
Trauma in Gayl Jones' Corregidora

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Abstract

"We were told to make generations" and that's just what we have done and what you must continue to do. These are words uttered by Ursa's mother, and her inability to "make generations" is what forms the crux of this novel. Gayl Jones, in writing about the Portuguese planter, Corregidora, underlines the most important aspect of slavery: the double marginalization of women on the plantations – marginalization on the basis of race as well as that of gender. These women, struggling to remove the shackles of slavery find themselves in post-bellum times, as much enslaved by the likes of Mutt Thomas and Tadpole as they were by Corregidora – who was not beyond having three generations of women brought to his bed. Trauma being a direct or indirect result of marginalization, this paper works in the backdrop of Cathy Caruth's trauma theory. In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* Caruth asserts, "trauma is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind," and "that knowing and not knowing are entangled in the language of trauma and in the stories associated with it." Reading *Corregidora* in the backdrop of slavery brings to mind the depths of degradation to which slave owners sank and the humiliation suffered by the women unfortunate enough to be sold to them. This paper, therefore, attempts to trace the element of trauma caused by the marginalization of women, in Gayl Jones' novel *Corregidora* in order to underscore the long lasting impact of slavery and the resultant trauma in the minds of 'women of color.'

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