

A Postcolonial Approach to the Problem of Subalternity in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the different forms of subalternity, the effect of marginalizing subaltern characters, and the postcolonial discourse among characters coming from different backgrounds in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child* (2015). A close reading of this novel shows how subalternity shapes the novel as a whole, both in its form and content. The title, language, tone, multiple points of view, and characters, all form a postcolonial frame and setting to the whole novel which highlights the problems of racism and child abuse in the United States of America in the twenty-first century. The novel is mainly about a dark child named Bride. She is born in a white family and represents children's marginalization in a white society because of a very long history of discrimination against black people. In addition to Bride, the study shows many other examples of racism and child abuse. So, one can argue that postcolonialism is one of the best approaches that can help the reader better understand the marginalized characters. A postcolonial approach will shed more light on the suffering of all these people and help the reader find out the victim and the victimizer. As a whole, *God Help the Child* necessitates a totally different approach to the problem of subalternity. Instead of Spivak's view that the subaltern cannot speak, it is possible to anticipate a near future in which the subaltern might be able to speak.

Key words: Postcolonialism, Subalternity, Marginalization, Toni Morrison, *God Help the Child*

INTRODUCTION

The problem of subalternity is a social problem that many American writers discuss in their novels during the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. This is the age of colonialism and postcolonialism when the conflict between the colonizer and colonized becomes one of the most important problems that many people suffer from in their everyday life. Children and black people are the most to be negatively affected by such conflict, causing them to be marginalized and, as a result, become subalterns in their own society.

One of the most important writers who are very much interested in the problem of subalternity is the postcolonial African American novelist Toni Morrison. She supports the marginalized people in the United States of America. In her novel *God Help the Child* (2015), she discusses some of their problems, such as racism and child abuse. Morrison explores both problems through the eyes of the novel's main character, the marginalized child, Bride. As Bride grows up, things gradually change. Her discrimination as a child affects her childhood and her life as an adult as well. The novel highlights the problem of child abuse by presenting many examples of abused children. Besides racism, Morrison focuses in her novel on the marginalized as subalterns. One can argue that subalternity shapes the novel by emphasizing

both racism and child abuse as major problems that the marginalized suffer from and cause them to become subalterns.

PROBLEM AND LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Kathryn Kulpa, "*God Help the Child* received respectful but mixed reviews. Most critics acknowledged Morrison's past work and saw *God Help the Child* as part of Morrison's ongoing literary dialogue on race, beauty, childhood, and identity" (2016, 230). However, Lionel Shriver claims that the previous themes were "underexplored" (2015, 144). Moreover, he believes that *God Help the Child* is "not on par with earlier works such as *Beloved*" (ibid). On the other hand, David Ulin (2015) finds Morrison's themes to be universal and says that her novel "seems to want to say something about responsibility, about what we owe to (and how we damage) one another." Morrison herself once says: "Don't get me wrong (.) it's not an intention of something you don't know. It's about yourself" (qtd. in Italie). She always emphasizes the importance and universality of the themes she discusses in this novel and in her other novels as well.

This paper is mainly concerned with the study of the subaltern as one of the important dimensions of postcolonial studies. Postcolonial critics like Carlos Pessoa, Robert Warrior, and Gayatri Spivak agree that subalternity is mainly a

social construct. For Carlos Pessoa, subalternity is “the site at which the socially exterior elements reside within a given social formation” (489). Robert Warrior refers to Spivak’s “Can the Subaltern Speak?” and says that it “emerged in and helped shape a specific moment in the development of literary theory in the US, and it continues to challenge Native American studies in significant ways” (85). MJ Dutta refers to Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Spivak claiming that “[t]he subaltern studies project focuses on locating the agency of the marginalized subject,” and that “much of the work in the field of subaltern studies therefore focuses on resistance and opposition to the status quo, demonstrating the consciousness underlying peasant movements” (qtd. in Dutta 222).

