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## **Loss of Secure Base and its Relationship with Attachment Anxiety in Morrison's Sula**

**Dr. Rafea Mohsin Alwan**

[rafi51020@gmail.com](mailto:rafi51020@gmail.com)

**Keywords:** anxiety; attachment trauma; insecure base; Bowlby; Allen

### **Abstract**

While most trauma studies highlight the horrible repercussions of wars and atrocious institutions like slavery and colonialism ,this study centres on female characters who endure attachment trauma, the abandonment of a secure base and the aftermath of detachment, leading to attachment anxiety. These individuals are victimized by their family members, who are supposed to give them attention and protection. Psychological anxieties have resulted from the Traumatic experiences of these characters at the hands of their close relations. The present study uses hermeneutic and interpretative research methods to analyze Toni Morrison's novel "Sula" from the perspective of Jon G. Allen's Attachment Trauma Theory. It also examines the influential role of John Bowlby's psychiatric concept of a secure base in developing a child's familiarity. This paper examines the female characters who have endured physical violations and extensive emotional and psychological trauma. The study evaluates the loss of a secure base and its destructive effects on the individual's behaviour from childhood to adulthood. The examination of these unspoken heartbreaking experiences in this novel not only expresses the social significance of Morrison's novel but also contributes highly to addressing the problem of attachment trauma in real society, as literature mirrors life and society.

## فقدان القاعدة الامنة وعلاقته بالاضطراب النفسي المتعلق في رواية سولا للكاتب

توني موريسون

د. رافع محسن علوان

[rafi51020@gmail.com](mailto:rafi51020@gmail.com)

الكلمات المفتاحية : القلق النفسي ، صدمة التعلق ، القاعدة الغير امنة ، بولبي ، ألن

### ملخص البحث

بينما كانت اغلب الدراسات تسلط الضوء على العواقب الفظيعة للحروب والمؤسسات الاثمة التي تسبب الصدمات النفسية كالاسترقاق والاستعمار، هذه الدراسة تميزت كونها تركزي تحليلها على الشخصيات النسوية التي عانت صدمة التعلق وحرمان القاعدة الامنة وظروف ما بعد العزلة التي تؤدي جميعها الى قلق التعلق النفسي. الذين يتعرضون للاعتداء من قبل احد افراد عائلاتهم الذين من المفترض ان يوفر لهم الاهتمام والحماية. القلق النفسي ينتج من تجارب الصدمة النفسية التي تمر بها هذه الشخصيات على يد اقرب الناس لديهم. الدراسة الحالية تبحث عن تحليل رواية "سولا" للكاتبة الامريكية توني موريسون على ضوء نظرية صدمة التعلق النفسية للدكتور النفسي الامريكي جون جي ألن بالاستفادة من طريقة التأويل و التفسير لتحليل البحث. تتناول الدراسة ايضا مفهوم القاعدة الامنة للكاتب النفسي جون بولبي وتأثيرها الفاعل في تطور اللفة والحميمية للطفل. هذه الورقة العلمية لم تقتصر فقط لدراسة العنف الجسدي الذي تعرضت له الشخصيات النسوية في الرواية بل تناولت ايضا الصدمة والمعانات النفسية والعاطفية الواسعة التي مرت بها هذه الشخصيات. الدراسة ايضا هدفت لتقييم التأثيرات السلبية على سلوك الشخص بسبب غياب القاعدة الامنة من عمر الطفولة الى البلوغ. هذه الدراسة لم تكتفي فقط بتسليط الضوء عن الفائدة الاجتماعية للرواية من خلال عرض التجارب المؤلمة التي لم يتم البوح بها لهذه الشخصيات الخيالية بل ساهمت ايضا في تناول مشكلة صدمة التعلق في المجتمع الواقعي لأن الادب كما هو معروف يعتبر مرآة الحياة والمجتمع.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background of Study

Toni Morrison, a worldwide renowned writer of the 20th century, can be considered one of the most popular Afro-American black female writers in the current period. As an author, she understands the potential of her works; she considers this arena an instrument and a way to foster patriarchal awareness. Identity, trauma, sexism and racism have been topics of Toni Morrison. She attempts to uplift the status of women in general and black women in particular. Not only Morrison but the vast majority of the Afro-American writers also discuss psychological predicaments. She establishes social awareness among people and makes them realize the position of women in society to practice her outlook, which is to liberate black women from every aspect of subjugation and expose the psychological effects of the black woman through her literary works. Her works shed light on social problems such as gender discrimination, gender oppression, racial discrimination and the traumatic effect on their psyches. Her works also encompass the exposure to harsh situations and the necessity to seek ways to achieve psychological recovery. Her themes always focus on her black women, which links them to realistic psychological phenomena. Her importance for the well-being of black life makes her the mirror of Afro-American life. In her novels, Morrison attempts to expose the aftermath of psychological and physical atrocities inflicted on black women. The improper secure base and its traumatic consequences on individuals is one of the recurrent themes reflected in her novel *Sula*.

