

THE PORTRAYAL OF FEAR AND TRAUMA AS ROADBLOCKS TO LOVE IN COLLEN HOOVER'S UGLY LOVE

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Abstract

The study explores the portrayal of fear and trauma as roadblocks to love in Colleen Hoover's Ugly Love. The objective is to examine the fear and trauma suffered by Miles Archer as the roadblocks to love. The study uses qualitative research design and psychological approach. The study aims to analyze the cause and the effects of the fear and trauma as roadblocks to love, and how the fear and trauma are solved. The results shows that the cause of fear and trauma relate to the abandonment of his first love, Rachel, due to the car crash that results the death of his newborn baby. He is not just devastated by Rachel's departure, but also the death of his son which makes him lose the persons he loves the most. After Rachel leaves him, he promises himself not to fall in love with anyone again. The effects of his fear and trauma also reveal that he faces difficulty and problem in moving on his life considered as roadblocks to his love. In coping with his fear and trauma, Miles Archer finds constructive way to manage his emotions, facing and accepting his fear and trauma, and learning how to manage his feelings in order to heal.

Keywords: *love abandonment, fear and trauma, cause, effect, healing*

INTRODUCTION

Most of us will experience an event in our lives that could be considered traumatic. Trauma can happen at any age. And it can affect us at any time, including a long time after the event has happened. It is a natural response to a terrible event that is beyond an individual's capacity to cope, like an accident, crime, natural disaster, physical or emotional abuse, neglect, experiencing or witnessing violence, death of a loved one, war, and more. Everyone will not respond in the same way, the impacts can be all-encompassing, effecting a

person's physical, mental and social well being. Trauma is a great disruption and usually invisible to the human eye.

When someone experience a trauma, it could make likely to have mental health problems. This is especially if it is not supported to manage the trauma, or if it happens continuously over a long period of time. It is impossible to avoid the types of mental issues. Many people do not believe that the problems they face actually affect their mental health. It can change the way they behave, act or even their personality. Some issues like depression, anxiety or trust are the examples of mental health that can happen to someone in their life who have experienced trauma. According to Townsend & Morgan (2017) when someone experiences a certain event or incident that leaves a wound in their mind, they often forget what happiness looks like. When they ignore those feelings and do not try to do anything, the pain will linger along with them continue their life. Slightly, this feeling can affect their future life, because of the trauma that they have over the past.

The issue above is also portrayed in *Ugly Love*, a novel written by American author, Colleen Hoover. The novel describes about the main character, Miles Archer whose life is covered by fear and trauma since he hides his past life privately. He who works as a professional pilot is a very quiet and closed-off person. People around him do not know about who he really is. He is hard to be emotionally approached and be opened up about himself, especially his past. He unintentionally meets Tate Collins, a sister of his friend. He agrees to have physical relationship with her without involving his feelings. The relationship gets complicated and makes her uncomfortable. She tries many times to uncover the reasons that make the relationship uncomfortable. Miles unfortunately does not want to open up about what makes him this way. The more she asks about his past, the more pains he has. It triggers trauma due to his awful past experience. The reason that Miles does not want anyone know about what happens in his past because he wants to forget the pain he carries over the years. He thinks telling the story only makes him remember the tragedy of the night that he loses two most

important people in his life. He often experiences anxiety when the topic of his six years past comes up. He often unconsciously expresses his past experience to her, either by word or his physical relationship . He feels that he deserves to take the blame on the incident that takes away his happiness.

Based on the description above, the objective of the study is to investigate the fear and trauma as roadblocks to love pictured in the novel. It is purposely to identify the causes, and the effects of the fear and trauma and the solution of fear and trauma. The fear and trauma as a mental health problem that has become a rising issue in the society nowadays make the writer conduct the study as the trauma has no boundaries regarding age, gender, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. Trauma is a common experience for adults and children in our communities For this reason, the study needs to address trauma as an important part of effective behavioral health care and an integral part of the healing and recovery process

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used in analyzing Miles's Trauma in Colleen Hoover's *Ugly Love is a* descriptive qualitative method, an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem (Shank, 2002:5). The data taken from the novel *Ugly Love* will be analyzed descriptively and the result is presented in a form of words. In order to answer the research questions, a deliberate way of collecting, studying, organizing, and interpreting the data accurately helps to understand the existing facts within a studied issue, offering descriptions (Calderon. 2006). Furthermore, the literary approach used is a psychological approach. Rene Wellek and Austin Warren states the "psychology of literature" as (a) the psychological study of the writer as a type and an individual, (b) the study of the creative process, (c) the study of the types and laws that are present in literary works, and (d) the study of the effects of literature on the readers (Wellek and Warren, 1949:95). In relation with the above statement, the psychological approach applied in this study

involves the study of the types and laws presented in literary works as the study deals with the observable patterns of human's behavior.

