So my mother would hold my hand. . . . And look at me with proud eyes, for once. . . . She even liked me" (Morrison, 2015, p.153). Sweetness is content with her daughter in the courtroom for the first time as a result of Bride doing what her mother required her to do.

I glanced at Sweetness; she was smiling like I've never seen her smile before – with mouth and eyes...best of all were Sweetness. As we walked down the courthouse steps, she held my hand, my hand. She never did that before and it surprised me as much as it pleased me because I always knew she did not like touching me. I could tell (2015, p.31).

Bride's behavior in the courtroom could be understood in light of Herman's analysis of the behavior of child victims. Herman explains that the victim of childhood trauma tries to please his/her caretaker; she asserts, "The child victim often becomes a superb performer. She attempts to do whatever is required of her...She brings to all these tasks perfectionist zeal, driven by the desperate need to find favor in her parents' eyes" (Herman, 1997, p.76).

Another psychological disorder that a traumatized child may experience into adulthood due to child abuse is Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). Jayne Leonard defines BPD as "a mental illness marked by an ongoing pattern of varying moods, self-image, and behavior. These symptoms often result in impulsive actions and problems in relationships" (Leonard, 2018, p.6). Herman also highlights such relationship problems caused by BPD; she states, "Interpersonal difficulties have been described most extensively in patients with borderline personality disorder. Indeed, a pattern of intense, unstable relationships is one of the major criteria for making this diagnosis" (Herman, 1997, p.90).

Throughout the novel, Bride reveals BPD symptoms; after Booker, the male figure in the novel, deserts her, she starts to feel confused and doubtful of her worth; her self-doubt takes the form of questions: "What? I'm not exciting enough? Or pretty enough? I can't have thoughts of my own? Do things he doesn't approve of" (Morrison, 2015, p.8). Besides, Bride suffers from fluctuations of mood; she keeps thinking about whether she is happy or not: "By

morning soon as I woke up I was furious. Glad he was gone because clearly he was just using me since I had money and a crotch. I was so angry. I was so angry” (2015, p.8). Switching moods and lack of self-confidence can be traced in Bride's behavior as she reacts to different situations. She says; “maybe he is right. I am not the woman. When he left, I shook it off and pretended it didn't matter... so why am I still sad?” (2015, p.32). Bride's shocking bizarre actions are symptoms of BPD as well. “I open the medicine cabinet and take out his shaving brush. . . . I splash water and rinse my face. The satisfaction that follows is so sweet. . . . When I feel depressed the cure is tucked away in a little kit where his shaving equipment is” (2015, p.35). At some point, Bride starts to realize her feelings and to admit that she is acting abnormal “And I'm stir-crazy slouching around these rooms” (2015, p.38). In relation to the first section of the novel in which Sweetness narrates the event of Bride's birth, and in light of Herman's analysis of the impact of child trauma, Booker's departure can be read as a trigger for Bride's suffering and a spark that precipitate her childhood trauma.

Dissociative Disorder is one of the main forms of psychological disorder that can be caused by events in childhood. Dissociative disorders (DD) are defined by the American Psychiatric Association as mental disorders that involve experiencing a disconnection and lack of continuity between thoughts, memories, surroundings, actions and identity. Mathew Tull sees a very strong link between childhood trauma and dissociative disorders; it usually results from trauma and stress in childhood, not adulthood. He adds “Ongoing trauma, especially childhood physical, sexual, or emotional abuse and/or neglect is a very significant risk factor for the development of dissociative disorders and is thought to be the root cause in at least 90% of people with these conditions” (Tull, 2020, p.5).

Bride decides to dissociate; she moves to California leaving her mother, the source of her childhood trauma. Herman explains that some abused children find survival in dissociation with all the surroundings that are considered as a heavy burden. “In the setting of childhood abuse or neglect, dissociation is thought to be a self-protective survival technique in which a child (or adult) slips into dissociative state in order to escape fully experiencing trauma that is unbearable” (Herman, 1997, p.1). Although traumatized people usually isolate themselves to escape from the atrocious surrounding environment, they also try to search for others who will help them to overcome their suffering. This reflects that trauma involves the paradox of desire to dissociate and desire to connect. This is shown in Bride's desire to search for Booker. I guess this part needs more

interpretation of the novel because it is mainly dependent on theory without application.