In its exposition, Toni Morrison's *Sula* states that as far as Afro-American teenagers are concerned, there is an exceptional presentation of what psychological trauma can result. The novel revolves around the friendship of two girls, "Sula and Nel, " lasting from early age to maturity. Sula, an intelligent female child with a distinctive birthmark on her face, is an active girl who makes a solid relationship with her friend Nel, who is systematic and virtuous. They have a top secret from early friendship when Sula brings about the unintentional death of a person, "Chicken Little". Both have undergone challenging circumstances. While the plot develops, this relationship deteriorates when Nel discovers an intimacy between Sula and Nel's husband, Jude. Jude departs Nel, as well as Sula, to move to Detroit. Later on, Sula gets badly ill, and Nel calls on her. They debate on disloyalty and their relationship. Not too long afterwards, Sula passes away. In the ending part of the story, Nel visits the cemetery to see her close friend Sula' grave. Nel weeps Sula's name loudly and pitifully.



In this paper, the researcher has focused on the bond between mother and child. In the following parts, the researcher will highlight the meaning of dependent attachment figures or secure bases in a child's lifetime. This paper questions the significance of the mother or someone else close to the child who supports him and provides him with care and security.

### **1.2The Significance of Secure Base in the life of individuals**

Attachment relations are essential in giving security and safety to children; they play a pivotal role in the child's growth until adulthood. The reasons for depression have been discussed by Allen, who opines that it is perceived that division in secure relations can lead to stress. For attachment trauma, Allen also adds that a betrayal of secure relations can cause depression. Bowlby's research proved that when a child detached from his /her mother/ caregiver, he or she complains, which is succeeded by despair; "separation-related despair is the prototype for depression in response to loss" (Allen,2002, p.119). Consequently, secure attachments protect people from anxiety and play a central role in reducing stress or anxiety. On the other hand, persons lacking secure attachment go through a traumatic life. They undergo powerful emotional needs for another person. They feel upset and secluded on not having any person, which can result in bad emotional condition. It is noticed that the more people live near their attachment figure, the sooner they come out of depression. Allen says,

"There are many sorts of trauma, ranging from tornadoes to assaults, and trauma can involve either a single event or repeated events. Trauma can befall a person in childhood or adulthood or both. In my view, trauma in attachment relationships (e.g., abuse and neglect by caregivers or romantic parents) is especially likely to have severe consequences, depression among them."

(Allen,2002, p. 120)

Among trauma in attachment relationships, sexual, physical and emotional abuses are the most worrisome as they have severe consequences.

### **1.3Attachment Trauma Theory**

John G. Allen, a prominent American psychiatrist, specifies the features of contemporary Attachment Theory in his vast collection of books and

scholarly articles. He presents a prototype he believes we all have in mind: “a mother comforting her frightened child” (Allen, 2013, p. xxii). In this image, he based this theory on which a child feels securely attached to the mother figure. The child feels confident that he will get comfort whenever he is in physical or emotional pain. Similarly, a traumatized person needs the care and attention of an attachment figure. When he can regulate emotions, essential to everyday life, trauma is transgenerational; a person who adopts the role of a parent may behave more or less the same way his parents have treated him. It is not that attachment security can only be received by parents but also by other extended family members, teachers or psychiatrists. Besides the attitude of caregivers, the temperament of a child and the environmental context also contribute to the development of attachment.

A human child remains dependent for an extended period compared to other animals because his requirement for protection and security is more significant than other animals. Moreover, this period laid the foundation in his training that he is socially dependent upon others and has to interact with them for his survival and development. Environmental factors which affect attachment are socio-economic status, health issues of parents, and stressful life events. A child brought up by a single mother or someone struggling with marital conflicts is likely to feel more insecure and less equipped to meet the challenges of life (Bowlby 1988).

#### **1.4 Attachment Anxiety**

Attachment trauma leads to attachment anxiety, which is alienating. Alienation results in avoidance, thus blocking the way to healing, but a traumatized person needs attention, care and empathetic listening to reduce the emotional pain (Dawson, 2002). Remembering and thinking about secure relationships evoke a feeling of security that provides a buffer from stress. Allen (2013), in her book “Restoring Mentalizing in Attachment Relationships”, appreciates Mikulincer et al. (2011), who contributed to the attachment trauma theory by presenting the idea of islands of security. They say that patients with a history of attachment trauma have islands of security stored in their memories where they go when they cannot find peace amid the stressful environment in which they are living. They can be associated with siblings, grandparents, teachers, or clergy members. They revisit these relatively secure islands and represent loving relationships where they find solace and warmth. That brings joy to these distressed people who enliven their spirit to carry

on the activities of life amid unfavourable circumstances. From such relationships, “they internalize the feelings of pleasure which soothe their fragmented souls and provide them with psychological security” (Mikulincer et al.,2011, p.189).