RESEARCH FINDING AND DISCUSSION

A. The Cause of Miles's Fear and Trauma

Miles Archer, a 24 years old airlines pilot, is revealed as having a confident, bright, and easy-going personality. He enjoys spending time to socialize so he has a lot of friends. Miles falls in love with Rachel when they are seniors in high school. Their relationship become problematic when they discover that Rachel's mother is dating Miles's father. They try to stop their love, but they are unable to do so. The situation becomes even more difficult when Rachel discovers she was pregnant.

Even though it makes more difficult, Rachel and Miles decide to have the baby. Miles is proud in the hospital because the new baby seems to be pulling his family back together. He loves Rachel and his son more than he can imagine. On the way home from the hospital, however, he overwhelmed by the happiest day of his life drives the car. He unconsciously loses his focus on the road. They are involved in a car crash. Their car is pushed off a bridge and jumps into water. Their baby is killed.

Little did he know, his happiest day became his unforgettable day for him with carries guilt. I'm wet. It's cold. My head hurts. My arms hurt. I can't see her, I can't see her, I can't see her, I can't see him.

Silence.

Silence.

Silence.

DEAFENING SILENCE.

"Miles!"

I open my eyes.

It's wet, it's wet, there's water, it's wet.

Water is in the car. (Hoover, 2014: 270)

The quotation above shows that the horrific night incident that takes his happiness instantly always haunts him for years. Unfortunately, after the

incident which takes two most important person in his life, he guards and reserves his personal life. He builds walls around himself, and keeps his past hidden. He avoids emotional attachments that can create a traumatic event of his past. It can be seen in the quotation below:

I'm sorry. I can't do this. It hurts too much... My mother is taking me back to Phoenix. We're both staying there. It's all too complicated, even between the two of them now. Your father already knows. I tried to stay. I tried to love you. Every time I look at you, I see him. Everything is him. If I stay, everything will always be him. You know that. I know you understand that. I shouldn't blame you I'm so sorry. Love, Rachel. (Hoover, 2014: 284-285)

The quotation above shows how Miles discovers the feelings of the person he trusts and loves the most. The letter written by Rachel the next day after the tragic incident makes him upset since she leaves through a paper sheet without saying goodbye. She actually does not blame him and leaves him all alone as she can feel about him. She is not the only one who feels sad over the death of their newborn son but also Miles loses him too. That Rachel decides to go makes Miles lose the two most important people that he wants to have a future with. He feels betrayed as he trusts her so much and gives all of his heart to her. There is nothing left for him, and the pain he has is so much that he cannot handle it. So that is why he promises himself not to ever fall in love with anyone again so he will not feel the same pain over and over again. The image he sees is only Rachel and Clayton. So it's hard for him to forget that tragic event that takes away his happiness. It completely changes his life in a short period of time. The memory of that specific night will always come up every time he closes his eyes.

The reality he faces changes in a short time. His grief and guilt over the death of his son make him battle with a sense of great sadness. He loses his newborn son because of his own negligence. Furthermore, his guilty feeling over Rachel for being unable to give him the happy life makes him more drowned in sadness.

B. The Effects of Miles's Fear and Trauma

After getting abandoned by someone who he loves the most, Miles finds it difficult to trust and involve the feeling of love towards someone else. He gives up all his feeling to her but, in the end, she leaves him alone while his life turns upside down. He thinks that there are no such genuine feelings. It is hard for him to trust someone who will not leave him. So, he decides to avoid dating and any relationship attachment for over six years. His feeling becomes melted when he is attracted to his best friend's sister, Tate. He still doesn't want to involve his feeling in the relationship, so he makes an agreement only to have a physical relationship with her. He warns her to do the same thing, which does not involve her feelings in her relationship. It can be seen in the quotation below:

“It's not that I don't like you, Tate.” He sighs heavily and runs his hands through his hair, gripping the back of his neck. “I just don't *want* to like you. I don't want to like *anyone*. I don't want to *date* anyone. I don't want to *love* anyone. I just . . .” He folds his arms back across his chest and looks down at the floor.
(Hoover, 2014: 83)

The quotation above shows that Miles does not allow himself to have love again even after six years. The trauma he has terrifies him. He does not believe anyone who will ever love and never leave him. He thinks that if someday he allows himself to love someone, he will have to be ready to gain the pain. He seemingly does not want to get such pain again. So he tries so hard to prevent his feeling not to love her and maintain the distance between him and her. For example when he spends so much time with her, he slowly feels attached to her. He admires her care, love and intelligence, but when he starts to get feelings for her, he decides to step back and becomes cold as he is used to be.