Toni Morrison’s earlier works address different post-colonial issues. For example, she discusses the problem of slavery in her novel *A Mercy* (2008), where she describes an era “when slavery was not associated with racism” (qtd. in Gras 2). Unlike her earlier works, Morrison’s *God Help the Child* is more related to the changing conditions of the modern times. The modern setting of the novel makes it more related to different postcolonial issues. Some of these issues include: “the legacy of slavery still affects African American bodies” (Gras 1), the effect of racism, and child trauma. As indicated by Delphine Gras (2016), “the legacy of slavery still dictates the way Black female bodies are seen and treated in twenty-first-century America” (ibid). Gras tries to prove that “race still matters,” which is true, for one can see how it causes the subalternity of the characters in the novel (ibid). Moreover, “Morrison also directly addresses how portraying the significance of race in the shaping of a child’s identity was a key concern in the creation of *God Help the Child*” (Gras 3). Morrison adds in an interview for *The Telegraph* that people should look at “the ways racism manifests itself differently instead of believing that it has vanished,” (qtd. in Gras 3). In addition, Morrison claims that “[t]he question of race [...] is not static. You just have to swim in it for a bit” (Wood).

In addition, an important factor of subaltern studies is the study of diction and language. For example, the studies conducted by some critics like Dirk Hoerder, Mohan Dutta, and Mahuya Pal focus on the study of language using a subaltern approach. While Dutta and Pal (2010) focus on studying the actual dialogue of the marginalized, Hoerder (2001) studies the language of narratives that are confounded by the intimate lives of the subalterns. *God Help the Child* can be considered to be a narrative that is confounded by the lives of the subaltern children and females. The characters’ names and their language are important to discuss when the language of the novel is considered. In addition, the title and the use of multiple points of view in the novel are significant as well.

METHOD AND DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The researchers use the method of comparison and contrast to achieve the main goals of the study. Concisely, the utterances of the characters have been studied and compared to the characteristics of the subaltern. Moreover, the behavior and the names of some characters have been studied to show how subalternity shaped their lives. In addition to the

comparative approach, the researchers use also the descriptive and analytic approaches to achieve the objectives of the study. As a whole, the study shows how black people, and children in particular, are still suffering from marginalization in the modern American society.

DISCUSSION

The main character, whose name is originally Lula Ann Bride, calls herself Bride, which indicates change; she is not the same person as when she was a child. Bride, as a name, refers to joy, beauty, and her way of getting dressed. As mentioned at Lionel Shriver’s review, Bride “chooses to wear only white. The colour sets off her striking complexion, which, in a more progressive era, has transformed from bane to asset” (Shriver 144). The change of her name and wardrobe shows the current postcolonial status of black people in United States of America. Accordingly, it can be considered a better change, but still not enough for their healing, as Bride observes: “memory is the worst thing about healing” (qtd. In Italie). All these references shape her life as an adult. First, she is a successful regional manager at a cosmetics business. Second, she is very beautiful and attractive, though her mother predicts that “her color is a cross she will always carry” (Morrison *God Help the Child* ch.1 para.7). Finally, Bride always wears white because it shows and compliments her beauty.

The other important character is Sweetness, Bride’s mother. Her name clearly shows love and kindness. According to Gras (5), naming the first chapter after its narrator, Sweetness, “recalls *Beloved*’s plantation life in the nineteenth-century Sweet Home, [...] nothing is sweet about Sweetness’s parenting or life in Sweet Home, the plantation in *Beloved*.” At the beginning of the novel, Sweetness is portrayed as the bad racist mother; however, she shows the sweet motherly love towards her daughter only at the end of the novel. Sweetness keeps talking about the difficulties of being a mother and how happy she is for her daughter to become a mother. Morrison chooses to give Sweetness the first and last chapters in the novel in order to clearly indicate the positive change that took place in her character. Another possibility is that her name might be ironic. A mother is a symbol of sweetness, love, and kindness, but Sweetness is not as sweet or kind as a mother, her daughter lacks any sincere affection from her. In addition, one can see how Sweetness narrates the events of her life in a very racist way.

Another example that supports the argument about Morrison’s careful choice of the names of her characters is the name of Bride’s lover. It is very symbolic and has many implications about his character as well. Booker Starburn, who turns to be one of the main characters at the end of the novel, is a very important character. Booker, as a name, means “scribe,” which makes a good name for writers, scholars, and musicians. Throughout the novel and as his name indicates, Booker, who has got a master’s degree, shows a very educated personality. He likes reading books, writing prose and poetry, and playing music. Like Bride, his point of weakness is his past and the memory of his abused dead brother, Adam, and anything related to abusing children. This memory, and

the idea of not being able to help his brother, burns like a star in his heart. After the murder of his brother by a child molester, he feels guilty for his brother and every helpless child in the world. As in Gras (1) mentions, "The maimed bodies of African American males and females that fill the pages of Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child* remind us that the legacy of slavery still affects African American bodies." One can see the previous incident as one out of many examples in the novel that proves the subalternity of children in general, and the subalternity of Booker in particular, whose life is very much affected by this event.