Attachment trauma causes severe stress, which may become a cause of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and a multitude of psychiatric disorders. To minimize stress, one has to develop more secure attachment relationships. These relationships are supportive as they provide emotional comfort, physical help and companionship (Greenwald, 2005).

Allen (2002), in *Coping with Depression*, says that a depressed person is caught between stifling his anger and expressing it in irritable outbursts. He suppressed his anger because he was afraid of the caregiver’s anger. This suppression of anger contributes to depression, consequently putting him in a worse situation. Just as the traumatized person needs “reassurance, similarly the caregiver needs reinforcement for he also feels frustrated, helpless and hopeless” (Allen,2002, p.211). Attachment is perhaps the worst kind of interpersonal trauma because it results from betrayal in attachment relationships.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Overview of Trauma Theory

Currently, studies on trauma mainly deal with three fields—first, research in psychological trauma. Cathy Caruth is known as a pioneer in this area, and most of his trauma books encompass “*Trauma: Exploration in Memory*” (1995) and “*Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*” (2016). Along with Caruth’s achievement, Ruth Leys' book “*Trauma: A Genealogy*” (2010) sheds light on traumatic symptoms regarding the knowledge of genealogy perception. Secondly, trauma research from the sociological and historical perspective, which embraces numerous studies: Lawrence Langer's book “*Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruin of Memory*” (1993) and Dominick La Capra's book “*Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001) and so forth. Thirdly, the relationship between literary texts and trauma memory includes supreme books such as Paul Ricoeur’s book “*Memory, History, and Forgetting*” (2014) and Kali Tal's book “*World of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma*” (1996).

As an essential part of trauma psychology research, the most psychological part of trauma is attachment trauma, also identified as

developmental trauma. This trauma occurs once the victim views conditions as threatening their need for intimacy with others. This kind of trauma generally happens during childhood. The victim's trauma may be shaped by the actions of one of the victimized person's best friends. Psychological and Physical abuse by relatives, sexual abuse against children by relatives, the refusal of the presence of children or children being violated, not heeding their emotional desires, ignoring their physical requirements, and being detached by force from other people are all instances of actions that can bring about attachment trauma (Manzo & Wright, 2014).

## 2.2 Traumatic Studies on the Fiction of Toni Morrison

Being an Afro-American writer, Toni Morrison's writings pay special attention to issues such as the dilemma of black women and their psychological sufferings. Eric D. McDonnell Jr., in his study "*As If We Were Alive - Trauma Recovery in Toni Morrison's Beloved and The Bluest Eye*" (2016), discussed trauma and its impact on the characters of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and *The Bluest Eye*. He opined that ample criticism and research on Morrison demonstrates over-focus on trauma and a deficiency of expressive extensive emphasis on recovery. This is not true, as Morrison is not a masochist. Instead, her literary works achieved a paramount point mission of engaging severe actual actions of the society while also innovatively envisioning insightful methods of recovery and the prospects for healing.

In his study entitled "*Trauma and Identity in Alice Walker's The Color Purple and Toni Morrison's Sula*" (2019), Ayad A. Abood Al-Saymary discussed the correlation between trauma and identity, along with their correlation to eco-consciousness in Afro-American literary works. The correlation of trauma to identity is mutual in the way trauma has its impact and can form a person's identity, which can be identified again after a traumatic act. It is paramount to avoid being overwhelmed by trauma, and learning ways of coping with trauma can be considered one of the alternatives that some of Walker's and Morrison's strong characters are confronted with. Another study, "*Attachment and Trauma in Toni Morrison's God Help the Child*" (2018) by Linda Mydland, tackles Attachment trauma. This study explored that both the experience of trauma and the deficiency of an attachment figure go hand in hand in the story. When a child is deprived and abandoned by his parents, he is gloomier than the others. Even though they are literary works, it is hard not to

get emotionally understood., In this novel, Toni Morrison can raise public awareness of abuse and neglect.

Further, a study entitled “*Suppression, Oppression and Survival in Toni Morrison’s Jazz*” (2017) by Shamaila Dodhy and Nasir Umar Muhammad discussed the anxieties of trauma and how to seek proper ways of recovery. They opine that Toni Morrison’s *Jazz* emphasizes the conflict of exploited people of the black community against strict institutions of capitalism, slavery, and feudalism. Morrison demonstrates strain prolonged on stressed people via materialistic exploitation; thus, *Jazz* exemplifies the disregarded sector of people who are not provided with fair opportunities to endure and cannot find entry to high-esteemed means and positions. The governing class uses power and discourse to make the system appear logical and natural.

Thus, the previous literature on Morrison’s novels invites the researcher to investigate attachment trauma, the lack of a secure base and its devastating consequences on individuals and society.