His past traumatic experience he suffers for over six years has an impact on his emotion. For example, he often seems mad or angry when the question about his past comes up. He denies his own feeling over the love he

have towards Tate. He sometimes seems failed to move on from his past traumatic experience. A flashback feeling of guilt towards Rachel often comes unconsciously.

He's not sick. He's crying. Hard. So hard he isn't even making a sound. I don't even know the guy, but the obvious devastation he's experiencing is difficult to witness (Hoover, 2014:15)

The quotation above shows that Miles is deeply upset, shown by signs of a lot of emotional pain. It seems that his past hurts him a lot. He tries to deal these feelings by drinking alcohol. . What's really striking is that he is crying hard, but without making any noise. This suggests he hides his feelings because of the trauma he has before. His appearance reflects that his past pain still affects his emotion. The distress feeling shows a glimpse that his past experience still hurts him.

C. How Miles Solve his Fear and Trauma

Miles tries to overcome his trauma by facing his biggest fear. He has to deal his trauma on his own although Tate tries to help him to get through his trauma. Rachel is the key of his healing process because the cause of his trauma is the feeling of guilt with Rachel. So when he decides to face his fear and meets Rachel, he sees that Rachel is able to move on with her life. Miles visits Rachel. She has remarried and has an infant daughter. She tells him that she is too afraid to love again until she meets Brad, her new husband. She realizes that while she is with Brad, the happiness she felt begins to outweigh the sadness. Eventually, she comes to the point where she still feels sad sometimes. However, the sadness does not overwhelm her. She admits she had feared when she becomes pregnant that she will not be able to love the baby like she loved Clayton. However, when she sees her baby daughter, she cries tears of joy for the first time. She becomes the person that makes him out from his trauma.

“Rachel, I . . .” He looks back at me again. “I don't know why I'm here.” I do. I can see it in his eyes. I got to know those eyes so well when we were together. I knew all his thoughts. All his emotions. He

wasn't able to hide how he felt, because he felt so much. He's always felt so much. (Hoover, 2014: 300)

The quotation above shows Miles's struggle to articulate his thoughts and feelings coherently. It reflects his internal struggle, suggesting that he might be grappling with unresolved emotions or uncertainties, unable to provide a straightforward explanation for his actions or presence. It also shows that Miles's emotional complexity hints at his internal conflicts, confusion, and the intricate nature of his emotions. He finds difficulty to express or comprehend fully in that moment.

Back at home, Miles waits outside Tate's apartment for six hours. When she arrives, he tells her that he misses her. Tate notices that his attitude about their relationship is changed. He tells her that he had a son who died. The day that he meets her is the day of his son who would have turned six. He promises to tell her to have comfortable sharing.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, it comes to a conclusion that the cause of Miles's trauma relates to the tragic events causing Rachel's departure and Clayton's death. These circumstances reveal the deep cause of loss and the lasting impact of guilt. It shows that memories of the past continue to affect his current life and his emotion. It is difficult for him to open up and form genuine connections. The effects of his difficulties with intimacy and trust affect not only his romantic relationships but also his interacts with friends and family. The barriers he puts up around his feelings are clear evidence of the deep and widespread effects of his unresolved trauma.

However, the most important part of his trauma is about how Miles changes and feels better. He faces his hidden feelings and goes back to painful memories after meeting Rachel. He starts to feel better. When Miles says comforting things to himself, it is a very important moment that shows he's being kind to himself and taking a brave step towards feeling better. The book mixes

therapy, thinking about oneself, and being open about feelings to show how someone recovers from bad experiences.

The way Miles solves his trauma is by facing his own fear and trauma. His decision to meet Rachel changes his perspective. The way she is able to move on and have happy life makes him realize that he can do the same. His relationship with Tate is very important. He gets the courage to deal with his past. Through his patience, understanding, and supporting each other, he can cope with his fear and trauma by facing and accepting his past that haunts him for years. He is slowly able to start opening up about his past and gaining the trust of other people around him, especially Tate who has opened his mindset about loving someone.

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