

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND
SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF AMMAR THELEDJI- LAGHOUAT
FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH



On Trauma and Troubled Psyches in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child* (2015)

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH IN PARTIAL
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR MASTER DEGREE IN CIVILIZATION
AND LITERATURE

By:

Mechraoui Manal

Board of Examiners:

Dr. Nebeg Raouf	University of Laghouat, Chairman
Dr. Mouissa Fattoum	University of Laghouat, supervisor
Dr. Kourdourli Abdelkader	University of Laghouat, Examiner

Academic Year 2022-2023

Acknowledgements

I am sincerely grateful to Allah for guiding me through my academic journey and completing this dissertation.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to my supervisor, Dr. Mouissa Fattoum, for her invaluable guidance and unwavering support during my master's degree.

I also thank the jury members for their time and feedback, which enriched my research.

Dedication

In memory of my beloved aunt, Zouzou, whose enduring encouragement and affection remain an unwavering source of inspiration even in her absence.

I dedicate this work to my parents, Khadidja and Laid, for their unwavering support and sacrifices that have been the cornerstone of my academic journey.

To my siblings, Nesrine, Hicham, and Zakaria, I am grateful for your constant presence and camaraderie, which have fueled my determination.

My grandmother's love and wisdom have profoundly molded my personality and aspirations, for which I am deeply grateful.

To my devoted Aunt Hassiba, whose invaluable support and guidance played a pivotal role in my research, I extend my heartfelt thanks.

I am profoundly thankful for the wisdom and mentorship provided by my uncle, Professor Dejedid Mabrouk, whose illuminating insights have guided my academic pursuits.

And to my best friend, Amel, your enduring friendship and unwavering support have been a consistent source of inspiration throughout this journey.

This dissertation is a testament to my profound gratitude for the unwavering faith you have placed in me.

Abstract

The intricate dynamics surrounding the intertwining of trauma and troubled psyches have captivated scholarly attention, offering a rich terrain for exploration within Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*. This dissertation unveils the complex interplay between psychological turmoil and the healing process. This study seeks to unravel the evolutionary trajectory of trauma, its multifaceted portrayal both within individual experiences and in collective narratives within the novel, and the subsequent examination of the nexus between trauma and troubled psyches. Moreover, it strives to illuminate the underlying themes of resilience and transformative healing journeys that permeate Morrison's narrative. By delving into the evocative prose of the novel, this dissertation seeks to uncover the long-lasting effects of trauma on the characters' psychological well-being, while emphasizing humanity's profound ability to recover. To achieve this goal, the research employs a psychoanalytical approach rooted in the concepts of Sigmund Freud to analyze the depiction of trauma and its effects on troubled psyches in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*. Ultimately, this research serves as a testament to the enduring narrative potency of Toni Morrison's literary oeuvre and its ability to shed light on the timeless and universal intricacies of trauma and troubled psyches.

Keywords: Trauma, Troubled Psyches, Psychological Turmoil, Healing Process, Toni Morrison

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	II
Dedication	III
Abstract	IV
Table of Contents	V
General Introduction	7
Chapter One: Insights into Trauma Theory	
Introduction	8
I. An Overview on Trauma Studies.....	16
II. Trauma: Etymological Insights	19
III. Literary Trauma Theory	22
IV. Sigmund Freud’s KeyConcept.....	24
IV .1.. The Act Out Concept	24
V . Collective and Individual Trauma.....	28
V.1. Collective Trauma	28
VI. Types of Trauma.....	29
VI.1. Historical trauma	29
VI.1.1. Inter-generational trauma	29
VI.1.2. Cultural Trauma	30
VII. The Impact of Trauma on Traumatized Beings	30
VIII. Individual Trauma.....	31
IX.Understanding the Impact of Different Traumatic Experience.....	32
IX.1.Depression and Anxiety	32
IX1.1.PTSD	32
X. Narratives of Trauma and Recovery.....	34

Table of Contents

X.1. Trauma Narrative.....	34
X.1.1. Narratives of Recovery.....	35
XI. The Nexus Between Trauma and the Troubled Psyche.....	36
Conclusion.....	39

Chapter Two: The Projection of Trauma in Morrison’s *God Help the Child*

Introduction	41
I. Collective Trauma	42
I.1 Intergenerational Trauma.....	43
II. Individual Trauma	46
II.1. Bride’s Trauma	47
II.2 Booker’s Trauma	51
III. Intrusive Borderline Personality Disorder.....	53
IV .Borderline Personality Disorder	55
V. Unveiling Acting Out: Freudian Insights in <i>God Help the Child</i>	57
Conclusion.....	59

Chapter Three: The Nexus Between Trauma and Troubled Psyches in *God Help the Child*

Introduction	60
I. The Interplay between Trauma and Troubled Psyches	60
II. Manifestation of Troubled Psyches	62
II.1. Bride	63
III. Exploring Bride’s Inner World in <i>God Help the Child</i>	64
III.1. Self-Perception	64
III .2. Behavioral Responses.....	65
III .3.. Interpersonal Dynamics.....	65

Table of Contents

IV. Exploring Booker's Inner World in <i>God Help the Child</i>	66
IV.1. Booker.....	66
IV.2. Self-Perception	67
IV.3. Behavioral Responses.....	67
IV.4. Interpersonal Dynamics	67
V. Troubled Psyches and Self-Image	68
VI. Shattered Souls: Trauma's Profound Impact in <i>God Help the Child</i>	69
VII. Narratives of Recovery: Overcoming Trauma and Finding Resilience.....	71
VII.1. Booker	72
VII.2. Bride	74
VII.3. Bride and Booker.....	75
Conclusion.....	78
General Conclusion.....	79
Work Cited.....	82
Appendices.....	85
Résumé.....	89
ملخص.....	90

General Introduction

General introduction

General introduction

The backdrop of trauma occupies a significant position within the domains of psychology and literature. Grounded in the aftermath of distressing events, trauma theory has emerged as a potent framework that allows scholars and researchers to delve into the intricate mechanisms governing human responses to adversity. Drawing upon disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and literature, trauma theory presents a nuanced lens for comprehending the wide-ranging impacts of traumatic experiences on both individuals and societies. The contributions of pioneers like Judith Herman and Bessel van der Kolk have illuminated the psychological and physiological repercussions of trauma, underscoring the imperative of acknowledging and addressing its enduring effects. Against this backdrop of trauma theory, the exploration of its resonance within literature gains prominence, particularly evident in the works of literary figures such as Toni Morrison.

The convergence of trauma and literary analysis offers a distinctive avenue for comprehending the human condition. Authors frequently employ their narratives to encapsulate the intricate aftermath of trauma, moving beyond mere representation to illuminate the intricate connections between trauma and the troubled psyches of their characters. Within the context of Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*, the exploration of trauma delves deep into the intersections of trauma, self-image, and the process of healing. By engaging with Morrison's narrative tapestry, a complex web of connections is unveiled, revealing the intricate layers that define the human experience when confronted with adversity.

Toni Morrison's recognized status as an accomplished author is evident through her receipt of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1993. This prestigious award undeniably highlights her outstanding storytelling prowess. Renowned for her ability to

General introduction

infuse vitality into the African American narrative, Morrison's impact is indelible. In 2015, her novel, *God Help the Child*, generates both fervent anticipation and lively debate due to the intricate tapestry of symbolism and multi-dimensional meanings housed within its deceptively slender pages. One illustration of this complexity can be found in the character of Bride. Her obsidian-black skin symbolizes the trauma of her childhood, while her name signifies her journey to reclaim her identity. These layers of symbolism provide readers with a rich tapestry of meaning to explore, sparking passionate discussions about the novel's themes.

The novel's debut elicits a spectrum of reactions from critics. While Michiko Kakutani of *The New York Times* celebrated Morrison's adroit narrative craft, painting twilight worlds that blend fable and reality and poignantly capturing characters' yearnings for belonging and love, Ron Charles, of *The Washington Post*, held an alternate stance. Charles contended that the novel fell short of Morrison's prior literary prowess, occasionally straying into the realms of implausible fantasy. Amidst the diverse interpretations laid bare by critics, this research endeavors to navigate the uncharted territory of the intricate relationship between trauma and troubled psyches within Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*.

The narrative's exposition of the interwoven nature of trauma and psychological turmoil serves as the lodestar of this exploration. By meticulously scrutinizing the characters' emotional landscapes, driving forces, and psychological contours, this study aspires to unearth invaluable insights into the profound juncture where trauma converges with the intricate complexities of the human psyche.

Accordingly, the research aims to address the following questions:

- How does Toni Morrison's narrative in *God Help the Child* negotiate the complexities of portraying trauma within both collective and individual

General introduction

- characters, and what do these portrayals reveal about the nuanced intersections between personal and societal traumas?
- In what ways does the portrayal of trauma and its impact on troubled psyches in "God Help the Child" contribute to a deeper understanding of the healing process for both individual characters and the collective psyche, and how does Morrison's narrative exemplify the potential for resilience and transformation when characters grapple with trauma challenges?
 - How do the characters in the novel grapple with their self-image in the aftermath of traumatic experiences, and what forms do these struggles take as they manifest through unconscious behaviors and actions within their relationships?

In order to answer these questions, one suggests that the evolving portrayal of trauma in contemporary literature, epitomized by Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child* reflects a multidimensional exploration, indicating an increasing recognition of trauma's profound impact on both individual experiences and societal dynamics. Building upon this, the narrative complexities within the novel are anticipated to unveil a juxtaposition of trauma, examining its manifestation within collective societal contexts and within the struggles of individual characters. The research further posits that these intricate portrayals will underscore the interconnectedness between personal trauma and broader societal influences, ultimately contributing to a deeper comprehension of trauma's multifaceted dimensions. Moreover, by delving into the depiction of trauma-induced troubled psyches, the study suggests that the novel illuminates the intricate nexus between trauma and psychological distress, concurrently underscoring the narrative's potential to offer nuanced perspectives on the healing process, resilience, and transformative potential within the context of adversity. Anchoring this exploration is the understanding that the characters in the novel engage in a multifaceted exploration

General introduction

of their self-image following traumatic experiences, and these internal struggles are translated into various 'act outs' that permeate their actions and relationships .

The intricate exploration of trauma, marked by its profound impact on the human psyche and far-reaching consequences, has long captivated the intellectual curiosity of researchers and scholars. Its capacity to disrupt and disorient has spawned a multitude of studies, each providing distinctive perspectives and insights to the evolving discourse. Within the field of trauma studies, prominent scholars have ventured into this intricate domain, each presenting unique viewpoints. Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) embarked on a groundbreaking journey into the subconscious mind. His work unveiled the role of the psyche in processing traumatic experiences, similar to how a detective unravels clues. Freud's exploration of the concept of repression and the subconscious shed light on the intricate workings of the human mind. However, it also sparked discussions about the limitations of psychoanalytic theory in fully comprehending trauma's vast landscape.

Judith Herman's "Trauma and Recovery" (1992): In the latter part of the 20th century, she emerged as a prominent figure in trauma studies. Her seminal work expanded the conversation around trauma, much like a skilled painter adding layers to a canvas. Herman's emphasis on the concept of complex trauma resonated with others in the field, similar to harmonizing notes in a symphony. She highlighted the significance of recovery and healing, offering a holistic view that considers the enduring effects of trauma on individuals' psychological well-being. Yet, questions arose about the extent to which trauma could be categorized within clinical frameworks.

Cathy Caruth *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996): Cathy Caruth delves into the intersection of trauma, narrative, and history, offering a unique perspective that challenges traditional approaches. She analyzes how trauma

General introduction

disrupts conventional narrative structures and poses a significant challenge to the articulation of traumatic experiences through language. Her approach was groundbreaking, sparking debates about the challenges of linguistic representation in conveying the ineffable nature of trauma.

Bessel van der Kolk *The Body Keeps the Score* (2014) offered a fresh perspective, akin to discovering a new dimension in the sense that he emphasized the significance of understanding how traumatic experiences are stored in the body, much like a scientist unlocking the secrets of a complex organism. Van der Kolk's insights into how bodily interventions can complement psychological treatments raised intriguing possibilities. However, his work also stirred discussions regarding the efficacy of somatic therapies in trauma recovery.