5.2. Bride's Quest for Self-Realization and Recovery

Bride decides to take a journey to search for Booker, as she wants to know why he escapes all of a sudden. Bride's physical journey searching for Booker turns into a psychological one, where she seeks inner peace, recovery and self-realization. "Booker was the one person she was able to confront – which was the same as confronting herself, standing up for herself. Wasn't she worth something? Anything?" (Morrison, 2015, p.98). Bride concludes her reasons for tracking Booker as to "force him to explain why she didn't deserve better treatment from him, and second, what did he mean by 'not the woman?'" (2015, p.80).

Bride is able to achieve her inner quest for self-realization. She starts to do some changes trying to overcome her traumatic childhood. When she grows up, she calls herself 'Bride', as a means of getting rid of the racist environment she lives in. "Lula Ann was a sixteen-year-old-me who dropped that dumb countrified name as soon as I left high school. I was Ann Bride for two years until I interviewed for a sales job at Sylvania, Inc., and, on a hunch, shortened my name to Bride" (2015, p.17). Bride also starts to dress up in white color only following her friend's advice, Jeri, "You should always wear white, Bride. Only white and all white all the time" (2015, p.31). This reflects that she can feel her inner beauty away from her dark skin and that she is not ashamed of it anymore like her mother. Bride's decision to take control of her appearance and of her life may be understood in view of Herman's description of those she calls "fortunate survivors" (1997,p.70).She describes those survivors as individuals "who have found a way to take control of their own recovery and thus have become the subjects of their own quest for truth rather than the objects of inquisition" (1997, p.70). Consequently, people start to see Bride in a different way as she has been more accentuated in the white.

Bride is able to challenge her past through her achievement and success in her career. She works very hard until she runs her own business and becomes responsible for her own cosmetics line called YOU GIRL. Moving to another place to start a new life away from her miserable childhood is another trial to recover and come to terms with her identity. Once Bride becomes an adult, she moves to California and puts a distance between her and her own mother who has rejected and humiliated her. After achieving success in her workplace, Bride

sends money to her mother but never visits her. Later in the novel, the mother is given a chance to reflect on her daughter's dissociation from her and seems to have reached a conclusion that sums up the correlation between child abuse and long-life trauma. In a soliloquy, the mother says, "What you do to children matters. And they might never forget. She's got a big-time job in California but she doesn't call or visit anymore...She sends me money and stuff every now and then, but I ain't seen her in I don't know how long" (Morrison, 2015, p.38).

Bride's relationship to Booker can be read as an outlet and a means of recovery. Through this relationship, Bride is given a chance for healing and self-realization. Morrison allows Bride the proper environment to heal through 'voicing her trauma'. Bride recalls all her childhood suffering inflicted by her own mother to Booker. She tells him of how she was rejected and humiliated as a young girl. "Distaste was all over her face when I was little and she had to bathe me. Rinse me, actually, after a halfhearted rub with a soapy washcloth... I used to pray she would slap my face or spank me just to feel her mouth. I made little mistakes deliberately, but she had ways to punish me without touching the skin she hated – bed without supper, lock me in my room – but her screaming at me was the worst" (2015, p.31). Booker's reaction is so positive towards Bride's confession, and he soothes and reassures her "It's just a color, 'Booker had said. 'A genetic trait – not a flaw, not a curse, not a blessing nor a sin...Scientifically there's no such thing as race" (2015, p.143). Bride is happy to find someone with a different mentality that could help her to overcome her melancholic past. Herman clarifies that revealing hidden secrets is a crucial step that helps the trauma victim to recover.

Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims... The conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud is the central dialectic of psychological trauma. People who have survived atrocities often tell their stories in a highly emotional, contradictory, and fragmented manner, which undermines their credibility and thereby serves the twin imperatives of truth telling and secrecy. When the truth is finally recognized, survivors can begin their recovery (Herman, 1997, p.1).

Voicing the trauma Bride suffers from is the only way that helps her to achieve full recovery. Bride informs Booker about the incident that has influenced her childhood memory in a drastic way. In a flashback, Bride recalls the hidden secret of Sofia Huxley that nobody knows about and the reason for insisting to visit

Huxley at court. Bride has witnessed a child who has been sexually abused at the age of six. Bride is shocked not only because of what she has witnessed, but also by the reaction of her mother who warns her against speaking up the truth. The mother, a victim of racism herself, is afraid to be forced to leave her home if Mr. Leigh, the criminal, knows that her daughter witnessed the incident. Booker understands Bride's feelings and encourages her to overcome her fear about her childhood suffering. "'You're not responsible for other folks' evil". "Correct what you can; learn from what you can't" ... "No matter how hard we try to ignore it, the mind always knows truth and wants clarity"' (Morrison, 2015, p.56).