Postcolonial criticism emphasizes the importance of analyzing the language and tone of any literary text. According to Cary and Mutua (64), discourse in postcolonial narratives embodies both "meaning and social relationships," language and tone "can substitute both subjectivity and power relation". So, tone and language in *God Help the Child* embody a postcolonial meaning and culture. The tone and language at any postcolonial text show different aspects of postcolonialism. In Morrison's novel *God Help the Child*, language and tone are intermingled together to show how postcolonialism causes racism and subalternity to all characters. Both themes of racism and child abuse are problems that deeply affect the subaltern. The language and tone of the novel are used to discriminate the main character, Bride, and abuse the children, causing them to become subalterns.

The characters of the novel, who also play the role of first person narrators, use an extremely informal language. In comparison, Gras (3) says that "what has struck some reviewers of *God Help the Child* as an incoherent narrative lacking character development or depth is instead a provocative indictment against the illusion of post-raciality." Morrison chooses to use the first person narration in order to create a better understanding and development of the characters. The effect of using informal language can be clearly seen in Sweetness saying "I never did convince him that I ain't never, ever fooled around with another man. He was dead sure that I was lying" (*God Help the Child* Ch.1 para.5). Sweetness uses here double negation, which indicates only one negation in informal American English. In addition, the phrase 'ain't' is a form of negation in Afro-American slang language. The previous example shows discrimination against black people in the past, which shapes black people's use of language and the effect of colonization on their life throughout history. Moreover, the tone that Brooklyn uses after she receives a letter from Bride is another example. She says, "I didn't have to read it to know what it said. 'Sorry I ran away. I had to. Except for you everything was falling apart blah, blah, blah...'" (*God Help the Child* Ch.12 para.1). Brooklyn mocks Bride while she is absent and shows how much she does not even care about her. The use of 'blah, blah, blah' shows a sarcastic tone that Brooklyn uses to mock Bride. Actually, she envies Bride for being colored and successful. Her tone shows a true colonizer's racist mentality.

In *God Help the Child*, Morrison uses a very modern style of writing. She uses informal English to create the modern setting of the novel and to give the reader a closer look that will enable him/her to have a better understanding of the

novel's themes, especially when the character is the narrator. She also uses a lot of contractions and short sentences. For example, Bride says, "Christ. Now what? My earrings. They won't go in. The platinum stem keeps slipping away from my earlobe. I examine the earrings—nothing wrong" (*God Help the Child* Ch.6 para.13). The previous example illustrates the use of informal English and contractions such as 'won't', short sentences, and even fragmentation, which are elements of a modern way of writing. So, the modern style of writing and the use of a modern setting prove the fact that subalternity and racism still exist at the time.

The title of the novel, *God Help the Child*, is also very significant. According to the novel, she chooses this particular title because Sweetness' last words, after describing the difficulties of parenting and how it changes parents, are: "God help the child" It is a prayer for the new unborn baby of Bride and Booker and all children. The title "prompts us to think about the future of our children and suggests that, if there is to be any, we need to start acknowledging that we still do not live in a post-patriarchal or post-racial society" (Gras 16). In addition to this reason that Morrison gives, one can say that it is a prayer for the new unborn baby of Bride and Booker and all children. Children's subalternity causes child abuse, which is one of the major social problems that Morrison discusses in the novel. There is a need for a prayer to God to help the abused subaltern children because "the subaltern cannot speak" (Spivak 104).

Postcolonial narratives mostly use either a first person narrator or a third person narrator. Morrison chooses to use multiple narration to combine both points of view in some parts of the novel. According to Gras (3), "this novel depicts a generation whose hope is to belong to a post-racial world free of racism" and free of subalternity. Accordingly, Morrison uses multiple narrators to create a voice for the subalterns, hoping for a society free from subalternity and racism. She also entitles the chapters after the names of the characters who narrate the events; each chapter is narrated by one character. The reason for using multiple narration is to give the reader a better idea about the events and the intentions of all characters, a sense of amusement which is felt after reading many perspectives of the story, and to emphasize the theme of subalternity in the novel from different views. Sometimes, what is more important than the story itself is the identity of the one who is narrating it. The novel is full of telling and retelling, which gives it a sense of modernity. The simplicity of the language, the modern style of writing, and the modern setting form great temptation and attraction for the reader to continue reading. Moreover, those modern aspects are what make the novel universal and easy to understand by all people around the world.