## 2. Methodology

The hermeneutic and interpretative research methods have been implemented to scrutinise and analyse this study. This method has linked the novel with non-literary texts of trauma studies to examine attachment trauma in the female characters of Toni Morrison’s *Sula*.

A qualitative study is adopted along with the textual analysis of the selected text. The researcher focused on the impact of Attachment trauma and the lack of security based on female characters, which brings about attachment anxiety. Attachment trauma is committed by intimate people for whom it is implicitly believed that they will defend and protect helpless members of the family.

The present study's methodological pattern has essentially emphasised the principles of Jon G. Allen, one the leading phycologists of the current period. Along with attachment trauma, the phenomenon of attachment trauma provides an understanding of the conduct of realistically represented female characters in the same way that we comprehend the behaviour of real people in real-life situations. The concept of a secure base is also discussed concerning attachment trauma.

Based on the experimenters’ observations, some attachment types were established. Secure attachment is the first type, in which “the



children realize that they will get protection and care at any time they need it because their needs are consistently met by their caregiver (Prior et al., 2006, p. 15).

On the contrary, insecure attachment happens whenever parents are “less predictably warm and responsive to a child, resulting in the progress of anxiety” (Seccombe, 2015, p. 102). Further, there are two types of insecure attachment: the first type is anxious-ambivalent, and the second is avoidant. Regarding anxious-ambivalent attachment, children are unsure whether their requirements will be fulfilled and get anxious when their parents are not nearby. When parents come back, however, instead of looking for them out for love, the child refuses them. In avoidant attachment, “caregivers disregard the needs of their children. As a result, children do not expect comfort from their caregivers and display no signs of attachment to them” (Seccombe, 2015, p. 102).

### 3. Analysis

In the Peace family, the symptoms of Attachment trauma appear in the major female characters. First, the grandmother of the family, Eva Peace, agonizes over Attachment trauma by her lecherous spouse, BoyBoy, who forsakes her and her three children: “He did whatever he liked womanizing best, drinking second, and abusing Eva third. When he left in November, Eva had \$1.65, five eggs, three beets and no idea of what or how to feel” (Morrison, 2004, p.32). The feelings of abandonment and neglect make her traumatised, much like Shadrack after the war—lonely, confused, and chaotic. A few years later, when BoyBoy returns, she still deals with her senses: “When Eva got the word that he [BoyBoy] was on his way, she made some lemonade. She had no idea what she would do or feel during that encounter. Would she cry? Cut his throat, beg him to make love to her? She could not imagine” (Morrison, 2004, p.35). Her fluctuating between being furious and affectionate proves the tension of trauma. She endeavours to fetch some discipline to her devastated marriage when she decides to detest him. By detesting her husband “BoyBoy”, she can express her traumatic past and mend minimum some parts of her marital life: “Hating BoyBoy, she could get on with it, and have the safety, the thrill, the consistency of that hatred as long as she wanted or needed it to define and strengthen her or protect her from routine vulnerabilities” (Morrison, 2004, p.36). Accordingly, Eva prides herself in her bedroom and devotes her life to raising her kids. Like the Wright women, Eva desires to safeguard herself from trauma and its shocking impact, consequently rejecting fruitful human relationships. In this way, Schreiber formulates it: “As

the matriarch of that family, Eva is led by her trauma—her husband’s abandonment and dire poverty” ((Morrison, 2004, p.86). Due to her psychological conditions, she feels separated and lost from her inner passions and maternal feelings towards her children, mostly having mixed feelings of passion and rejection for them.

It is apparent in the killing of her son “Plum”. Once we read the novel, we first come across Plum. Perhaps the writer aims to enable us to feel the murder without knowing the logical reason for the act of murder; Morrison artistically separates the murder of her son from its surroundings. Then, the reader is told the reason behind her justified feeling in killing her son. This is told through Eva’s trauma-infused story. Her justifications are considerably connected with her disgrace of Plum as she harbours love for him. She informs Hannah that:

“...he wanted to crawl back into my womb and well...I ain’t got the room no more even if he could do it. There wasn’t space in my womb. And he was crawlin’ back. Being helpless and thinking baby thoughts and dreaming baby dreams and messing up his pants again and smiling all the time”

(Morrison, 2004, p.71)

The traumatized victim will agonize over the feeling of being insecurely attached, and the event’s flashbacks will fearfully reoccur, masquerading as a nightmare during the victim’s sleep (Caruth, 1995). These are the applicable cases that Eva Peace repeatedly suffers during sleep. The notions of Bowlby stimulate Morris N. Eagle to identify the way a child feels a sense of hatred towards their caretakers and his family, which divulges itself: Bowlby frequently recognizes rage and enmity not as crucial but as responses to detachment and neglect and to the parents’ indifference or isolation. Just as Bowlby defines it, “the child’s reaction is an “expression of anger at the way he has been treated.” (Eagle,2013, p.43). These behaviours may be expressed as protest (i.e., to loss or abandonment) and may be headed by various senses (anxiety, guiltiness, and longing) [Bowlby upholds that] “in the absence of frustration . . . an infant would not direct aggression against his love object” [due to] “the trauma of separation from his mother.” (Eagle,2013, p.129) Here, Eagle identifies that children who have not been given any attention and are deprived by their parents develop a

hostile reaction toward them because of a sense of loss. Before being hostile, though, as Eagle claims, children may try to be milder.