In examining these scholars' contributions, it becomes evident that while they each bring unique insights to the study of trauma, they also share common themes and challenges. Similarly, their works have sparked debates and discussions within the field, highlighting both the progress made in understanding trauma and the questions that continue to perplex researchers. *God Help the Child*, a literary work of profound thematic complexity, has garnered the attention of reviewers and researchers, inspiring a nuanced examination of its multifaceted themes. In "‘What You Do to Children Matters’: Toxic Motherhood in Toni Morrison’s *God Help the Child* (2015), Manuela López Ramírez delves into racially biased and oppressive parenting, with a particular focus on patriarchal motherhood. She explores its implications for the formation of black identity and self-perception in children within the novel.

Similarly, Gallego's work, "Race, Interdependence and Healing in Toni Morrison’s *God Help the Child* (2019), posits that the novel's characters confront the enduring effects of a racist culture deeply rooted in the legacy of slavery. Gallego

General introduction

astutely highlights the disruptive impact of both individual and collective traumatic experiences on personal development and societal progress. Expanding upon this discourse, Paula Martín-Salván, in “The Secret of Bride’s Body in Toni Morrison’s *God Help the Child* (2018), scrutinizes the transformation of Bride's body within the narrative. She adeptly explores how the novel intricately weaves seemingly disparate changes in Bride's body into a coherent narrative of trauma.

As we traverse this rich landscape of trauma research and literary analysis, this dissertation embarks on a distinctive trajectory by delving into the intricate relationship between trauma and troubled psyches within the novel. Differently put, this study endeavors to illuminate the complex interplay between personal and collective traumas.

This dissertation employs a psychoanalytical approach, drawing upon the concepts of Sigmund Freud (acting out) to analyze the representation of trauma and its influence on troubled psyches in Toni Morrison’s *God Help the Child*. The work is structured into three interconnected chapters, the research commences by tracing the evolution of trauma theory, thus providing a foundational theoretical framework. The second chapter, however, examines the portrayal of trauma within individual and collective dimensions through a detailed exploration of the novel’s characters and their interactions. The third chapter delves into the intricate nexus between trauma, troubled psyches, and the healing process, drawing insights from trauma theory and character exploration. This yields a nuanced understanding of the affinity between trauma and psychological turmoil within Morrison's narrative.

Chapter one
Insights into Trauma Theory

Introduction

Humans are vulnerable creatures who frequently experience accidental injuries. These injuries can be either physical (bruises, gashes, and fractured bones) or emotional (anxiety, depression, or trust issues). The injuries at the emotional or psychological level are the ones that will remain engraved in the individual's memory and consequently lead to the development of trauma. In this sense, trauma can be defined as a response to a disturbing situation that inhibits people's emotions, reduces their capacity for emotional expressions, and prevents them from verbally expressing themselves, regardless of an individual's age, race, or place.

Literary trauma theory has become widespread in recent decades, as novels strive to show trauma effects on the characters and follow their progress towards recovery or insanity. Accordingly, authors attempt to replicate real life trauma effects by giving in depth explanations of the inner feelings and thoughts of characters. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a theoretical framework on the notion of trauma. It focuses on providing a brief overview of the theory of trauma, unearthing its history, and introducing collective and individual traumas. It also provides a brief insight into PTSD. Furthermore, this chapter aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of literary trauma theory, shedding light on the narratives of trauma recovery, and delving into the intricate exploration of troubled psyches and self-image.

I. An Overview on Trauma Studies

Before digging deeper into the notion of trauma, it is important to comprehend the term 'trauma' from a historical perspective. The word trauma is derived from the Greek language meaning "wound" or "hurt"; the Greeks also used it for "defeat". Around the end of the nineteenth century, Sigmund Freud and Pierre Janet presented the first theory

to conceptualize the term trauma, which began to shift from a physical injury to a shocking incident whose effect can be perceived within the victim's nerves and psyche.

Judith Herman, in her book *Trauma and Recovery*, defines trauma as “a state of distress and powerlessness resulting from an individual's exposure to external atrocities or natural disasters” (Herman 24). A profoundly distressing or disturbing experience can leave long-lasting wounds that make it challenging for individuals to move forward in their lives. It is often described as a “toxic condition, characterized by intense anxiety, complete helplessness, and a loss of control over one's mind” (Swart 120). In essence, trauma entails dissociation and a destabilization that gradually takes hold of the mind, eroding one's sense of control.

Additionally, Freud provided a number of statements that define trauma and describe some of the processes that resulted in the creation of a traumatic state, as clarified, “We describe as ‘traumatic’ any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield. It seems to me that the concept of trauma necessarily implies a connection of this kind with a breach in an otherwise efficacious barrier against stimuli” (Freud 301). According to him, the mental apparatus is overwhelmed by stimuli that cannot be mastered or bound when the “barrier” is penetrated, and his use of the term ‘protective shield’ refers to a protective barrier that shields the mental apparatus from imminent overwhelming trauma. On the other hand, Cathy Caruth defines trauma and its effects through her work titled *Unclaimed Experience*, as follows:

In its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the

often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena (Crauth 11).

According to her, trauma is a very uncommon experience that describes a sudden or catastrophic event. As for Roger Luckhurst, “trauma can be understood as a rupture or violation of boundaries that creates a peculiar communication between the internal and external realms. It forcefully creates connections between previously separate systems, leading to unexpected and unsettling associations that cause distress or confusion” (Luckhurst 3).

Peter. A. Levine describes trauma and its damage in his book *Healing Trauma* (1997) as “the most avoided, ignored, belittled, denied, misunderstood, untreated cause of human suffering” (Levine 01). In another way, trauma is the individual's response to a series of events and overwhelming events that eventually diminish the positive feeling and interest. Additionally, it causes the rejection of social relationships and families. Verbal attitudes and reactions of traumatized individuals demonstrate that they struggle with concentration and sleep in addition to being quickly alarmed and worried. Hence, traumatized individuals have profound problems with their sense of self-worth, individual identities, and cultural identities. (Social Psychology of Traumatic Responses 311-348) .

The concept of trauma encompasses a broad range of experiences and interpretations depending on the context in which it is discussed. In medical discourse, trauma is often understood as a sudden onset of physical injury or damage to the body's systems, resulting in dysfunction and potential long-term consequences. This perspective focuses on the physiological aspects of trauma and the internal dangers that can persist over time. On the other hand, in psychological research and clinical practice,

trauma is primarily associated with events or experiences that cause significant distress and harm to an individual's psyche. It encompasses the emotional, psychological, and cognitive impact of these experiences, which can be long-lasting and deeply affecting. The understanding of trauma in this context emphasizes the subjective and internal aspects of the individual's response to distressing events. Overall, the concept of trauma encompasses a complex interplay of physical, emotional, and psychological dimensions, highlighting the diverse perspectives and interpretations surrounding this multifaceted phenomenon.

II. Trauma: Etymological Insights

Much of trauma's perception and understanding was shaped by the experiences of those who witnessed the horrors of war in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One of the earliest occurrences of trauma was noted by Austrian physician and professor Joseph Frank in 1813. He described the experiences of a 14-year-old girl who witnessed invading soldiers from Napoleon's forces threatening her father's life. This made him question the absence of medical literature on the mental illnesses associated with citizens who have survived war torn areas.

In 1866, John Eric Erichsen claimed that psychological symptoms were caused by physical injuries sustained by railway accident survivors and warned against conflating them with hysterical symptoms. He subsequently wrote "*On Railway and Other Nervous System Injuries*", in which he chronicled the survivors' physical injuries and somatic symptoms. For two decades (1860-1880), physicians assumed that the somatic problems were from the survivor's experience of the shock rather than an actual shock to the spine. By the end of the 1880s, the idea of railway spine had been superseded by that of traumatic neurosis. Hermann Oppenheim originated the term

"traumatic neurosis" in 1889, associating trauma-related symptoms with chemical alterations in the brain.

The study of psychological trauma originated in the late 19th century, pioneered by French neurologist Jean Martin-Charcot, focused on the investigation of a condition known as 'hysteria'. Prior to Charcot's discoveries, hysteria was perceived as a perplexing and unintelligible illness. However, he observed and documented the disease's progression and defining characteristics, shedding light on its psychological nature. Through hypnotic techniques, Charcot successfully induced symptoms in patients, providing evidence to support his theory. Although he was unable to fully comprehend the nature of the ailment or propose effective treatment strategies, his insights laid the foundation for future advancements. It was through the efforts of his students, such as Sigmund Freud, Josef Breuer, and Janet, that the link between psychological stress and hysteria began to be explored and elucidated in the late 1880s, building upon Charcot's seminal contributions. Eventually, Freud shifted from seduction theory to conflict theory. The unacceptability of aggressive and sexual impulses was thought to be the source of hysterical symptoms. Freud was more concerned with intrapsychic concepts and dreams than with external trauma. Psychiatrists began to notice soldiers returning from the war with shell shock disorder around the conclusion of WWI. The goal of psychiatric first aid was to provide soldiers with a brief treatment that would let them recuperate and return to the front lines as fast and efficiently as possible. Warriors who had been traumatized were able to overcome their shell shock symptoms and rejoin the active combat duty after receiving treatment.

Following WWI, Abram Kardiner began counseling traumatized American war veterans in 1923, Similar to Janet and Freud, he also recognized the phenomenon of recurrence, wherein victims tend to reenact the initial traumatic event. He was

concerned about the soldier's reliance on his fighting unit. As a result, throughout WWII, counseling for traumatized warriors focused on decreasing the isolation between these warriors and their unit. During WWII, physicians reintroduced hypnosis as a trauma therapy, and the US Army utilized "group stress debriefing". Henry Krystal was a psychoanalyst who examined the effects of protracted traumatization on concentration camp survivors after WWII. He broadened the definition of alexithymia, a prevalent symptom in profoundly traumatized people, highlighting their incapacity to fantasize, articulate, or experience. Joyce McDougall, on the other hand, indicated that her patients were suffering from an inability to ponder upon an excess of emotive events, rather than incapacity to perceive emotions. However, some scholars who disagreed with Freud's psychological theories went further and developed a new theory that fits the current disturbances, which is now known as 'contemporary trauma theory'. As an outcome, throughout the second half of the twentieth century, this century has seen the genocide of World Wars, the Holocaust and the Vietnam War; trauma studies cover the war veterans' symptoms and experiences of tragedy and deal with psychological abuses such as domestic violence and sexual assaults. For this, experts develop different diagnoses to distinguish between single and repeated trauma symptoms, persist, and then provide survivors with appropriate treatment.

Consequently, the pioneering French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot, credited as the first to explore the correlation between trauma and illness, engaged in the exploration of the field recognized as trauma theory. Within this context, he developed a fascination with hysteria as a psychological injury linked to distressing experiences. Jean-Martin Charcot's revolutionary concepts regarding trauma and its psychological aftermath sparked a wave of articles and research during the late 19th century. These scholarly endeavors elaborated on and delved into Charcot's concepts, furnishing

valuable insights into the intricate nature of trauma and its profound impacts on individuals.

III . Literary Trauma Theory

With the publication of Cathy Carruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* and Kali Tal's *Worlds of Hurt* in 1996, the field of trauma studies in literary criticism received considerable attention to examining trauma literature. Early scholarship shaped the notion of literary trauma theory by popularizing the idea of trauma as an unrepresentable event. Scholars such as Caruth have contributed to the field by introducing a psychoanalytic post-structural perspective that highlights trauma as an intricate issue of the unconscious mind. According to this viewpoint, trauma unveils the inherent contradictions present in our experiences and the limitations of language to fully capture its complexities. In Jacques Marie Émile Lacan approach develops the concept of trauma as a recurring sense of absence that shatters awareness of the severe experience, preventing linguistic value other than a referential expression. This approach permits a special emphasis on language indeterminacy, ambiguous referentiality, and aporia, particularly for Carruth's deconstructive criticism. The concept of the unspeakable void gained prominence in literary criticism as a way to conceptualize the role of trauma in literature. Due to the idea that trauma causes permanent damage to the mind, this traditional concept of trauma appealed to a variety of critics working outside of poststructuralism as well.