So, Subalternity of human beings, especially children and females whether they are colored or not, is one of the main themes of the novel. For Fernanda Moore:

The Morrisonian themes are there. There will be racism, specifically, that of light-skinned blacks toward dark-skinned; and there will be heartache, specifically, that of a daughter spurned and belittled by her own mother. There will also be struggle—damaged souls desperate to transcend

terrible pasts—and there will be child abuse, both physical and emotional, before the novel ends. Sweetness’s chapter reads like an evil oracle; the reader braces for dreadful things. (69)

One can clearly see how racism and child abuse cause subalternity for many people who belong to all classes in the society. In the novel, racism and child abuse take different shapes, discriminating dark-skinned blacks by whites and light-skinned blacks as well.

Morrison describes the character of Bride in an interview with Maddie Oatman for *Mother Jones* magazine as a “very successful” person. However, she adds that “in her brain she’s returning to that despised little black girl her mother didn’t even like” (60). She lives the harshness of racism as a child living among white people. She gets lots of racist acts from her light-skinned mother who deprives her from the most basic right a mother can give to her child. “All I know is that for me, nursing her was like having a pickaninny sucking my teat. I went to bottle-feeding soon as I got home,” says Sweetness, her mother (Morrison *God Help the Child* Ch. 1 para. 3). Using the word “pickaninny” by the mother to describe her daughter is a very racist act. Sweetness causes racist feelings to her daughter; she even tells Bride to call her “Sweetness” instead of “mother” or “mama,” she adds, “It was safer. Being the black and having what I think are too-thick lips calling me ‘Mama’ would confuse people” (Ch.1 para. 6). The same feeling can be seen in the following passage:

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 touch. 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. (Ch.4 para. 5)

The previous quotation describes Sweetness’s feelings while raising Bride. It also shows her feelings while bathing her, “Distaste was all over her face.” She is even disgusted of touching that black skin; she would do whatever it takes so as not to be in contact with Bride’s skin. As a result, Bride clearly does not have the sweetness of a mother’s touch and love. Both confessions and feelings agree with Gras’s opinion that Morrison carefully creates the characters of the novel in a way she “forces her readers to acknowledge the pervasive mental and physical damages racism and sexism still cause to this day, particularly for black girls and women” (3).

Racism, which is one of the main causes of subalternity in the novel, is not only caused by Bride’s light-skinned black mother, white people discriminate against her and her mother as well. Bride’s personality is shaped by many racists that she meets in her life. Her mother is not the only one; the whole society is the sculptor of her personality. Bride is either discriminated against directly by the society or deceived by friends like Brooklyn who tries to show the best to Bride, but she is not sincere in her feelings. Brooklyn says about Bride, “she can’t pronounce the *r* in *raw*, which is what her skin looks like—all pink and blue-black. Worse than anything is her nose—nostrils wide as an orangutan’s

under gauze the size of half a bagel” (*God Help the Child* Ch.3 para. 7). She is jealous of Bride’s work and emotional life; she cannot bear to deal with a black person like Bride who has a successful job and a loving boyfriend. Brooklyn is very close to Bride because she wants what Bride has and actually tries to take it. She tries to hook up with Bride’s lover, but she fails.

Though the society does not accept Bride for being a black person in a white society, she grows up to be a fascinating beautiful woman. She is a “very successful,” beautiful, and attractive young lady. Unfortunately, however, she feels insecure. In order to feel confident, she consults a fashion designer called Jeri about what she should wear to look beautiful. He tells her to “always wear white,” “Only white and all white all the time” because it compliments her skin. He describes her “A panther in the snow” (*God Help the Child* Ch.4 pars. 9-14). She also seems to love a guy named Booker, but leaves her later. She cannot get over the feelings she felt with Booker before leaving her, so she starts a haunting trip to find Booker and tell him that she needs him. As previously mentioned by Gras (2016, 3) regarding the ways racism manifests itself in a supposedly post-racial era, Bride lacks self-assurance, affection, and compassion. As a result, her subalternity as a child and an adult is due to her harsh childhood, racist atmosphere, and unaffectionate mother. In addition, Morrison portrays Bride as a character suffering from what W. E. B. Du Bois characterized in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) as double consciousness. According to Gras, Bride is a woman who desires to achieve the American Dream; she portrays the harshness of doing so as an African American woman (5).