Depending on Eagle's view, Bowlby formulates that the cause behind a child's aggression is to "aid in reunion to the attachment figure and [discourage] further separations" (Eagle, 2013, p.133). As Eagle notes,

"The goal emphasized has to do with maintaining the attachment bond. Hence . . . removing the obstacles that frustrate one's goals would mean removing the barriers to maintaining an attachment bond. [Bowlby] notes that anger and aggression in response to separation, loss, and abandonment are intended to convey the message "do not do this again" and thereby preserve the attachment bond. Thus . . . destroying the object could not normally be one of the motives for aggression insofar as it would contradict the primary aim of anger, namely, preserving and maintaining the attachment bond."

(Eagle, 2013, p.133)

This is evidence of the disgrace of incest and Eva's disdain for Plum for not being a real man. There is also a feeling that Eva considers this brutal act as an act of affection. Before Eva kills her son, she hugs him. Eva informs Hannah that she tries to redeem Plum: "I did everything I could to make him leave me and go on and live and be a man, but he would not, and I had to keep him out, so I just thought of a way he could die like a man not all scrunched up inside my womb, but like a man" (Morrison, 2004, p.72). The mother, in this emotional regard, appears to charge Eva Peace through Herman's standard model of the traumatized individual's supportive guide, in which she directly states:

"In general, she [a traumatized subject] should be encouraged to turn to others for support, but considerable care must be taken to ensure that she chooses people whom she can trust. Family members, lovers, and close friends may be of immeasurable help; they may also interfere with recovery or may themselves be dangerous"

(Herman, 2015, pp. 114-115)



This sense of shame and redemption that Eva displays embodies her endeavour to arrange her conditions and Plum's as well. His murder is narrated from his viewpoint and combined with the beauty of the fire:

“He felt twilight. Now there seemed to be some kind of wet light traveling over his legs and stomach with a deeply attractive smell. It wound itself— this wet light—all about him, splashing and running into his skin. He opened his eyes and saw what he imagined was the great wing of an eagle pouring a wet light over him. Some kind of baptism, some kind of blessing, he thought. Everything is going to be all right, it said. Knowing that it was so he closed his eyes and sank back into the bright hole of sleep.”

(Morrison, 2004, p.47)

Plum's natural state is that he has returned home from the battle and is drug-addicted. He is helpless to everyone. In these circumstances, Eva's killing of Plum is a purification of his shame and a relief from the horror Plum endured in the war. Trudier Harris's book "Fiction and Folklore: The Novels of Toni Morrison", evaluates Eva's killing of her son like this: "The fire that Eva sets to kill Plum succeeds in destroying him...the burning negates Eva's willingness to endure her son's suffering, and, from Hannah's point of view, it negates motherly affection" (Harris, 1991, p.80). The fire symbolizes the destructive nature of attachment trauma and anxiety. Attachment trauma, left untouched, destroys its host, making him or her separated and in a condition of palsy. Unlike the Wright women, who disguise their traumas and try to cope with the community by discovering suitable men to get married, Eva Peace breaks social rules. Through her sense of contempt against men, she is aggressive towards men and makes them suffer for the deprivation she went through from BoyBoy.

According to Bowlby (1988), an ideal parent supports their children's side, raising them with love and care. By caring for it, a child can take the right path to finding out about society and accomplishing their childhood visions. Thus, due to the securely attached connectedness, a child will live and mature confidentially. Otherwise, the emotional state of that child will grow loosely, and consequently, he will compassionately try "to become emotionally self-sufficient and may later be diagnosed as narcissistic or as having a false self of

the type” (Bowlby, 1988, p. 123). Eva experiences the trauma of being left by her spouse and becoming poor and abandoned with three children, but not without the utter cost of being physically harmed. After she leaves her children and comes back a year and a half later with a missing leg, it is said by the townsfolk that she may have had her leg cut off to ask for the insurance money. Eva loses part of herself physically and emotionally. This traumatic act destroys her, and the feeling of neglect remains and is unfortunately transferred to her kids, specifically Hannah and later Sula. Eva’s story embodies attachment trauma. The devastating nature of attachment trauma develops and returns for coming generations when it is left loosely.