Freud's theories regarding trauma, memory, and their psychological implications have heavily influenced the field. Other prominent 19th century researchers, such as Joseph Breuer, Pierre Janet, Jean-Martin Charcot, Hermann Oppenheim, Abram Kardiner, and Morton Prince also discussed shock and hysteria. Freud's early theories documented in

Studies on Hysteria (1895), co-written with Joseph Breuer, and later in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), are still widely referred to by literary trauma critics today. Freud believed that traumatic hysteria stems from a repressed sexual assault experience in the past. In *Studies on Hysteria*, Freud and Breuer emphasized that it was not the original event itself that was traumatic, but rather its recollection. The talking cure is necessary to unravel the lingering effects of past traumas, enabling people to break free from its debilitating hold. Furthermore, latency or *Nachträglichkeit* delays understanding of the initial event until a contemporary occurrence causes its resurfacing through remembrance. As Freud and Breuer write:

May reverse the dictum “cessante causa cessat effectus” (when the cause ceases the effect ceases) and conclude from these observations that the determining process (that is, the recollection of it) continues to operate for years—not indirectly, through a chain of intermediate causal links, but as a directly releasing cause—just as psychological pain that is remembered in waking consciousness still provokes a lachrymal secretion long after the event. Hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences. (Freud and Breuer 7) .

Literature and trauma may appear to be unrelated, if at all, but Cathy Caruth believes they are inextricably linked. Caruth, a trauma theorist and newly reappointed head of the Comparative Literature Program, argues that literature is frequently intimately linked with pain in ways we have yet to comprehend. In her perspective, “Traumatic memories are never completely known but insist on being told,” she stated. “Literature tells us as much about what we don’t know as it does about what we do know, and it can thus communicate what ordinary memory or understanding cannot.” (Caruth)

Literary language has always been distinguished by its ability to communicate what other means of communication cannot. Caruth thinks that traumatic experiences are not owned by a person or community; hence, their impact can never be represented by direct reference. Contrary to popular belief, it is the very indirectness of literature and its metaphorical language pauses in speech, and linguistic peculiarities that conveys the intensity of a traumatic history. Carruth's trauma study has focused on literary, theoretical, and testimonial texts as tools for communicating new kinds of personal and historical experience.

IV. Sigmund Freud's Key Concept

Sigmund Freud is widely recognized as the pioneer of psychoanalysis. Following the death of his father, Freud conducted a self-analysis that led to the publication of "Interpretation of Dreams" in 1899. He continued to produce a series of influential works, including his exploration of the "Freudian slip," which encompasses everyday tongue slips and humorous jokes. In 1907, Freud and a group of Jewish psychologists established the Psychological Wednesday Circle, later renamed the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society. His impact on American scholars began with the release of "Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis" in 1910. During the 1920s and 1930s, Freud further developed his foundational principles, as evident in works like "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" and "The Ego and the Id." Political circumstances necessitated Freud's relocation to London, where he ultimately succumbed to oral cancer in 1939.

4.1.1. The Act Out Concept

The term 'acting out', which is the noun form of the verb 'to act out' is a translation of the German verb 'agieren' (to act). Freud introduced the term "agieren" to describe a specific type of resistance that occurs in psychoanalytic treatment. This

concept involves the patient expressing their inner conflicts or past experiences through their behavior rather than recalling and verbalizing them. Freud used "agieren" as both a verb and a noun in his work, and at times in its transitive form. This concept is related to the idea of "abreagieren," which shares a similar root and means "to discharge." Semantically, the term "acting out" also refers to a theatrical representation (acting a part) and the externalization of an act, often accomplished rapidly, as indicated by the preposition "out."

The term "acting out" originated within the psychoanalytic domain, specifically in clinical psychoanalysis. Over time, it has expanded beyond this particular context and entered psychiatric language to describe uncontrolled behavior or impulsive actions. Acted-out behavior is characterized by a lack of consideration on the part of the individual and an indifference to the potential consequences, which can sometimes be harmful to both the person himself and others. When acting out, the individual acts without prior thought or reflection, with the behavior itself replacing the process of thinking and expressing thoughts in words. The inclination to act impulsively, resulting from the inability to utilize the mediating power of thought and words, is a characteristic feature seen in certain personality disorders. However, the expression of emotional states through behavior rather than verbalization, known as "acting out" can occur intermittently in anyone, especially during adolescence, when gestures and actions serve as primary modes of expression. It is important to note that the term "acting out" does not primarily denote a spatial distinction between an external "out" and an internal "in" within the therapeutic setting. Instead, it emphasizes the nature of actions replacing thought, which are external to mentalization but remain within the context of the analytic relationship. Differentiating between "acting out" and "acting in," as previously done by contrasting external settings with the consulting room, may lead

to confusion by diverting attention from the more significant distinction between the intrapsychic level and the realm of outwardly-directed actions. In some instances, the term “acting in” has been used to describe specific forms of action unfolding within the consulting room without verbal communication, or within the the Melanie Klein's Kleinian framework, to refer to certain manifestations of drives, defense mechanisms, and primitive object relations in the transference.

In 1905, Freud introduced the concept of acting out when one of his early hysterical patients abruptly interrupted treatment, expressing an unconscious fantasy instead of recalling a significant aspect of her past. He further explored this concept in 1914, using "acting out" to describe a resistance to analytic work that replaces the process of remembering repressed memories. Acting out involves the enactment of unconscious fantasies, creating an immediate experience for the subject, particularly when the origins and repetitive nature of these behaviors are mysterious. The stronger the tendency to repeatedly act out unremembered material, the more resistance there is to making progress in therapy. Freud contrasts two modes: "agieren" (acting) as unconscious and repetitive acting out, and "erinnen" (remembering) as the recovery and transformation of repressed material through verbal expression (International psychoanalytical association 2-8)

Initially, acting out is viewed as a form of resistance to the progress of analytic treatment. However, this acting out can bring forth hidden psychological aspects that would otherwise remain unexpressed. In this way, it can serve as an indicator of the unconscious psychic dynamics, presenting an opportunity and perhaps a necessary step in bringing repressed material back into conscious awareness. Freud acknowledged this necessity in his work , claiming «When all is said and done, it is impossible to destroy any-one in absentia or in effigie» (Freud 108). Freud also asserts that it is highly likely

that during the process of psychoanalytic treatment, the resistance to acknowledging unconscious desires and conflicts will manifest in some form of action, particularly if the analyst is involved. He emphasized that acting out should be confined to the treatment context, and if the established rules of therapy are excessively modified, the exhibited behaviors cannot be considered as valid foundations of analytic work.

In his final work, "*An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*," Freud revisits the valuable possibilities of acting out during psychoanalytic treatment. He categorizes two types of acting: one that remains within the boundaries of the treatment context and can be resolved through therapy, and another that takes place outside those boundaries, posing a genuine risk to the continuation of treatment as he says, is «almost undesirable thing» (Freud 54).

Hence, the Freudian concept of acting out is a clinical phenomenon that arises during the process of analysis, similar to transference. Both acting out and transference involve repetition and an inability to recall information. They serve as indirect ways of remembering and can function as both resistance to and opportunities for analytic work. When Freud examines the analyst's involvement in transference as a form of acting, he explores the shared underlying mechanism of resistance that characterizes both phenomena, which is the retrieval of repressed material. Consequently, the boundary between acting out and transference becomes blurred, and they appear almost synonymous and interchangeable. In transference, the focus is on the analyst as the recipient of transferred emotions, while in acting out, the emphasis is on expressing these emotions through actions rather than words. Ultimately, Freud's recognition of transference within the framework of acting out diminishes its negative associations. Just as transference is an inevitable aspect of analytic treatment, so is acting out.

V. Collective and Individual Trauma

Traumatic experiences, or trauma, are the inability of an individual or community to respond physically or emotionally in a healthy way to severe distress. This can have a detrimental effect on an individual's wellness and can be felt by everyone at once. Because a community is a group of individuals regardless of their traumatic nature, it is essential to examine the differences between collective traumas experienced by a large number of individuals or a segment of the community and individual traumas that cannot be approached without first discussing the collective one. The idea of trauma has been greatly expanded to include psychic components that affect a whole community or group of people at once.

V . 1 Collective Trauma

Collective trauma refers to the psychological response exhibited by an entire community in the aftermath of a traumatic event that has far-reaching consequences for the society as a whole. It is represented in the collective memory of the group and involves not only a reproduction of the event but also an ongoing reconstruction of the trauma. It emotionally binds people from all around the world together via feelings of powerlessness, unpredictability, loss, and sadness (National center for biotechnology information).

In recent years, scholars have defined collective trauma as the shared feelings that a community feels when exposed to a traumatic experience that leaves an indelible mark on their collective conscience, irrevocably affecting their destiny. In irrevocable ways, identities are being reshaped. Collective trauma can take many forms, including but not limited to those mentioned below.

VI. Types of Traumas: Historical, Intergenerational, Cultural

VI.1 Historical Trauma

It is frequently a complicated and collective trauma experienced by a group of people with comparable identity links across time and generations. It was originally meant to reflect the grief of the children of Holocaust survivors; however, during over the last two decades, the term has come to refer to a wide range of colonized aboriginal tribes across the world. It has also been used to characterize African Americans, Palestinian adolescents, and a variety of other cultural communities that have a shared history of oppression, persecution, or large collective trauma exposure. PTSS is a concept created by researchers from many professions to describe the collective experience of trauma experienced by particular ethnic groups over generations. In this claim, PTSS is viewed as, “a condition that exists when a population has experienced multigenerational trauma resulting from centuries of slavery and continues to experience oppression and institutionalized racism today” (DeGruy 109). She established the concept in her book Post entitled *Traumatic Slaves Syndromes: America’s Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing* (2005), claiming that PTSS is a condition that is caused by multigenerational oppression of enslaved Africans and their descendants as a product of centuries of chattel slavery (DeGruy15).

VI.2. Inter-generational Trauma

Generational trauma (also known as inter-generational trauma) is an event that is passed on through generations in a family or society. If an ancestor experiences extreme and sustained stress, this can influence his/her descendants. Symptoms of this type of trauma may include outbursts in response to triggering events, self-destructive behavior, depression, guilt for being a survivor, internalized oppression and poor self-esteem. Those who have been affected for many years often state that they have had ‘an ongoing

feeling of depression or restlessness' since childhood. Feliciano Villar claims that intergenerational exchange is an element of historical trauma. He states that this concept "implies the involvement of members of two or more generations in activities which could promote awareness of varying perspectives, fostering increased interaction and cooperation to achieve shared goals, and allowing for mutual influence" (Villar 115).

VI.3. Cultural Trauma

Cultural trauma is a process that happens when members of a collective are exposed to an experience that has a profound, lasting effect on them and their identity. Alexander Jeffrey defines it as "the sense of being subjected to a horrible event that leaves permanent marks on the shared consciousness, altering their future in an irreversible manner" (Alexander 314). Ron Eyerman likewise claims it is a process of mediation involving other strategies and ideas which attempt to reconstruct and redefine their collective identity in order to heal the disruptions in social cohesion.

VI.4 The Impact of Trauma on Traumatized Beings

The collective trauma can have devastating effects, including the collapse of trust and generosity in a social order, substituted by aggression, impotence, and fear. Daya Somasundaram notes the "negative impact on social processes, networks, relationships, institutions, functions, dynamics, practices and resources which wounds and injures the social fabric" (Weisner 6). The physical impacts may include deteriorated public spaces and unhealthy products; the sociocultural ones could be damaged social relations and destructive norms, and economically it could mean

intergenerational poverty, long-term unemployment or business relocation along with limited employment opportunities, leading to a community's disinvestment.

VII. Individual Trauma

Trauma can have a direct impact on some individuals as well as groups of individuals or collectivities. "Trauma is the unique individual experience of an event or enduring conditions in which the individual's ability to integrate his/her emotional experience is overwhelmed and the individual experiences (either objectively or subjectively) a threat to his/her life, bodily integrity, or that of a caregiver or family" (Saakvitne 60). An individual trauma is an event, a sequence of events, or a collection of circumstances that an individual perceives as physically or emotionally hurtful or threatening. Individual trauma can have long lasting negative impacts on an individual's functioning and health, social, and emotional well-being. A traumatic experience has a significant influence on the individuals, either in the way they conceive, recall information, view themselves or perceive the world (Bloom 02).

VIII. Understanding the Impact of Different Traumatic Experiences

Experiencing trauma can manifest in various ways, leading to distinct impacts on individuals. One such type is the loss and separation from caregivers and loved ones, often intertwined with traumatic events, unpredictability, and interpersonal violence. Additionally,

physical neglect occurs when parents, guardians, or custodians fail to fulfill a child's essential needs, including providing food, clothing, shelter, education, medical care, supervision, or even abandoning them. Emotional abuse or assault encompasses nonphysical actions aimed at belittling, insulting, verbally threatening, or degrading the victim, which can induce feelings of threat, humiliation, neglect, shame, or degradation.