Morrison tries to open the eyes of the society on the problem of child abuse. The society is too busy with putting an end to other problems such as racism, forgetting all about greater problems such as child abuse, which affects all groups of people in the society. At the time when the novel was written, societies around the world are changing drastically, and racism is already abolished in many countries. Morrison uses a black character to show how the American society is busy with abolishing racism that should have been abolished long time ago, while more serious problems, such as child abuse, begin to appear. She highlights the marginalization of children by providing many examples of abused children, causing them to become subalterns. She uses Bride to represent the problem of child abuse in its utmost. *God Help the Child* is a wakeup call to stand for those marginalized children, as well as black people.

In “A Child is Being Beaten,” Sigmund Freud considers the child in any family to be an innocent victim of the family and the whole society. He also discusses issues like subjugation, humiliation, shame, and trauma, and says that they all persist into adult and social life. Similarly, Spivak considers children as subalterns. She mentions Freud’s ideas to support her idea that women are also subalterns, since she already considers children to be subalterns. Accordingly, the subalternity of children is a result of their victimization in the family and society at large.

Morrison discusses different incidents of child abuse in

the novel and shows the serious suffering of the victimized children. The Society's reaction to the color of Bride's skin and the mental effects of discriminating against her is a type of child abuse. In one incident, Bride looks out from the window and sees the landlord sexually abusing a kid right under the window. The landlord sees her, but he does not care because she does not make a threat for him; on the contrary, he curses her and speaks in a very bad way to her. While asking her to close the window, he calls her a "nigger" and curses her. The other example of child abuse is related to a child called Rain, who had been sexually abused by her mother's clients of men. Rain reveals her story to Bride because she can easily relate to her childhood. Bride can clearly see that the emotional and mental effects of child abuse are caused mainly by her biological mother. The third incident is about Adam, Booker's brother, who is brutally killed by a murderer who is obsessed with killing children. All these incidents show examples of people who are victims of abuse, which causes them to become subalterns.

Bride ends up being a psychologically abused child because of the racist abuse that she gets all throughout her life. Her mother says, "I don't care how many times she changes her name. Her color is a cross she will always carry" (*God Help the Child* Ch.1 para.7). What her mother states does not only imply racism, but also shows how much Bride feels insecure about herself and her identity, she keeps changing her name constantly. She tries hard to find her identity, she wants to forget about Lula Ann Bride, the child who is always discriminated against and people see as the ugly black little girl. Bride comforts herself by saying, "how about that, Lula Ann? Did you ever believe you would grow to be this hot, or this successful?" (Ch.2 para.4). She does not want to remember how bad her childhood was, but suddenly she starts to remember her lover, Booker, and how happy she was with him as if she feels sad for losing the only love and affection she gets in her life. Moreover, racism affects her mentality as an adult. She also seems to discriminate against others such as when she calls the song that the hippie family sings as "some dumb old hippie song" (Pt.2 para.16). Immediately after this reaction of hers to the song, she begins to remember her drastic childhood, "Bride quickly dashed a bright memory of Sweetness humming some blues song while washing panty hose in the sink, little Lula Ann hiding behind the door to hear her. How nice it would have been if mother and daughter could have sung together" (Pt.2 para.16). So, the memories of Bride's drastic childhood shapes her personality, she behaves like someone who lacks love and affection, someone who is a victim of racism, and as a result, a subaltern.

Bride witnesses a number of incidents as a child. She remembers hearing a meow-like voice through the open window of her mother's bedroom. She describes what she hears and sees, "how pained it sounded, frightened, even. I looked. Down below in the walled area that led to the building's basement I saw not a cat but a man. He was leaning over the short, fat legs of a child" (*God Help the Child* Ch.6 para.18). The man, who turns out to be Mr. Leigh, the landlord, sexually abuses a child. An innocent child be-

comes a victim of a bad man, causing a trauma that ruins his life forever. So, one can argue that Bride's subalternity causes an endless cycle of subalternity for other people because of not being able to speak or do anything about what she sees.

Another sexually abused child is Rain, the one whom Bride meets at the hippie family's home. The hippie couple find Rain in the street and decide to raise her. Rain tells her foster mother about her story, but she warns Rain of saying anything about the story to other people. Rain tells Bride about her story, she tells her that her biological mother throws her out because she hurts "some guy. A regular. One of the ones she let do it to me" (*God Help the Child* Pt.2 para.36). Her mother apologizes to the guy and throws Rain out. Her mother does not realize that her daughter is much more badly affected by this incident. Rain's subalternity is caused by sexual abuse. It is also caused by considering her a source of money, which is the same way her biological mother feels about her. Spivak has made it clear that "the subaltern cannot speak." Accordingly, one can see how Rain cannot really speak because she is warned about saying anything about the story which causes her to be a subaltern who is not able to speak.