Moreover, Bowlby (1988) assertively increases the tasks of a mother toward her traumatically anxious child, demanding that each mother should pay extra attention to her victimized child, raising and teaching him properly to make him conscious of any possible futuristic risks that probably threaten his psychological wellbeing. On the highest top of nurturing and teaching, a secure, abusive mother should permanently be her child’s shelter of protection and comfort (Bowlby and Ainsworth, 2013). The present study evidently raised such relative arguments based on Bowlby’s psychiatric suggestions. However, while explaining Bowlby’s works on psycho-developmental attachment patterns and their potential effects on a child’s identity:

“This secure base ( . . . ) provided both infants and adults with the capacity to use one or a few primary figures as a secure base from which to explore and, as necessary, as a haven of safety in retreat. ( . . . ) Within the framework of Bowlby’s secure base theory, both infants-caregiver and adult ( . . . ) are viewed instead as secure base relationships.”

(A J. Waters et al. (2002, p. 4)

Due to the traumatic anxiety experienced by Eva, we see that in the same way, Eva abandons her children as a reaction to her abandonment by her husband “BoyBoy”. Consequently, it frightens and traumatises them greatly, like she was already traumatized. Eva does not offer a secure home for her children where they can grow with a positive sense of who they are.

This is a functional part; a secure base is fundamental for the individual, which should be shed light on while raising a child to explore his own life and establish “the structure and function of later personality” (Bowlby & Bowlby, 2005, p. 8). Consequently, her daughter Pearl flees to Flint, Michigan, possibly wishing she could establish agency and search beyond her traumatic past by reforming her identity in a far remote home. Plum, her son, cannot heal from war's horror and becomes a drug addict.

On the other hand, Eva's younger daughter, Hannah, best embodies how trauma is passed from one generation to the younger generation. Hannah is the embodiment of the traumatic feeling of abandonment and loss. Something is missing hinders connectedness with her mother, and she considers it an essential part of her life when she inquires, “Mamma, did you ever love us?” (Morrison, 2004, p. 67). Like this relationship, Bowlby writes,

“for a relationship between any two individuals to proceed harmoniously each must be aware of the other's point-of-view, his goals, feelings, and intentions, and each must so adjust his own behavior that some alignment of goals is negotiated”

(Bowlby, 1988, p. 130).

Additionally, Hannah's enquiry suggests that she is unsure if they were ever loved and is more complicated than would seem. Hannah is sceptical about the relationship among the family members and the bonds that link a mother to her child and give a child a sense of safety and self-confidence. Eva replies: “Eva, who was just sitting there fanning herself with the cardboard fan from Mr Hodges' funeral parlour, listened to the silence that followed Hannah's words, then said ‘Scat!’” (Morrison, 2004, p. 67). Eva's silence discloses the absence of connection in her and Hannah's relationship. Eva's traumatic harm to BoyBoy—the loss of affection and safety—is engraved in Hanna, “her daughter”.

As mentioned above, Bowlby (1975) asserts that safety and attention are not restricted to only infants or children of three or four years. However, a victimized individual should always be given additional attention and embraced by love, motivation, and encouragement repeatedly, even during adulthood. Soon after his death, Hannah gets married to Rekus and is no

longer without “the attention” of a man (Morrison, 2004, p.42). She responds to trauma by developing sexual relationships with men in order to obtain the sense of being secured without the bond of anyone’s heart: “Hannah was fastidious about whom she slept with. She would fuck practically anything, but sleeping with someone implied for her a measure of trust and a definite commitment” (Morrison, 2004, pp. 43-44). Hannah’s sexual desire for married or single men makes her peculiar in society. She satisfies her desire for attachment through sexual connection: “What she wanted, after Rekus died, and what she succeeded in having more often than not, was some touching every day” (Morrison, 2004, p. 44). The loss that the individual experiences results in the progress of his confused attachment. In an additional comment on the actions of the mother figure, Shemmings & Shemmings (2011) assert that.

“caregivers of children with disorganized attachments . . . are either extremely insensitive in their caregiving, disconnected in their caregiving, or they display very anomalous or disrupted caregiving behaviour. In an attachment context, extremely in-sensitive parenting is described as withdrawal, neglect, unresponsiveness (with regards to the child’s need), lack of interaction or, conversely, over-intrusiveness and over-stimulation, aggression, rough handling, hitting, pushing and extremely hostile language.” (p.160)

Sexual relationship is the only way Hanna can connect to obtain a meaningful life and identity. She cannot attach effectively due to the attachment trauma she experiences. Subsequently, this loss, in turn, passed to Sula (her daughter). Like Hannah, who interrogates her mother’s affection, identifying a missing sense, Sula is confronted with a similar issue when she hears Hannah say, “...I love Sula. I just do not like her” (Morrison, 2004, p. 57). She knows no person can depend on a secure place to shelter. Like her family, Sula is afflicted with a dreadful feeling of deprivation. After over-hearing these comments from her mother, Sula realizes that she has no family relations or sense of security and pursues the sustenance and security she requires and needs in Nel. Due to the lack of familial love with their fathers and mothers alike, kids with a wavering attachment, however, seek means to

keep substantially attached to their parents, as they “learn that the best way to keep their parent available—physically, rather than emotionally—is not to display their feelings” (Shemmings, & Shemmings, 2011, pp. 27-28).