Physical abuse or assault involves the deliberate use of physical force, such as pushing, slapping, hitting, strangling, kicking, or employing weapons. Witnessing violence, whether it involves witnessing physical abuse, parents being battered, or other forms of violent acts like stabbings or shootings, can deeply impact individuals, evoking emotions of low self-esteem, guilt, worry, sadness, and grief. These diverse traumatic experiences significantly affect individuals' lives and overall well-being in profound ways.

Trauma may have a long-term and severe effect on an individual's mental health and general well-being. Trauma, whether the consequence of a single traumatic incident or chronic stress, can cause a wide range of physical and mental symptoms that can have severe impacts on many aspects of life. Understanding how trauma affects mental health and wellness is a critical step in the healing process. Trauma may have a substantial influence on an individual's psychological well-being, causing a spectrum of symptoms from mild to severe. Some of the most prevalent repercussions of trauma on mental health include:

VIII.1. Depression and Anxiety

Trauma increases the possibility of developing anxiety and depression. Trauma survivors may have feelings of pessimism, grief, and concern, which can interfere with everyday tasks.

VIII.2. PTSD

In 1980, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) introduced a new name for the psychological illness that arose from the experiences of soldiers. This illness, previously known as “shell shock” during World War I and “combat fatigue” during World War II, came to be officially recognized as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Initially,

PTSD and its identification were primarily associated with individuals directly involved in horrific experiences, such as war veterans, battered women, rape victims, and abused children. However, it is now understood that secondary victims, including witnesses, bystanders, rescue workers, and relatives who learn of a loved one's death or injury, can also develop PTSD. This expanded understanding highlights the far-reaching impact of trauma and the potential for PTSD to affect individuals indirectly affected by traumatic events (Luckhurst 1).

In 1992, Judith Herman, a pioneering clinician whose work is currently regarded as crucial in the field of traumatology, stated that psychological trauma is frequently influenced by the society in which such trauma occurred. Her studies revealed a crucial influence in removing blame from survivors, who were formerly seen as weak and defective for their suffering. Herman also coined the term "Complex PTSD" to describe a particular form of PTSD that develops as a result of uncontrollable social or interpersonal traumatic experiences, while living under oppression, in situations of imprisonment.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that can occur following a terrifying event, whether personally experienced or witnessed. It is characterized by a range of symptoms, including flashbacks, nightmares, severe anxiety, and intrusive thoughts about a traumatic event. These symptoms can emerge within a month of the trauma or may take years to manifest. PTSD symptoms can significantly impact social, professional, and personal relationships, making it challenging for individuals to carry out their daily activities. There are four main categories of PTSD symptoms: intrusive memories, avoidance, negative changes in thinking and

mood, and alterations in bodily and emotional reactions. The severity of symptoms can vary over time and differs from person to person.

The causes of PTSD can be diverse and include experiences such as child abuse, witnessing a home burning, going through a natural disaster, sudden loss of a loved one, involvement in sexual assault, or being in a serious car accident. These traumatic events can act as triggers for the development of PTSD.

IX . Narratives of Trauma and Recovery

IX.1 Trauma Narrative

Individual experience may be neglected in novels when the social and political concerns of the collective dominate the narrative. Trauma in personal narratives change how memories are naturally processed, causing psychological suffering and a loss of cognitive control, recognized as dissociation and also referred to as the disintegration of self-identity. Accordingly, the victim's sense of subjectivity and agency is interrupted by this interruption and fracturing. An individual who lacks subjectivity and agency is unable to communicate their experiences because they lack the capacity for storytelling and a narrative framework. However, in the communal narrative, the focus of traditional literary study of trauma novels has been on the collective experience, as is apparent in works like Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, which is about African slavery in America, or the Holocaust stories, including Tadeusz Borowski's collection of short stories. Accordingly, trauma is passed down through generations through the act of storytelling; thus, affects the listener either as an individual, or collectively through shared ancestry and ethnic origin. Arguably, when we read a text with our focus on the collective experience of trauma, we risk denying subjectivity to the individual character; thereby, reducing the individual to nothing. Yet, that same text may be read or analyzed

with an individual focus, such as in Morrison's novels, which depict how a text can be read as a narrative account of simultaneous individual and collective trauma (Gumb 239-44).

IX.1.1. Narratives of Recovery

According to Judith Herman, one of the primary goals of trauma therapy is to help victims regain their self-control. In her 1997 book *Trauma and Recovery: The Psychophysiology of Violence-From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*, she suggests three steps toward recovery, including creating a safe environment, going through a process of remembering and grieving, and reintegrating into daily life. She emphasizes that these stages might not be experienced by everyone in the same order. Herman and other trauma experts concur that sufferers must accept the painful events, grieve their losses, and move on with their lives (López 303).

For individual victims of trauma, new possibilities exist to explore diverse responses, such as recovery narratives that demonstrate recovery from trauma in a hostile environment in the aftermath of a traumatic experience. Narratives in fiction can be imaginatively represented and interpreted through resilience, reconciliation, and resistance. Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or even significant sources of threat. Reconciliation, which enables a victim to accept the traumatic event, reframes the traumatic experience and removes self-blame. Adding to that, it encourages healing among collective trauma victims. Reconciliation can be achieved in fiction through representations of and meditations on characters' feelings of and responses to vulnerability. Resistance that is seen as a protection against change in the traumatized person, can manifest as resistance to traditional talk therapy and conventional treatments. Overcoming this resistance

involves reclaiming agency and control over one's life. Recovery narratives, drawing from diverse disciplinary frameworks and cross-cultural community backgrounds, encompass both individual and collective perspectives. For example, Toni Morrison's novels are recovery narratives that offer a subjective view of trauma and recovery. Additionally, fiction can provide a space not only for witnessing and testimony, but also for mourning and memorializing through which individual agency may be reclaimed (Gumb 240).

Postmodern trauma novels in particular tend to stage individual quests of trauma survivors for recovery in great detail. They also tend to investigate thoroughly the profound impact that trauma may have on an individual's physique and psyche. Additionally, postmodern literature generally maintains a positive outlook on recovery, and postmodern traumatic fiction frequently emphasizes the challenges of the healing process. In the midst of the sense of trauma's widespread presence and impact, this shows how late postmodernism's wound culture has created a demand for affirmations of optimism. In order to show their readers that there is in fact a life beyond trauma, postmodern trauma literature from the 1990s and early 2000s typically focuses on innovative yet problematic beginnings (Schönfelder).

X. The Nexus Between Trauma and the Troubled Psyche

The nexus between trauma and the troubled psyche is a compelling area of study that has captivated researchers in the field of psychology. These scholars have dedicated their work to understanding the profound relationship between traumatic experiences and the resulting psychological disturbances. By examining the effects of trauma on the human psyche, they have illuminated the intricate processes that underlie mental health disorders, leading to valuable insights and effective interventions. One key aspect of

this nexus is the long-lasting impact of trauma on the psyche. Researchers such as Bessel van der Kolk has emphasized how traumatic experiences can give rise to trauma-related disorders, illuminating the mechanisms through which trauma affects mental well-being. Their work highlights the enduring psychological consequences of trauma and the importance of comprehensive approaches to treatment and recovery. The psychological aftermath of trauma is another crucial dimension of this nexus. Scholars like Judith Herman have explored the complex consequences of trauma, including the challenges of healing and recovery. Their research underscores the significance of recognizing and addressing the psychological scars left by traumatic events, emphasizing the need for trauma-informed care and support. The somatic aspects of trauma also contribute to the troubled psyche. Peter A. Levine's research has shed light on how traumatic experiences are stored in the body, leading to a range of psychological disturbances. By understanding the interplay between the body and the mind in the context of trauma, researchers have expanded our understanding of trauma recovery and the holistic nature of healing. Early relational trauma and its impact on the developing psyche have been another focal point. Scholars

like Allan N. Schore have investigated the psychological challenges that arise from early trauma and emphasized the importance of secure attachment in promoting healthy psychological development. Their work highlights the long-term effects of trauma on the troubled psyche and the significance of early intervention and support.

By delving into the psychological consequences of trauma, researchers such as Judith Lewis Herman have uncovered the complexities of trauma survivors' experiences, particularly those who have endured interpersonal violence. Their research has provided insights into the effects of trauma on memory and the troubled psyche, advocating for comprehensive approaches to trauma recovery that address the

multifaceted psychological aftermath. Understanding the troubled psyche in the context of trauma-related disorders, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), has also been a focus of investigation. Scholars like Richard J. McNally have examined the cognitive and emotional processes underlying trauma-related symptoms, deepening our understanding of the troubled psyche's intricate workings. Their research contributes to the development of effective interventions and therapies for individuals navigating the aftermath of trauma. In summary, the nexus between trauma and the troubled psyche encompasses various dimensions that researchers have dedicated their efforts to exploring. By unraveling the intricate connections between trauma and psychological distress, these scholars have advanced our understanding of trauma-related disorders, informed treatment approaches, and provided hope for individuals seeking healing and recovery.

Conclusion

This chapter has shed light on the meaning of trauma by providing an overview of trauma studies. It has clarified the distinctions between collective and individual traumas, outlining their various types and associated symptoms. The study of trauma offers valuable insights into its complex nature and the profound impact it has on individuals' well-being. By acknowledging the far-reaching effects of trauma, we gain a deeper understanding of the intricacies involved in the healing process. Furthermore, trauma theory illuminates how societal and cultural factors influence the perception and response to trauma, emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach to recovery. Through the lens of trauma theory, we recognize the resilience of human beings while also recognizing the necessity for empathy and support in navigating the aftermath of traumatic experiences. This chapter underscores the significance of ongoing research in trauma studies, as it continues to expand our comprehension of the subject and informs strategies for promoting healing and resilience in those who have undergone traumatic events.

Chapter Two

The Projection of Trauma in Morrison's *God Help the Child*

Introduction

Toni Morrison explores challenging and delicate topics in eleven novels and many other works written over five decades. In her recent novel, *God Help the Child* (2015), she represents an illustrative content that demonstrates every aspect of trauma theory. Through the presentation of African American horrific experiences of slavery and its consequences, Morrison explores in this novel several forms of racism, including domestic abuse, brutality, interracial violence and discrimination. Morrison therefore highlights the effects of the tragedies and terrible events of the Holocaust on African Americans. She specifically examines how racial disparities and racial ideas, which have persisted in post-racial America for decades, are still present. She specifically examines how racial disparities and racial ideas that have persisted in post-racial America across decades are still present. Interestingly, insights regarding intergenerational trauma and interracial prejudice can be found in her book *God Help the Child*.

Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*, offers valuable insights into intergenerational trauma and interracial prejudice. The book explores the consequences of Blackness and the lasting effects of slavery through intricately woven narratives. Despite the title suggesting an individual's experience of trauma, Morrison skillfully addresses the collective and universal aspects of these experiences. She also delves into the traumatic journeys of other child characters, including Brooklyn and Rain, who have endured sexual abuse and mistreatment. Morrison's storytelling goes beyond surface-level analysis, aiming to expose the underlying facade of contemporary racial ideologies. This chapter, therefore, explores how the novel portrays the experiences of the main characters, Bride and Booker, in relation to trauma. Drawing upon Judith

Chapter two The Projection of Trauma in Morrison's God Help the Child

Herman's trauma theories and DeGruy's insights on Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome (PTSS), the work explores the transmission of intergenerational trauma and its profound impact.

I. Collective Trauma

The experience of collective trauma differs from individual trauma, as it encompasses "cumulative psychological and emotional wounding across generations" (Martinez 01). The narrative begins with Sweetness recounting the prevailing societal beliefs that stem from skin pigmentation. Cathy Caruth emphasizes that history and trauma are intertwined, stating that "History, like trauma, is never simply one's own, that history is exactly the way we are implicated in each other's traumas" (Caruth 24). This highlights the shared nature of trauma among collective groups and the impact of traumatic events on both individuals and communities. In the case of African Americans, the experience of racial trauma led Sweetness to be cautious about her daughter's skin color. Her comments about her family's history are significant, as they reflect the suffering endured by her ancestors and how her response to her daughter's skin color is a direct result of centuries of discrimination. She describes how her grandmother blended in with white culture, claiming: "You should've seen my grandmother; she passed for whites and never said another word to any one of her children" (Morrison 03).

