

Posts essay

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



Georgia Douglas Johnson

Georgia Douglas Johnson was a famous poet and playwright who belonged to the illustrious class of writers and artists of the Harlem Renaissance. Most of her writing was done in the early part of the 20th century. Being of African-American heritage, she was acutely aware of the miserable life of many African Americans during the time of the Jim Crow laws and segregation, and the effects of these on the lives of these individuals. African Americans had to deal with racial oppression and segregation during this time. Even the Supreme Court at the turn of the century declared segregation to be constitutional, even if African Americans had been declared free from slavery and as citizens of the United States. Many Southern states promoted racial discrimination and resorted to terrorizing African Americans. In the website of Dream Media, it is mentioned that lynching or torturing and then killing African Americans for even the slightest infraction of rules was common in the South during this period. The lynching victims were often hung from trees to terrorize others. Therefore this was the environment that Georgia Douglas Johnson was exposed to during the time that she began to write.

The main stanza of the poem is 16 lines long, with longer lines of alternating 8 syllables and 6 syllables for each line. There is no break in between the 16 lines, and then the next stanza consists of only two lines, in order to provide the conclusion that no African American child must be born during these difficult times. The alternating 8 and 6 syllables style could have been used in order to emphasize the hardships that an African American child would have to endure if he or she were born in these times.

The speaker of the poem is part adamant and part angry. She definitely does

not want to bring a child into the world at this point in time of her life. “ The world is cruel, cruel, child – I cannot let you in!” only reveals her determination not to have any children. She is sure that the child will simply lead a life of suffering, and she cannot be a party to that happening.

However, towards the end of the long stanza, her tone and mood begins to be pleading: “ Don’t knock at my heart, little one, I cannot bear the pain”.

She is imploring any of her future children not to arrive in this world, but that perhaps they can simply meet one another in the next world instead.

However, the firmness of her tone is stating that she will never have any child of hers born during her lifetime is clear throughout the poem.

In the last line of the poem, the speaker commands any child wishing to be born to stop with its intentions and simply wait for the right time. There is some sort of predicament in this cause as it is now clear here that there is the distinct possibility that the speaker is pregnant with a child and that she must abort the baby – “ be still, my precious child, I must not give you birth!” As a pregnant woman, she is dealing with a *mélange* of emotions, and yet in the end, she still makes the decision not to give birth (or to abort the baby).

The Story of an Hour

In this story, Chopin seems to be telling the story of all those women at the turn of the 20th century who felt that they did not own themselves – or that they were like “ chattel” – that they could be controlled by their overbearing fathers, husbands or boyfriends. The woman was definitely presented as the “ weaker gender” in this story, and that freedom in terms of decision making and choice were elusive to them at this point in time.

Her heart condition seems to be symbolic of her being weak and trapped in

an oppressive marriage – she is weakened by the control of her husband, just as she is supposedly “weakened” by her “heart condition”. However, with the news of the death of her husband, her malaise seems to have disappeared, and she is now a strong, independent woman! Alas, this health and independence is too-short lived, as one can say that she died of a broken heart – because at the sight of her husband, she knew that she had lost her independence and her life – and thus she simply dies and disappears from this world, in the hope of being independent in the next world without her husband.

Works Cited

Kenneth, David. (2015). Oppression of African Americans in the First Half of the 20th Century. Web.