Based on Bowlby’s views, Winnette and Baylin (2017) state that an individual “feels more secure and confident when he expresses his needs and thoughts” (p. 204) to his mother /attachment figure, whom a child desires to/ upon others, usually because he achieves all his necessary and developmental needs. Sula also goes through a feeling of loss by her mother that quits her disconnected from the outside world and cannot develop acceptable, compelling intimacy. Sula is first afflicted by trauma when she hears that her mother does not like her despite her affection for her. Soon following this act, she unintentionally pushes Chicken Little into the water, where he sinks. In the drowning of Chicken Little and later the passing of her mother, Hannah, it is evident that Sula has little desire and sympathy for connectedness to people. She does not attempt to help Chicken Little as he sinks, which confirms that no one is qualified to depend on or to be trusted, not even herself: “The water darkened and closed quickly over the place where Chicken Little sank. The pressure of his hard and tight little fingers was still in Sula’s palms as she stood looking at the closed place in the water” (Morrison, 2004, p.61). The drowning of Chicken Little is one of the principal attachment traumas that afflicts Sula but also links her destiny with Shadrack’s.

Moreover, these two figures experience traumatic acts and try to recover from attachment trauma in secrecy. The recurrent expression “Always” Shadrack informs Sula used to lessen her fault also signifies Shadrack’s recognition of an act too hard to depict. One more feature of attachment trauma, as identified by Shemmings and Shemmings, is “the paradox” the child experiences when “the very person who should be able to protect him or her is at the same time the source of danger” (Morrison, 2004, p. 54). This type of trauma is evident in the intimacy between Sula and Shadrack when she says “Always,” which indicates to Sula that he will retain Sula’s participation in Chicken Little’s drowning as a top secret. This top secret may signify the silent trauma of Chicken Little’s drowning that they both saw but could not discuss. It denotes the secrecy of a permanent traumatic attachment state. As it is concealed from others, it will constantly remain to be

remembered in the person, creating anxious actions: “Once Sula ignores them [communal values] and moves into a realm of her unrestrained seeking and exploration, she is forever outside the world view of the Bottom” (Harris, 1991, p. 77). Shadrack and Sula are discarded, unable to negotiate attachment trauma without help from the society that belittled them.

One more incident Sula goes through that exemplifies trauma, and its impact is Hannah’s death (her mother). It is surprising to see Sula’s mother burning while Sula is standing on the porch, apparently not scared but curious. Sula feels devastated as she is separated emotionally and physically. She does not care and even moves. The reason is the indifference Sula experienced at her mother's hands, which leads to Attachment anxiety. Besides providing their families with love and care, parents must also feed them with social instructions to assist them as they grow up. Similarly, R. Chris Fraley and Glenn I. Roisman (2015) underscore the necessity for caregivers to create a supportive intimacy with their children early on, which results in “the development of the skills necessary for developing and maintaining high-quality friendships” (p.16). Additionally, in revising Bowlby’s ideas, Fraley and Roisman state that:

“Bowlby believed that supportive and responsive interactions between parents and their children are crucial for children’s development of these broad skills [the ability to take the other person’s perspective, have empathy, and resolve conflict effectively]. For example, he believed that a child’s sense of self (i.e., whether the child perceives him- or herself as lovable) is rooted in the history of transactions between parents and children. In addition, the child’s ability to regulate emotions properly is rooted in early relational experiences.” (Fraley & Roisman, 2015, p.13)

They also add that:

“The violence—sometimes verbal, but more frequently physical—is often an attempt to create unique solutions to avoid further victimization. Thus, violence becomes an act of rebellion, a form of resistance to oppressive power. The choice of violence—often rendered upon those within their community and family—redirects powerlessness and transforms these characters, redefining them as



compelling, dominant women. However, their transformation often has multidimensional repercussions for them and those with whom they have chosen to be violent”

(Fraley & Roisman, 2015, p.25)