In accordance with Gregory Philips' theory of historical trauma, the predicament faced by Sweetness can be attributed to the accumulation of traumatic experiences. Philips contends that persistent exposure to emotions like racism over generations can induce trauma responses even after extended periods. In Sweetness's case, her reaction to Lula Ann's skin color is rooted in deeply ingrained associations with historical instances of slavery, oppression, discrimination, inferiority, as well as feelings of shame and

Chapter two The Projection of Trauma in Morrison's *God Help the Child*

humiliation. Sweetness embodies a generation still affected by unresolved racial prejudice. The concept of collective trauma arises from the lasting impact of distressing episodes in black history, manifesting as a collective memory of traumatic events from the distant past. This theme is vividly depicted by Morrison in the scene depicting Lula Ann's birth, which shocks Sweetness due to the baby's dark complexion. This experience prompted Sweetness to adopt a strict and vigilant parenting approach.

Furthermore, Lula Ann's birth initiates a profound personal transformation in Sweetness, a phenomenon referred to as the 'Active Forgetting' phenomenon. This notion pertains to the storage and retrieval of memories. The presence of suppressed memories tied to the mistreatment of individuals with darker skin points to a concealed narrative of black slaves originating from the early centuries of the slave trade.

I .1 Intergenerational Trauma

God Help the Child presents a post-racial narrative that compels readers to confront the lingering presence of racism and sexism in society. Morrison deliberately explores the impact of colorblindness, particularly in the context of the enduring effects of slavery, which she refers to as "The Great Black Depression." (Dr.L.Anitta 50). This case study centers around the characters Sweetness and her daughter, delving into the complexities of racism, dysfunctional behavior, and the significance of blackness in bridging the past and the present.

Sweetness emerges as a complex and polarizing character in the novel. Readers are torn between feeling empathy for her ancestral, social, and familial background, her encounters with racism and segregation, and judging her toxic approach to motherhood. Having grown up during a time of racial segregation, Sweetness internalized the prevailing racial norms and prejudices that categorized African-Americans based on their race, skin

Chapter two The Projection of Trauma in Morrison's God Help the Child

color, and perceived degree of racial purity. Her upbringing laid the foundation for the harsh social expectations and discrimination she faced. She states at the beginning of the narrative that color is now inherent in the blood white people, proclaiming “can you imagine how many white folks have negro blood running and hiding in their veins?” (Morrison 03). Additionally, Sweetness attempts to justify herself by asserting that her black child is not a result of her actions. She expresses her apprehension about society’s response to Lula’s dark skin tone, suggesting that the tendency to segregate based on skin color is prevalent, even within social clubs, neighborhoods, churches, sororities, and colored schools (Morrison 04).

In the initial segment of the narrative, Sweetness provides insight into the lives of her forebears. She presents her mother as a fortunate individual with African heritage who possessed a lighter complexion. Compared to others in the Black community, Sweetness’s mother enjoyed relatively favorable circumstances, including the privilege of trying on hats in department stores and using ladies’ rooms without discrimination. Additionally, her father had the freedom to try on shoes in the front section of the shoe store, avoiding the segregated backroom (Morrison 04). Sweetness’s endeavor revolves around redirecting her focus from the impending threat she perceives to her doorstep. She aims to demonstrate that the concept of blackness is a social construct intricately woven into American society and families.

Furthermore, her narratives offer a poignant insight into the experiences of the women in her family who bore the physical repercussions of slavery. This intimate perspective provides a clear glimpse into the profound extent of pain and suffering catalyzed by Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome (PTSS), a phenomenon transmitted across generations within Sweetness's lineage. Dr. Joy DeGruy's explanation of PTSS resonates with this context, elucidating that this syndrome emerges in populations that have endured

Chapter two The Projection of Trauma in Morrison's *God Help the Child*

multigenerational trauma resulting from centuries of enslavement and continue to face oppression and institutionalized racism to this day (DeGruy 109).

The essence of this concept finds expression within the realm of Sweetness's familial history, vividly portraying the far-reaching impact stemming from the roots of internalized racism and the intergenerational transmission of trauma, tracing back to her grandmother. Sweetness internalized the authoritative and emotionally detached demeanor of her grandmother and parents, subsequently projecting these patterns onto her own daughter. This intricate cycle encapsulates the complexity of trauma's inheritance and underscores the role of historical narratives in shaping familial dynamics.

In a striking revelation, Sweetness conveys to readers that her grandmother, with her fair complexion, chose to disown her African American heritage. The evidence lies in her confession: "You should've seen my grandmother; she passed for white and never said another word to anyone of her children." (Morrison 05). This action aligns with the concept of Empathetic Traumatization discussed by Coetzer in his scholarly article "Trauma Survivors." Coetzer illuminates how individuals like Sweetness can manifest this type of trauma transmission when they attempt to understand and share others' traumatic experiences (Coetzer 03).

Despite not directly experiencing slavery and segregation, Sweetness inherited the experiences of her ancestors, particularly her grandmother, which significantly influenced her toxic motherhood approach. Coetzer's idea parallels with Mary Ainsworth's research on attachment styles. Ainsworth's study "Three Patterns of Attachment: A Psychological Study of the Strange Situation," underscores the significance of secure caregiver relationships in a child's development. When these bonds are insecure, avoidant or ambivalent attachment styles may arise. Such traits influenced Sweetness's family dynamics, profoundly impacting her toxic parenting toward her black-skinned daughter.

Chapter two The Projection of Trauma in Morrison's God Help the Child

Similarly, Lula's birth was met with disapproval by Sweetness, who sought to justify herself by emphasizing the lack of black pigmentation in her family's lineage. This underscores Sweetness's fear of societal oppression due to her daughter's skin color. Despite her fortunate lighter skin, Lula Ann represents an unyielding historical legacy. Sweetness's account highlights the discomfort experienced when outsiders reacted negatively to Lula, reinforcing the prevailing societal norms and deepening the sense of inferiority imposed by the segregated social order. Ultimately, Sweetness's narrative reveals the complex interplay of historical trauma, identity, and societal constructs within Toni Morrison's work. Through the lens of Sweetness's experiences, the novel underscores the enduring impact of generational trauma and societal discrimination on individual psyches and relationships.

II. Individual Trauma

Memories of specific events are stored in the human mind, resembling audio or visual recordings. These memories gradually and significantly influence the psyche over time, shaping one's life experiences in both positive and negative ways. In the narrative of Lula Ann and Booker, the words of William Faulkner ring true: "The past is never dead, it is not even past" (Cult 20). This sentiment captures the enduring impact of childhood traumas on the lives of both characters, leading to their marginalized existence in adulthood. Bride and Booker, the primary protagonists, grapple with the challenges of their present lives and struggle to find their place in society due to the disruptive experiences they endured during their formative years. This highlights the profound influence of trauma in shaping and directing their life paths.

II .1. Bride's Trauma

Lula Ann, the central protagonist of *God Help the Child*, confronts profound adversity and discrimination throughout her life. From a tender age, she confronts unjust treatment and marginalization solely due to her skin color. Her mother fails to establish a nurturing maternal bond, ironically referring to her as “Sweetness”. At sixteen, Lula Ann makes a pivotal decision to redefine herself, adopting the name “Bride”. She embraces wearing white clothing to mask her natural skin tone, symbolically challenging the biases she encounters. Lula Ann's journey delves into the deep impact of discrimination and her pursuit of personal empowerment in a racially biased society. Clad in white, she metaphorically liberates herself from the constraints of her fractured family connections, leaving behind her childhood abode. With resolute determination, she seizes the present, unburdened by the weight of her past. Embarking on a transformative path, she endeavors to forge a fresh identity as Bride, leaving behind a state of detachment, neglect, and abuse to embrace personal growth. Radiating beauty, she embodies the purity of white attire while being an empowered black woman.

However, Lula Ann's story does not conclude at this juncture. While she presents herself as someone who has triumphed over past neglect and parental abandonment, it is crucial to question whether detachment and skin color alone account for Bride's trauma. Judith Herman's definition of trauma sheds light on this matter. She defines “trauma as a state of distress and powerlessness resulting from an individual's exposure to external atrocities or natural disasters” (Herman 24). This definition addresses the broader context of trauma and underscores Bride's central role in her own experiences. Undoubtedly, her past trauma is rooted in the neglect she endured from her parents. Bride herself acknowledges the phenomenon of neglect during her childhood and the lack of attachment

Chapter two The Projection of Trauma in Morrison's *God Help the Child*

from her caregiver due to her skin color. She was born to fair-skinned parents who both harbored biases against her being born as a dark-skinned Sudanese girl. In a chapter devoted to her, Sweetness provides an explanation for her harsh treatment and avoidance of her daughter. She narrates:

It's not my fault. So you can't blame me. I didn't do it and have no idea how it happened. It didn't take more than an hour after they pulled her out from between my legs to realize something was wrong. Really Wrong. She was so black she scared me. Midnight black, Sudanese black. I'm light-skinned, with good hair, what we call high yellow, and so is Lula Ann's father. (Morrison 03)

However, Bride's skin color is not a result of her own decision or within her sphere of responsibility. Rather, her complexion is determined by a genetic component. In the early stages of the narrative, Sweetness elucidates how her own skin color is emblematic of the era characterized by Jim Crow laws. She discusses the pervasive racism that permeated her upbringing, serving to rationalize the prevailing dominance of white individuals and their discriminatory control when society was rigidly divided into "black" and "white". She tells Lula Ann when she was a child, that, «You could be sent to a juvenile lockup for talking back or fighting in school, a world where you'd be the last one hired and the first one fired. She couldn't know any of that or how her black skin would scare white people or make them laugh and trick her" (Morrison 07).

Sweetness's actions could be explained to some extent by the fact that Bride's father abandoned the family because he could not accept a black daughter; he even accused Sweetness of cheating on him. Sweetness blamed Lula Ann for everything as an abandoned wife.

Sweetness fails to provide her child a loving home environment and a secure environment. In opposition, her toxic motherhood was an initial factor that provided suffering to bride. She never behaved in a motherly manner; instead, she gives no sympathy but harsh feedback. like yelling at her and punishing her. Considering how Sweetness treated Bride and even locked the door behind her to keep her from misbehaving, Sweetness is actually meant to portray an authoritative parenting style. Another form of punishment was that Sweetness never touched Lula Ann's skin to the point that the child would act badly on purpose to get her attention and interaction by her mother; and even then, Sweetness still didn't touch her. Sweetness kept little Lula Anne at home so she would not scare anyone by going outside. Therefore, Sweetness finds her daughter's skin color to be rather ugly and scary. She abnormally warns her not to act inappropriately or to complain and to avoid getting kicked out of school. Bride quietly endures the abuse and insults from her friends. She is severely impacted by individual trauma through the personal experiences she had with that implant by somebody who did damage to her. Another incident that traumatizes little Lula Ann is when she witnesses the landlord rape a young boy in their backyard, "The boy's little hands were opening and closing, his crying was soft, squeaky, and loaded with pain,"(Morrison 19) Lula Ann recalls.

Despite not directly experiencing it, this imprints on her interpersonal trauma. However, scenes of rape and the boy's pain was shared among them. Yet, Lula Ann chose to remain silent about this incident because the landlord might kick her and her mother out from their apartment. Sweetness explains once that "The law was discriminating in who you could rent to [...]. But I got lucky with Mr. Leigh. I know he upped the rent seven dollars from what he advertised" (Morrison 10).

Due to this, her mother prevented her from retelling or mentioning this traumatic scene to anyone. However, Lula Anne could find attachment and relief in expressing her imprisoned feelings if Sweetness had the duty and committed herself to her child. But Sweetness' actions are consistent with Mary Ainsworth describes them in her paper entitled "Patterns of Attachment: Psychological Study of an Odd Situation. " Securely linked kids "showed the capacity to explore the world and use the mother as a rescue base." Ainsworth defined two insecure attachment styles: avoidant and ambivalent. When a kid does not form a secure attachment with the caregivers, the child tends to display one of these styles. She comes to the conclusion that the parent's features and ways of relating to the child determine the child's attachment style. Sweetness was able to provide Bride with the emotional support she needed so that she wouldn't have to deal with long-term trauma by acting as a therapist for her. But her case was particularly tied to the color of her skin. Blackness is different from whiteness in more ways than one. The color black causes pain and damage for almost all black children in America. The internal domestic dispute that gave rise to the story of Bride is marked by toxic motherhood and had an impact on the bride's mental stability as an adult. Since outside society does not accept or forgive racial differences, Sweetness has alleged that racism and the effects of skin color on people are to blame for her treatment. The bride is separated from her mother by colorism. This situation is remarkably similar to that of Pecola Breedlove, the central character in Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye*, is a young African American girl who desperately yearns for blue eyes, believing that having them will make her beautiful and accepted. She suffers from low self-esteem, abuse, and neglect, embodying the damaging effects of racial prejudice and unrealistic beauty standards in society. Her character symbolizes the tragic consequences of internalized racism and the quest for unattainable ideals.