Bride starts to compare her childhood to Rain's childhood. It turns out that she has had a better childhood, "Even Sweetness, who for years couldn't bear to look at or touch her, never threw her out" (*God Help the Child* Ch.12 para.60). Bride's eyes are open to see a harsher type of suffering that needs to be abolished. Rain's harsh childhood at her mother's house, who is a stripper, has affected her badly; it creates a criminal mentality in her mind. For example, Bride asks her "If you saw your mother again what would you say to her?", "Nothing. I'd chop her head off." She answers. "I used to think about it a lot. How it would look—her eyes, her mouth, the blood shooting out of her neck. Made me feel good just thinking about it." (Ch.12 pars.62-63). So, child abuse affects children, not only physically, but also psychologically, as in Bride and Rain's cases. Morrison realizes Rain's subalternity, she gives her a voice and enables her to speak and tell the story only to Bride. In addition, Morrison gives a whole chapter in the novel to Rain in order to give her a chance to express her thoughts and feelings.

Maddie Oatman reports Morrison saying: "even when you think you've had a wonderful childhood, I suspect there's always some little drop of poison—that sometimes just trails in the blood and determines how you react to other people and how you think" (60). Morrison's opinion indicates the serious effects of bad childhood on all people. Bride, Rain, and Booker are the characters who are mostly affected in their childhood. For Booker, the way his young brother, Adam, is killed affects him the most. Adam is killed by a child molester. Booker is unable to forget his brother, especially when he identifies the remains of the body with his father, and when he finds the killer. Adam's death affects Booker's personality. Booker is fully aware of the problem of child abuse, and he tries to be an advocate for helpless innocent children. He once notices a two-year old

child screaming and crying in the backseat of a parked car. He drags and beats the men who abused the child till the police arrest them. Moreover, when Bride tells Booker about the landlord and how her mother asks her not to tell anyone, he tells her, “now five people know. The boy, the freak, your mother, you and now me. Five is better than two but it should be five thousand” (*God Help the Child* Ch.6 para.19). Booker is aware of the problem and he believes that what he says to Bride is a better way out of the problem. It is true that “The subaltern cannot speak,” as Spivak claims (104), but in order to be able to have a way out of the problem of subalternity, people should try their best to speak out and to tell others how bad they suffer from such problem and similar other problems.

The themes of racism and child abuse shape the subalternity of almost all the main characters in the novel. Spivak (1988) mentions a type of the subaltern who are much more oppressed by saying “if you are poor, black and female you get it in three ways” (90). So, a person who is poor, black, female, and a child is definitely a more oppressed subaltern according to Spivak. Morrison seems to share the same view which can be seen from the way she presents Bride as a poor, black, female, and a subaltern child.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, one can see how subalternity shapes the whole novel, in both its form and content. The language, tone, multiple points of view, title, and characters, all form a postcolonial frame and setting to the whole novel. A subaltern is someone with no voice; he/she usually lacks one or more right. According to Freud, Spivak, and other scholars, subalterns are usually considered to be victims. At the beginning of the twenty-first century in United States of America, and all over the world as well, many people become victims of many social problems, especially racism and child abuse. Their suffering seems to be similar to the suffering of the colonized people. The victims are the colonized, and the victimizers are the colonizers. In the novel, Bride’s personality is affected by racism; she is colonized by others’ thoughts about racism. As for Booker, he is a victim of the past and the murder of his brother. Sweetness is a victim of the society and her husband, but she manages to be a victimizer for Bride. Sofia, who is accused of being a child molester, becomes a victim throughout the novel for a crime that she has not committed. Rain is another victim; she is colonized by her mother and the society at large.

So, reading the novel from a postcolonial view will shed more light on the suffering of all these people, especially in a changing time when it becomes difficult to decide who is really the victim and who is the victimizer, who colonized whom. In Morrison’s *God Help the Child*, both seem to belong to the same family, which necessitates a totally different approach to the problem of subalternity. Instead of Spivak’s view that the subaltern cannot speak, it is possible to anticipate a near future in which the subaltern might be able to speak.

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