Like her mother, Sula does love with her close friend’s husband. Once Nel announces the truth about having sex with her husband Jude, Sula’s answer demonstrates an absence of sympathy for Nel: “What you mean to take him away? I did not kill him, I just fucked him. If we were such good friends, how come you could not get over it?” (Morrison, 2004, p. 145). For Sula, sex with Jude is to compensate for what has been already missing in her childhood. It is used to prove self-assuring but not an attempt to attach others, as Carolyn Jones points out: “Sula’s sleeping with Jude is not personal; it is merely another of Sula’s ‘experiences.’ Sexuality, for Sula, is not the attempt to meet with an ‘other,’ but with herself. It is an attempt to find her lost centre” (Morrison, 2004, p. 622). Sula’s attachment trauma of being deprived at the hands of those who should give her love and attention properly. One of them is her lover Ajax, who causes her detachment, which makes her unable to show sympathy and regret to Nel. Sula is helpless to resist Ajax because she loves him. Ajax provides Sula with confidence and makes her be herself. When she sleeps with him, she thinks: “I will water your soil, keep it rich and moist. But how much? How much water to keep the loam moist? And how much loam will I need to keep my water still? And when do the two make mud?” (Morrison, 2004, p. 131). Sula, unfortunately, attempts to have Ajax; consequently, he leaves her. “Sula and Beloved: Images of Cain in the Novels of Toni Morrison” by Carolyn M. Jones (1993) approves the abandonment of Ajax and its destructive impact on Sula: “The loss of Ajax, and with him Sula’s one attempt at joining with another in marriage and with the community of Medallion, destroys Sula” (p. 623).

## 5. Discussion

The Attachment trauma of deprivation recurrent in the lives of Eva and Hannah is now experienced by Sula as well. Sula recognizes she cannot even

be self-reliant. With one more traumatic experience, Sula has no one to rely on, not herself. These devastating actions result from the passive effects of attachment trauma to inflict all aspects of Sula's life. When she was twelve, Sula's mental development is influenced by these events, and she feels lost for the rest of her lifetime: "The first experience taught her there was no other that you could count on; the second that there was no self to count on either. She had no centre, no speck around which to grow" (Morrison, 2004, pp. 118-119). Sula lacks "center" and cannot rely on anyone who can collect facets of herself. The more she grows up, the more the attachment trauma develops into other aspects of her life. Like her mother, Hannah, she has sex with anyone she likes. From the caregiver, "her mother", she acquires how to separate sex from the circumstances of a relationship and gathers the same reputation of making love with men.

Khantzian's study (2012) shows that there is a direct link between children who have been abandoned by an attachment figure and attachment anxiety behaviour. This anxiety attachment might be articulated via extravagant behaviours such as addiction to eating and drug or alcohol abuse even though the lack of an attachment figure is not apparent as a traumatic act, frequently, in a context where the caregiver is unable to give her or his child both mentally and physically; otherwise, other traumatic anxieties arise.

This paper shows children who experience attachment trauma and its consequent attachment anxiety. Children might suffer from attachment traumas of several types, for instance, from emotional and physical abuse or lack of attention. Once a child experiences a traumatic incident, the effects are various. The wounded children have to hold a traumatized soul that is not as obvious to others as a broken hand. The child copes with this issue that others might behave in selfish and inconsiderate actions, not necessarily out of evil, but because they do not understand the child's suffering and traumatized soul. Moreover, incidents in the children's every day lives might recall their memories, which increases their traumatic state.

## 6. Conclusion

Morrison's Sula reflects exciting constructions of trauma that show figurative hints of numerous types of trauma. By pursuing Attachment



Trauma and Attachment Anxiety in her novels, Morrison raises readers' awareness to link the experiences in her novel to real-life society. In *Sula*, Morrison presents Attachment trauma experienced by Afro-American women by offering an apt investigation of the past and the harmful effects of trauma in this novel.

This novel shows that Attachment trauma is substantial and causes several characters to be secluded and devastated by their conditions. The reader can also see the negative consequences of Attachment trauma as experiences of trauma are neglected and not addressed, as well as for the destructively disturbed society. The two friends “Sula and Nel” are detached characters at the end of the story. Both of them are taken apart and alienated from one another. They are both eventually lonely. Sula passes away alone, solitary in her mother’s bedroom, without any companion. Like Sula, Nel also finds out too late how necessary Sula is to her individuality and existence. Because of Attachment trauma’s persistent impact, these characters are abandoned and left isolated and haunted by their trauma, which destroys them, making them unable to establish self-confidence and form independent identities.

Though Sula is enhanced to recreate her identity and narrates her own story as one attached to the community, she eventually has no witness to narrate her story. Accordingly, *Sula* as a novel, as well as Sula as a character, endure the effects of Attachment Trauma unaddressed. Most female characters are abandoned, left alone, devastated by Attachment trauma and the deprivation of a secure base.

By examining the structure of Morrison’s *Sula* in terms of Attachment trauma, some characters have suffered or experienced unbearable traumatic experiences due to the absence of a secure base. Morrison is deeply aware that her novels may create such an effect. Morrison’s vision is to have the reader recognize and realize these fictional experiences and accept them as part of one’s reality.

To conclude the findings of the novel based on Lowenstein’s and Bowlby’s ideas, I would say that the most vital task of being a parent, married or divorced, is to act as a secure and helpful adult. A caretaker's responsibility is to behave towards your children in a way that provides them

with the needs required to construct their emotional and social competence. By doing so, they will be able to handle future conditions in life. If the caretaker fails, the result could be catastrophic and haunt the child from infancy into adulthood.

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