Chapter two The Projection of Trauma in Morrison's *God Help the Child*

Another inter-personal traumatizing incident makes a false accusation against Sofia Huxley. Therefore, Lula appears satisfied because she finally received her mother's acknowledgment and the love she had been missing since she was a child. However, when she was a grown woman, she could not let go of what she had done to Sofia Huxley. As a result, she makes an effort to make amends for her lie, yet she finds it difficult to establish social relationships and fails to preserve her relationship with her lover. As a result, Bride was unable to talk about her suppressed emotions with anyone. Therefore, Lula's inability to express herself is what puts her under the power of trauma, but as an adult, she was able to tell Booker about the repressed memory of being raped. He functions as the main attached figure to bride.

II .2 Booker Trauma

Booker Starbarn, Bride's romantic interest in the novel *God Help the Child*, possesses an enigmatic personality. Initially, he may come across as a simple and perhaps even lazy character, lacking any intriguing qualities. His relationship with Bride appears shallow and unhealthy, lacking the deep connection typically found between passionate lovers. This disconnect can be attributed to the fact that both Booker and Bride are grappling with their own individual traumas.

However, as the story progresses, the reader gradually gains insight into Booker's darker side, shaped by his haunting past and traumatic childhood experiences. Despite having had the opportunity to experience a sense of family and grow up in a happy domestic environment with access to technology and television, Booker's life takes a disturbing turn when his older brother Adam goes missing. Adam was more than just a sibling to Booker; they were soulmates who shared a close bond. The sudden disappearance of Adam shatters their family and leaves a void in Booker's life. The

Chapter two The Projection of Trauma in Morrison's *God Help the Child*

family's emotional breakdown continues until the police discover Adam's body in a culvert. This tragic event prompts the authorities to visit the Starbuck household to confirm the corpse's identity.

The inclusion of these details reveals the complex layers of Booker's character, showcasing the impact of trauma on his psyche and highlighting the profound sorrow he carries within him. Despite his initial portrayal as a seemingly ordinary character, Booker's journey uncovers the depths of his experiences and their lasting effects on his identity and relationships. Ultimately, Booker's complex persona and the exploration of his traumatic past add depth and complexity to the narrative, shedding light on the ways in which past traumas shape individuals and their connections with others.

Although he is not the victim, he is still affected and traumatized because of the sharing process of the experience with his brother. Therefore, when descendants attempt to comprehend the trauma of their siblings or parents, Booker's "intrusive trauma" occurs. As illustrated by Herman's theory. A survivor's life cannot progress if they are plagued by intrusive memories of their horrific experiences. In other words, trauma's symptoms may not always show up right away; instead, they may take months or even years to become apparent. Trauma symptoms can also express themselves in adulthood. The tragic loss of his sibling at the hands of a child molester has scarred Booker in this case. Adam's death affected his memories and flashbacks. However, Booker unintentionally went back to his pre-traumatic state and was unable to build a healthy life.

According to the Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association. Freud defined regression as a defense mechanism that results in the temporary or long-term reversion of the ego to an earlier stage of development rather than handling

Chapter two The Projection of Trauma in Morrison's *God Help the Child*

unacceptable impulses more adaptively. Regression occurs when a person's personality reverts to an earlier stage of development and adopts more childish mannerisms. Booker is imposing "active forgetting" to enjoy his present life and to start a loving relationship with Bride. Unfortunately, he finds himself in the same predicament when Bride makes a decision. Helping the accused without realizing the true culprit. As a result, Bride fails to function in Booker's therapy in terms of active forgetting as a remedy to replace traumatic memories with more positive ones. The experiences of Bride and Booker worsen their childhood injuries.

III. **Intrusive Borderline Personality Disorder**

The story of *God Help the Child* centers on the effects of the repetition of bad experiences from the past and how those experiences shape the present in the aftermath of traumatizing childhood experiences. In this way, post-traumatic stress disorder haunts adulthood. The lives of both the protagonist's bride and Booker's As noted by Judith Herman in her book *Trauma Recovery*, intrusive borderline personality disorder has a negative impact on PTSD because intrusive memories of traumatic experiences hurdle the survivor's life's developmental process. This indicates that trauma's effects manifest more gradually and are not felt immediately after the traumatic event but rather in the years that follow the accident.

This case study investigates the results of Bride and Booker's troubled lives. The painful childhood traumas, rejection, and avoidance that were brought on by her caregivers and are retained

in the mind of the bride as post-memory (both mentally and physically). Bride describes how her mother treated her when she was a child, claiming: "I could say

distaste was all over her face as I was little and she had to bathe me. 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” (Morrison 59). However, Bride is aware that sweet behavior is not an act of concern or love. She compares it to the beating she got from Sofia. Being beaten up by Sofia Huxley was similar to the beating she got from Sweet without the enjoyment of touching. Both showed her helplessness in the face of cruelty (Morrison 45). After being released from prison, Bride visited Sofia in an attempt to seek her forgiveness. But it turns out that Sofia only remembers the adult new bride when she speaks the name Lula Ann; otherwise, she does not know her. Bride sought acknowledgment of the child she once was from her trip to Sofia. In this context, Herman claims that there is a high chance of victimization recurrence in adult life for trauma survivors who are now adults (Herman 81). Herman’s perspective is the center of Bride's re-experience of violence and being abused again when she visits Sofia Huxley. She felt helpless, oppressed, and powerless to fight back. Consequently, Bride always feels undesired and unwanted, both domestically and socially. She kept experiencing feelings of inferiority and shame in school and on the street because of her complexion, which made her a target for insults from her classmates. insults like ‘Nigger’; after that, the unconscious remembering of previously buried flashbacks takes place again with even more harm than before. Herman draws attention to the trauma witness, pointing out that both witnesses and victims experience trauma (Herman 01). Although Booker does not experience direct trauma like Bride; nonetheless, trauma was transmitted to him through his brother’s accident.

Chapter two **The Projection of Trauma in Morrison's God Help the Child**

As a result of the incident he witnessed, Booker's memory was jolted. Despite the fact that Booker seemed to have gotten over his traumatic memories, he still remembers the time when Bride decided to help Sofia, the child abuser. Then he simply rejected her with the words, "You are not the woman I want" (Morrison 08). The term "child molester" still has meaning for both Bride and Booker because Booker was unable to erase the death of his brother. Sofia Huxley was a representation of past unhealed trauma and a reminder of the injury that had been suppressed. Because she reopened the wounds of both Bride and Booker, Booker became more reclusive in an effort to protect himself from thinking about the traumatic occurrences in the past.

IV. Borderline Personality Disorder

Accordingly, borderline personality disorder investigates the histories of children of trauma survivors and their inability to build a complete identity and reliable, healthy connections. Herman, who is extremely worried about child abuse as a root cause of adult psychiatric disorders, states that "unstable relationships are one of the major criteria for making this diagnosis [borderline personality disorder]" (Herman 90). In this term, the focus of this study is directed to borderline personality disorder as a starting point to address the process of the contribution of trauma, the cycle of its transmission through the children of survivors, and its transformation from one generation to another.

Bride and Booker are present trauma survivors who attempt to preserve their lives as they establish both social and familial relationships without experiencing identity crises or fragmentation of memory to cope with their childhood trauma. Nevertheless, they are struggling to maintain stable identities and relationships as adults. As we have seen, Bride relocates to California and adopts the name Bride

Chapter two The Projection of Trauma in Morrison's *God Help the Child*

instead of Lula Ann. She gets a job as an editor at a well-known fashion magazine, and one of her friends tells her to wear nothing but white; she claims, "I took his advice and it worked. Everywhere I went, I got double takes, but not like the faintly disgusted ones I used to get as a kid. These were adoring looks" (Morrison 44), and this tip changed her completely: "True or not, it made me, remade me" (Morrison 49).

Similar to Booker, who also joins a street band while leaving his home to start taking history and economics courses. In addition, they both experienced a journey to find healing, protection, and love in one another as they tried to escape their horrific pasts. The relationship between Bride and Booker is an alternate connection to someone who could provide security against the threats she encounters in life. A person in her situation would recover those qualities she was denied as a child "by idealizing the person to whom she becomes attached." (Herman 51), as Herman explains. Therefore, their relationship was crucial to the bride in order to prevent exploitation or abandonment. "What was important in our relationship, other than our lovemaking and his complete understanding of me, was the fun we had" (Morrison 107).

Booker seeks peace in his relationship with Bride, who doesn't bother him or ask questions about his history; Bride never asks about Booker's personal life. After learning that Bride wants to assist Sofia, Booker ends their relationship without explaining his actions. Bride was furious by the unjustifiable and sudden split; she jumped to conclusions about his reaction and stated, "I guess I threatened his ego by doing some Samaritan things not directed to him. Selfish bastard. I paid the rent, not him or the maid. When we went to clubs and concerts, we rode my Jaguar or in cars I hired" (Morrison 08). Adults with post-traumatic stress disorder have a lingering impact on their lives that might occasionally lead to borderline personality disorder. For those

Chapter two The Projection of Trauma in Morrison's *God Help the Child*

who have experienced traumatic events, people often feel that suicide and death will save their damaged brains (Dreier 02). In her book, Morrison presents a joyful ending that is elaborated by the possibility of treatment and psychological healing, inspiring her readers with a fresh start and urging them to figure out how to handle such circumstances, particularly for disenfranchised black people.

V. **Unveiling Acting Out: Freudian Insights in *God Help the Child***

In Toni Morrison's novel *God Help the Child*, several characters display various forms of acting out as they navigate their personal journeys and confront past traumas. One prominent character in the story is Bride, a young African American woman who has experienced childhood trauma and seeks validation through her physical appearance. Bride's actions can be seen as manifestations of acting out, as she utilizes her beauty and sexuality to exert power and control in her relationships. Her desire for external validation and struggles with self-worth drive her to engage in impulsive and reckless behavior, which ultimately becomes a hindrance to personal growth and healing.

Another character who exemplifies acting out is Sweetness, Bride's mother. Sweetness carries deep-seated guilt and shame over her past choices, particularly regarding Bride's dark skin color. Her internalized self-hatred leads her to emotionally distance herself from Bride and withhold maternal love and support. Sweetness' avoidance and inability to confront her past contribute to her acting out, which manifests as emotional detachment and a refusal to acknowledge the impact of her actions on her daughter.

Chapter two The Projection of Trauma in Morrison's God Help the Child

Booker, Bride's love interest, also exhibits behaviors of acting out. He is haunted by the loss of his brother, which has left him emotionally scarred and disconnected from his own identity. Booker's acting out is evident in his inclination to distance himself from intimate relationships, engage in self-destructive behavior, and suppress his emotions. His avoidance of vulnerability and self-reflection hinders personal growth and prevents him from forming meaningful connections.

Through the characters of Bride, Sweetness, and Booker, Toni Morrison explores the concept of acting out as a response to unresolved trauma, societal pressures, and personal insecurities. Their actions serve as both resistances to confronting their past and opportunities for self-discovery and transformation. Morrison delves into the complexities of human behavior and the potential for growth and redemption by portraying these characters' struggles and their journey towards healing.

Conclusion

Toni Morrison's narratives serve as poignant portrayals of the enduring oppression endured by black men, effectively highlighting the inextricable link between their lives and the deep-rooted trauma they face. Through her exploration of race and identity, Morrison starkly emphasizes the irrefutable truth that one's skin color cannot be altered, leaving black men particularly vulnerable to persistent bias and discriminatory treatment. This unyielding reality serves to underscore the ongoing struggles they encounter in the face of prejudice and discrimination, which persist to this day. The narrative powerfully captures the lasting impact of historical and societal injustices, shedding light on the continued challenges faced by black men in their quest for equality and liberation.

Chapter Three

The Nexus Between Trauma and Troubled Psyches in

God Help the Child

Chapter three The Nexus Between Trauma and Troubled Psyches in *God Help the Child*

Introduction

In the novel *God Help the Child* by Toni Morrison, the nexus between trauma and troubled psyches emerges as a compelling and recurring theme. Morrison skillfully weaves a narrative that delves into the profound impact of traumatic experiences on the characters' psychological well-being, offering readers a thought-provoking exploration of the intricate connections between personal trauma, troubled psyches, and the human condition. Through her vivid storytelling, Morrison paints a poignant portrait of the lasting effects of trauma, exposing the raw vulnerabilities and deep-seated struggles of her characters.