Bride's confession results in complete relief of her burden. She falls asleep on her chair feeling so relaxed. This reflects Herman's view, "When the truth is finally recognized, survivors can begin their recovery. But far too often secrecy prevails, and the story of the traumatic event surfaces not as a verbal narrative but as a symptom" (Herman, 1997, p.1). Bride feels free from her childhood burden and false testimony that has been a burden all her life. "Having confessed Lula Ann's sins, she felt newly born. No longer forced to relive, no, outlive the disdain of her mother and the abandonment of her father" (Morrison, 2015, p.162). Bride's physical journey searching for Booker leads to the success of her psychological journey seeking recovery from all her past sufferings. Bride's quest is fulfilled and she achieves her inner peace and self-realization.

6. Conclusion

Morrison's *God Help the Child* deals with the correlation between childhood trauma and psychological disorder. The novel weaves a web of childhood trauma stories, in which the main characters suffer from different kinds of abuse, neglect, witnessing domestic violence, emotional, psychological, and sexual abuse. Morrison focuses on her main protagonist representing different forms of disorder such as Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (c-PTSD), Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) as well as Dissociative Disorder (DD). Morrison elucidates how a child's exposure to traumatic experiences has a dramatic impact into adulthood, which reveals itself in emotional, social and behavioral problems. Judith Herman's vision in *Trauma and Recovery* explains the suffering of the trauma victim and the steps of his/her recovery. Morrison's portrayal of her characters, and her use of multiple narration in *God Helps the Child* allows her to represent the impact of childhood trauma and the means for overcoming it. Bride, the main protagonist, suffers from desertion and

humiliation both as a child and as an adult. Her quest is essential in having a direct psychological, mental and behavioral impact on her personality to heal, and achieve self-realization as well as inner peace. Although the novel shows manifestations of trauma through the characters, Morrison allows them a proper environment for healing and recovery. When they find their needs, they are able to heal from their traumatic childhood experiences, and finally attain self-realization. Morrison's novel takes the readers in a journey from self-hatred caused by trauma to self-acceptance developed through a quest

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صدمة الطفولة والسعي لإدراك الذات في رواية *ليكن الرب في عون هذه الطفلة* لتوني موريسون

المستخلص

يُقاس تطور شخصية الأفراد بمدى تأثرهم بالتجارب التي مروا بها في طفولتهم. غالبًا يعاني الأطفال الذين تعرضوا لإساءة المعاملة والإهمال من بعض أعراض الاضطرابات النفسية، والتي كثيرًا ما تترك آثارها على المدى الطويل. ، للمعاناة في مرحلة الطفولة تأثير كبير على حياة الفرد، وقد تؤدي في بعض الأحيان إلى مشكلة صدمة الطفولة. تتناول العديد من الأعمال الأدبية ضحايا صدمة الطفولة لتلقي الضوء على معاناتهم ومحاولاتهم للتعافي. تعد توني موريسون (١٩٣١-٢٠١٩)، الكاتبة الحاصلة على جائزة نوبل واحدة من أهم الكتاب الذين تناولوا المشكلات النفسية لدى الأطفال وتأثيرها عليهم حتى البلوغ بوضوح في العديد من الشخصيات التي قدمتها، فهي تركز على الارتباط بين المعاناة في الطفولة ومشكلة الصدمة النفسية في معظم كتاباتها. تقدم موريسون في رواية *ليكن الرب في عون هذه الطفلة* بطلنة الرواية "برايد"، والتي تعاني من أعراض اضطرابات نفسية نتيجة لرفض والديها لها للون بشرتها الأسود، وتتناول موريسون أيضًا تأثير مشكلة صدمة الطفولة على حياة البالغين كسمة أساسية في هذه القصة، وتهيئ للبطلنة البيئة المناسبة لكي تتمكن من التعافي والوصول إلى إدراك الذات. يهدف هذا البحث إلى تناول أسباب مشكلة صدمة الطفولة وتأثيرها السلبي على بطلنة رواية *ليكن الرب في عون هذه الطفلة* لموريسون مستندًا إلى رؤية جوديث هيرمان في كتابها *الصدمة و التعافي*.

الكلمات المفتاحية: صدمة الطفولة ، البحث ، إدراك الذات ، جوديث هيرمان ، توني موريسون ، *ليكن الرب في عون هذه الطفلة*.