This chapter explores the troubled psyches of both Bride and Booker in Morrison's *God Help the Child*. It delves into the analysis of their thoughts, behaviors, and relationships, shedding light on the profound influence of trauma on their mental and emotional well-being. The chapter examines their struggles with self-image, delving into the ways in which trauma has shaped their lives and affected their perception of themselves. Furthermore, it explores the theme of healing, highlighting the potential for growth and resilience despite their challenging pasts. By examining the experiences of both characters, this chapter offers insight into the complexities of trauma and the transformative power of healing in their lives.

I . The Interplay between Trauma and Troubled Psyches

In *God Help the Child* by Toni Morrison, the affinity between trauma and troubled psyches is a prominent theme that permeates the narrative. The novel explores the profound impact of traumatic experiences on the characters' psychological well-being, shedding light on the lasting effects of these traumas and their influence on their

Chapter three The Nexus Between Trauma and Troubled Psyches in God Help the Child

troubled psyches. Morrison delves into the complexities of trauma by depicting various forms of psychological distress and their origins in the characters' past experiences. The traumatic events they have endured, such as childhood abuse, neglect, and racial discrimination, shape their psyches and contribute to their troubled mental states.

Throughout the novel, Morrison examines how trauma manifests in the characters' thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. She portrays their struggles with identity, self-worth, and relationships, all of which are deeply affected by the traumas they have experienced. The characters' troubled psyches, marked by anxiety, depression, and a profound sense of brokenness, reflect the enduring psychological consequences of trauma. Moreover, *God Help the Child* explores the intergenerational transmission of trauma, highlighting how past traumas can impact future generations. The characters' troubled psyches are not only a result of their own traumatic experiences but also influenced by the traumas endured by their parents or ancestors. Morrison intricately weaves these intergenerational connections, emphasizing the far-reaching effects of trauma on the psyches of individuals and communities. By exploring the affinity between trauma and troubled psyches in *God Help the Child*, Morrison offers a profound examination of the lasting psychological impact of traumatic experiences. She invites readers to empathize with the characters' struggles and reflect on the profound connections between personal trauma, societal issues, and the human psyche.

II. The Manifestation of Troubled Psyches in Morrison's *God Help the Child*

Morrison adeptly portrays the enduring effects of childhood trauma on an individual's psyche and identity. Through Bride's story, Morrison explores the

Chapter three The Nexus Between Trauma and Troubled Psyches in God Help the Child

complexities of self-perception, societal expectations, and the pursuit of personal healing and authenticity.

II.1 Bride

Bride's troubled psyche is deeply intertwined with her traumatic past. During her childhood, Bride endured physical abuse and emotional neglect from her mother, Sweetness, who favored her lighter-skinned siblings due to societal colorism. This consistent mistreatment had a profound impact on Bride's self-esteem and mental well-being. An illuminating example of Bride's troubled psyche is her relentless preoccupation with her physical appearance. Believing that her dark skin caused her mother's rejection, she becomes fixated on attaining an idealized version of beauty to compensate for the lack of love she experienced. As an adult, Bride achieves professional success in the beauty industry, meticulously maintaining a flawless image through cosmetic procedures, extreme dieting, and an obsession with external perfection. However, despite her achievements, she remains emotionally fragmented and disconnected from her true self.

Another manifestation of Bride's troubled psyche is her difficulty in establishing and maintaining healthy relationships. Her traumatic past has left her deeply mistrustful and fearful of intimacy. She struggles to form genuine connections, often shielding herself behind emotional barriers. For instance, her affair with Booker, a married man, is characterized by secrecy, insecurities, and an inability to fully trust one another. Bride's transformative journey towards healing and self-discovery commences when she confronts her past and begins questioning society's standards of beauty and worth. Encounters with characters like Rain, a young girl facing her own trauma, and Sofia, an

Chapter three The Nexus Between Trauma and Troubled Psyches in God Help the Child

older woman who embraces her dark skin and rejects societal norms, prompt Bride to challenge deeply ingrained beliefs and reassess her self-perception.

As the novel progresses, Bride gradually unravels the layers of her troubled psyche, embracing her authentic self beyond external appearances. She realizes that her value extends far beyond physical beauty, encompassing inner strength, resilience, and compassion. By acknowledging her traumatic past and addressing her emotional scars, Bride embarks on a journey of self-acceptance and liberation.

III . Exploring Bride's Inner World in *God Help the Child*

Toni Morrison's novel *God Help the Child* follows the transformative journey of Bride, a dark-skinned woman who embarks on a profound path of self-discovery and healing. By delving into Bride's thoughts, behaviors, and relationships, readers gain valuable insights into her character and the overarching themes of the novel. Bridging the realms of identity, trauma, and personal growth, Morrison masterfully unravels the intricate layers of Bride's inner world, inviting readers to join her on a captivating exploration.

III .1.Self-Perception

Bride's self-perception undergoes a profound transformation significantly influenced by her traumatic upbringing. She bears the emotional scars of childhood abuse and neglect, which prominently manifest in her thoughts and actions. A central facet of her self-image revolves around her physical appearance, leading her to attribute her mother's rejection to her dark skin. This underlying belief prompts a perpetual quest for external validation and an enduring struggle with self-worth. However, as the narrative

Chapter three The Nexus Between Trauma and Troubled Psyches in God Help the Child

unfolds, Bride embarks on a process of introspection and self-discovery that ultimately challenges conventional societal standards of beauty and prompts a critical reevaluation of her self-concept and identity.

In the story, Bride reflects on her situation, pondering questions such as: "Am I not exciting enough? Or not pretty enough? Am I unable to have thoughts of my own or do things he doesn't approve of?" (Morrison 8).

III.2. Behavioral Responses

Bride's behaviors reflect her desire to compensate for her past trauma and gain acceptance. She becomes fixated on achieving physical perfection, obsessing over her appearance and investing significant time and resources in maintaining a glamorous image. She also engages in a tumultuous affair with Booker, a married man, which showcases her need for validation and her difficulty in establishing healthy relationships. As the narrative unfolds, Bride's behaviors shift as she confronts her past and embarks on a journey of self-acceptance and personal growth.

III .2.Interpersonal Dynamics

Bride's relationships are deeply affected by her troubled psyche. She struggles to form authentic connections due to her trust issues and fear of intimacy. Her relationship with her mother, Sweetness, is strained and marked by resentment and a lack of acceptance. In her affair with Booker, there is a sense of emotional distance and insecurity due to the illicit nature of the relationship. However, Bride's interactions with other characters, such as Rain and Sofia, provide opportunities for her to develop more genuine connections based on empathy, shared experiences, and acceptance.

Chapter three The Nexus Between Trauma and Troubled Psyches in God Help the Child

Throughout the novel, Bride's thoughts, behaviors, and relationships undergo a transformative process. She confronts her traumatic past and challenges societal expectations, gradually embracing her true self beyond external appearances. As she gains a deeper understanding of herself, she begins to establish healthier relationships and engage in more authentic thought patterns and behaviors. The novel delves into the complexities of the protagonist's inner world, showcasing the impact of trauma on thoughts, behaviors, and relationships. Through Bride's journey, the story explores themes of self-acceptance, the power of personal growth, and the importance of breaking free from societal pressures to define one's own identity.

IV . Exploring Booker's Inner World in *God Help the Child*

IV .1. Booker

Booker emerges as a crucial character, playing a significant role as a key relationship in the life of the protagonist, Bride. Booker's presence and interactions with Bride serve to deepen the exploration of her troubled past and its impact on her present. As the narrative unfolds, their relationship becomes a catalyst for introspection and healing, allowing Bride to confront her trauma and confront the complexities of love, trust, and self-discovery. Through Booker, the novel delves into the transformative power of human connection and the potential for redemption and growth in the face of emotional turmoil.

Chapter three The Nexus Between Trauma and Troubled Psyches in God Help the Child

IV .2. Self-Perception

Booker's self-perception is profoundly molded by his personal experiences and inner struggles. He bears the weight of emotional burdens and past traumas that significantly shape his perspective on the world. While the novel does not offer direct access to his inner thoughts, it can be surmised that Booker grapples with his own insecurities and internal conflicts, particularly in the context of his connection with Bride. His contemplations likely orbit around his desires, feelings of guilt, and the tumultuous emotions that accompany his involvement with a married woman. Furthermore, Booker's introspections may encompass his deep yearning for authentic connections and his earnest desire to come to terms with his past.

IV .3. Behavioral Responses

Booker's behaviors are driven by his emotional complexities and the dynamics of his relationships. As a character, he is torn between his attraction to Bride and his guilt over engaging in an affair. This conflict manifests in his actions, as he often vacillates between pursuing the relationship with Bride and attempting to distance himself from it. Booker's behaviors reflect his struggle to navigate his own emotional wounds and desires, leading to a complex and turbulent dynamic between him and Bride.

IV.4. Interpersonal Dynamics

Booker's relationship with Bride is a central focus in the novel. Their connection is marked by passion, secrecy, and emotional tension. Their affair serves as a means for both characters to seek solace and validation, despite the complicated circumstances. The relationship between Booker and Bride is a reflection of their shared experiences of

Chapter three The Nexus Between Trauma and Troubled Psyches in God Help the Child

trauma and their search for connection and healing. It is a relationship fraught with emotional barriers, guilt, and a lack of trust, making it challenging for both characters to fully open up to each other. In addition to his relationship with Bride, Booker's connections with other characters also provide insights into his behaviors and psyche. For example, his interactions with other individuals in the story, such as his family or friends, may shed light on his past and the influences that have shaped his thoughts and behaviors. While Booker's character is not as extensively explored as Bride's in the novel, his presence adds depth and complexity to the narrative. His thoughts, behaviors, and relationships contribute to the exploration of themes such as love, guilt, and the search for emotional redemption in the novel.

V. Troubled Psyches and Self-Image

In Morrison's selected novel, troubled psyches and self-image are intricately intertwined, reflecting the profound impact of trauma on the characters' perceptions of themselves. The novel delves into how traumatic experiences shape their self-image and contribute to their troubled psyches. The characters in the book, including Bride, Booker, Rain, and Brooklyn, all grapple with distorted self-images as a result of the trauma they have endured. Their troubled psyches are marked by a deep sense of inadequacy, shame, and insecurity, influencing their self-perception and interactions with the world. Bride, for instance, carries the weight of childhood abuse, resulting in a fractured self-image. She internalizes the negative messages inflicted upon her, distorting her perception of self-worth and desirability. This distorted self-image drives her relentless search for external validation and fuels her desperate quest for love and acceptance.

Chapter three The Nexus Between Trauma and Troubled Psyches in *God Help the Child*

Similarly, Booker is haunted by abandonment and loss, leading to a fragmented self-image. His traumatic past leaves him with an overwhelming sense of unworthiness, distorting his perception of himself as undeserving of love and connection. This negative self-image reinforces his self-imposed isolation and hampers his ability to form meaningful relationships.

Rain and Brooklyn also bear the scars of trauma, which shape their self-image. Rain's experience of molestation instills deep-seated shame and distorts her perception of her own value and worthiness. Brooklyn, having faced neglect and abandonment, struggles with a fragmented sense of identity and a diminished self-image, feeling unseen and unimportant.

Morrison skillfully explores the impact of these troubled psyches and distorted self-images on the characters' lives and relationships. She delves into their internal struggles, their ongoing battle to reconcile their traumatic pasts with their present identities, and their journey toward self-acceptance and healing. Through the portrayal of troubled psyches and self-image, Morrison emphasizes the transformative power of self-perception and the significance of reclaiming one's identity in the face of trauma. The characters' narratives serve as a poignant reminder of the intricate interplay between trauma, self-image, and the pursuit of self-empowerment and healing.

VI. Shattered Souls: Trauma's Profound Impact in *God Help the Child*

Trauma has profoundly shaped the mental and emotional well-being of both Bride and Booker in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*, leaving indelible marks on their inner selves. Bride carries deep emotional wounds from the childhood trauma she

Chapter three The Nexus Between Trauma and Troubled Psyches in God Help the Child

endured, casting a dark shadow over her overall well-being. The experiences of physical abuse and emotional neglect have distorted her self-perception, fostering feelings of unworthiness and self-doubt. Her constant need for external validation stems from the reverberations of her mother's rejection solely based on her dark skin. To compensate for the love and acceptance denied in the past, Bride becomes fixated on her physical appearance, relentlessly pursuing physical perfection at the cost of her well-being.

Similarly, Booker carries undisclosed traumas that have significantly influenced his mental and emotional state. While the specific details remain shrouded in secrecy, emotional scars deeply permeate his being. Inner conflicts and emotional turmoil haunt his thoughts, remnants of past traumas that leave lasting imprints. These unseen wounds impact his overall well-being and hinder his ability to form healthy relationships. Engaging in an affair with Bride becomes a reflection of his yearning for emotional connection, entangled with the guilt and complications stemming from unresolved trauma. The impact of trauma extends to their relationships as well. For Bride, the wounds of her past strain her ability to trust and form meaningful connections. Her relationship with her mother lacks acceptance, exacerbating her struggle to forge genuine bonds with others. Similarly, Booker's past trauma hinders his capacity for emotional intimacy, further complicating his relationships. Their shared traumas erect emotional barriers that manifest in the affairs they engage in.

The trauma endured by Bride and Booker has reverberated through their mental and emotional well-being, challenging their self-perception, trust, and emotional stability. *God Help the Child* masterfully explores the lasting effects of trauma, vividly depicting the intricate journey toward healing, self-acceptance, and the reclamation of their well-being.

Chapter three The Nexus Between Trauma and Troubled Psyches in God Help the Child

VII. Narratives of Recovery: Overcoming Trauma and Finding Resilience

Morrison argues that children now are likely to experience the same fate as children in the past, but children nowadays, particularly African American, are highly exposed to violence. According to Judith Herman, the consequences of mistreating children can have long-lasting and wide-ranging impacts (Herman). The psychological and social development of the child is significantly harmed, often resulting in challenges in forming intimate connections with others and a distorted sense of self. Research on early childhood development reveals that children who grow up in oppressive families or have experienced previous traumatic incidents become highly sensitive, remaining constantly alert even in safe surroundings. Additionally, lacking any means of defense against their abusers, these victims respond to the inflicted cruelties through dissociation, self-harm, depressive symptoms, and intense anger (Herman 88-90). In the novel, the main characters, Bride (Lula Ann) and Booker, have endured deeply distressing childhoods, which have left them feeling devoid of hope and powerless in various situations. Consequently, they often make misguided choices that harm themselves and those around them. Nonetheless, these characters yearn to overcome their traumatic pasts and rebuild their relationships with each other and their community. Through this process of recovery, they strive to regain their true sense of self and reclaim their identities.

According to Judith Herman's book *Trauma and Recovery*, the process of healing involves three key stages: establishing a sense of safety, reconstructing the narrative of the traumatic experience, and rebuilding the connections between survivors and their community (Herman 03). In line with the insights provided by Judith Herman, it is

Chapter three The Nexus Between Trauma and Troubled Psyches in God Help the Child

crucial to confront trauma directly as the most effective means of overcoming it. She emphasizes the significance of remembering and truthfully acknowledging the harrowing events, stating that these steps are prerequisites for restoring social harmony and facilitating the healing process for individual survivors (Herman 01). In a similar manner, Kristeva, Julia in her work *Tales of Love*, urges individuals to embrace openness towards others as a means to experience love (Kristeva 15). Similarly, Morrison, in her novel, asserts that the key to truly loving someone lies in recognizing and understanding the shared pain and hidden trauma of others.

VII.1. Booker

In his 1917 book *Mourning and Melancholia*, Sigmund Freud explores how individuals respond to the loss of loved ones and the erosion of their moral values. He explains that during the mourning process, people go through a period of profound depression, but gradually find healing over time. Additionally, he distinguishes depression as a pathological state of mourning, characterized by intense despair, a loss of interest in the outside world, and an inability to experience love. When the process of mourning is completed, individuals achieve a sense of liberation. Moreover, Freud highlights the connection between guilt and the loss of the object of attachment. The death of the loved one triggers feelings of guilt within the person, as these two processes are closely linked. If individuals fail to accept the loss or lack a meaningful process to make sense of it, they cannot properly mourn, leading to self-blame and despair in reality (Freud 584-89). This can be observed in Booker's own journey to mourn the deaths of his brother and aunt Queen. "His thoughts were stark skeletal. It never occurred to him that Queen would die or never could die. Much of the time, while

Chapter three The Nexus Between Trauma and Troubled Psyches in God Help the Child

he tended her feet and listened to her breath he was thinking about his own unease. How disrupted his life had become, what with caring for an aunt he adored and who was now dead to her own carelessness?" (Morrison 173).

On the other hand, Julia Kristeva in her book *Tales of Love* encourages individuals "to utilize language as a means of expressing and symbolizing their experiences of loss. By offering language as a form of compensation for the loss, the patient endeavors to engage in a transformative process of self-renewal through interpersonal interaction" (Kristeva 14-15). For Booker, engaging in reading and writing became crucial mechanisms for managing his traumatic memories. He expressed his deepest emotions about Bride and his brother through heartfelt letters, using them as a means of catharsis. Additionally, Booker found solace in Jazz, which served as a highly personal mode of self-expression. However, as his journey progressed, music became a conflicting force, inhibiting his ability to effectively mourn the loss of his beloved figures, Adam and Queen.

The real healing process of trauma begins when Booker confronts the unvarnished truth. Each time he envisions Bride's eyes gleaming with allure or her lips curving into a tempting, unrestrained smile, he experiences not only a surge of desire but also the dissolution of the haunting darkness that had shrouded him since Adam's death for countless years (Morrison 154). Queen insisted that Booker reveal the truth, saying, "You lash Adam to your shoulders so he can work day and night to fill your brain. Don't you think he's tired? He must be worn out having to die and get no rest because he has to run somebody else's life" (Morrison 184). She advised Booker to let go of his obsession with Adam. Following her guidance, Booker wrote a goodbye letter to his deceased brother, who had been the source of his deepest trauma. Through this act of

Chapter three The Nexus Between Trauma and Troubled Psyches in God Help the Child

catharsis, Booker found liberation from the overwhelming guilt that had ensnared him, reclaiming his freedom.

Subsequently, Booker expresses his heartfelt condolences to his brother and makes a firm decision to move forward in life. A significant turning point occurs when a fire accidentally destroys all of Booker's letters, symbolically erasing his past and creating space for a new beginning. This event marks the end of his prolonged period of mourning and the resolution of complex emotions associated with his brother Adam, who deeply impacted his life. Looking ahead, Booker envisions a fresh future with Bride and their unborn child. In this narrative, Booker serves as a conduit for Morrison's introspective musings on race, with his sophisticated thoughts and dialogues with Bride reflecting the author's own perspectives on racial dynamics. As a cultivated and quick-witted character, Booker emerges from the shadows of his childhood trauma by articulating his intricate emotions through writing.

VII .2. Bride

Bride, a woman with a traumatic past, adopts a false identity by changing her physical appearance and childhood name to conform to societal beauty standards in America. This creates a divide between her younger self, Lula Ann, representing the past, and her adult self, Bride, representing the present. Both personas contribute to shaping her identity, reflecting her unsuccessful efforts to overcome childhood trauma on her own.

Throughout the novel, Bride demonstrates a lack of honesty in various situations. Lula Ann falsely accuses Sofia of a crime she didn't commit, while Bride tries to suppress her inner child and find tranquility in her new life. However, Lula Ann

Chapter three The Nexus Between Trauma and Troubled Psyches in God Help the Child

eventually speaks up and offers an apology to Sofia, resulting in Sofia violently retaliating and causing serious physical injuries to Bride as a form of compensation. Bride's physical recovery in the final chapters symbolizes her journey towards healing from the traumas of her childhood and her transformation into an adult who is liberated from both emotional and physical pain. By opening up to Booker about her painful past and the burdens she endured as a young person, Bride liberates herself from the mistakes that caused harm to others and breaks free from the haunting remnants of her childhood trauma. Morrison reveals: "Having confessed Lula Ann's sins she felt newly born. No longer forced to relive, no, outlive the disdain of her mother and the abandonment of her father" (Morrison 190). Furthermore, when Booker "offered her the hand she had craved all her life, the hand that did not need a lie to deserve it, the hand of trust and caring for—a combination that some call natural love" (Morrison 206). She has achieved liberation to redefining her sense of self and developing inner strength, not just for her own sake but also for the well-being of her unborn child and for the sake of her relationship with Booker.

VII .3. Bride and Booker

Morrison intentionally portrays Queen as a mentor who highlights the issues faced by Bride and Booker and offers guidance on how to address them effectively. During a confrontation with Booker near Queen's house, Bride shouts at him: "You don't have to love me but you damn well have to respect me" (Morrison 181) This leads to a physical altercation, initiated by Bride, as she challenges Booker's belief that his writing was only about himself and not about her. Morrison portrays the reunion of Bride and Booker as a complex process of both violence and reconciliation. Through a third-

Chapter three The Nexus Between Trauma and Troubled Psyches in God Help the Child

person narrator, “Now having slept so many hours she felt more than rested and free of tension; she felt strong” (Morrison 190). When Bride and Booker openly share their childhood traumas, they give their inner child a voice and liberate themselves from the shackles of trauma.

When Queen’s house is consumed by fire, Bride and Booker demonstrate a shared sense of duty and awareness as they bravely enter the flames to rescue her. They take turns caring for Queen as she recovers from her burns. Morrison portrays their mutual support as a step towards healing from their individual traumas, moving away from their excessive preoccupation with past pain. Despite their plans for a future together, Queen’s sudden death leaves them uncertain. Booker blames himself for not providing more care to his late aunt, revealing his ongoing tendency to be overly fixated on mourning. Similarly, Bride views Queen’s death as a reminder that their recent comfort was derived from their focus on a third person they loved. She contemplates the unknown path ahead now that it is just the two of them. Hence, Queen predicted earlier that, “They will blow it, she thought. Each will cling to a sad little story of hurt and sorrow— some long-ago trouble and pain life dumped on their pure and innocent selves. And each one will rewrite that story forever, knowing the plot, guessing the theme, inventing its meaning and dismissing its origin” (Morrison 186).

Due to their persistent attachment to their painful pasts and childhood traumas, Queen feared that they would be unable to attain happiness. Nevertheless, after scattering Queen's ashes in the river, Bride shares the news of her pregnancy with Booker. Having already experienced the loss of both his brother and aunt, Booker realizes that he cannot bear the thought of losing another person. As Herman points out, “individuals who have survived trauma often have a deep fear that their children will

Chapter three The Nexus Between Trauma and Troubled Psyches in God Help the Child

face similar adversities, leading them to take significant measures to prevent such outcomes” (Herman 83)

Chapter three The Nexus Between Trauma and Troubled Psyches in *God Help the Child*

Conclusion

God Help the Child delves into the theme of trauma and its profound impact on individuals' psyches. Through the characters of Bride and Booker, Morrison explores the lasting effects of traumatic experiences on their self-perception and relationships. Both characters struggle with distorted self-images and grapple with their sense of self-worth. However, the novel also offers hope and resilience as Bride and Booker embark on personal journeys toward healing and self-acceptance. Ultimately, the novel portrays the intricate connection between trauma, troubled psyches, and the transformative power of self-discovery, emphasizing the potential for growth and resilience in the face of adversity.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

In culmination, this dissertation has navigated the intricate terrain of the affinity between trauma and troubled psyches in Morrison's *God Help the Child*. This exploration has been enriched by delving into the realm of trauma theory, a critical foundation laid by renowned theorists and scholars such as Judith Herman, Cathy Caruth, Sigmund Freud, and Breuer, who have collectively contributed to our understanding of the profound psychological impact of trauma. This study has unveiled the nexus between trauma and the intricate landscapes of troubled psyches, meticulously examining the convergence of psychological turmoil and the path to healing within the narrative. Through the lens of these scholars and guided by the insights they provide, the findings of this research resonate with profound implications. The exploration of trauma in Morrison's selected oeuvre has illuminated how trauma's echoes ripple through generations, leaving an indelible imprint on individuals' identities.

The novel's characters, each grappling with their unique psychological burdens, exemplify the intricate interplay of trauma's reverberations within their troubled psyches. Their journeys become a tapestry woven with resilience, pain, and the quest for healing. The examination of trauma within the narrative serves as a poignant reminder of the real-world implications of such experiences and the enduring effects on the human psyche. The significance of this research extends beyond literary analysis. By elucidating the intersection of trauma, identity, and healing, this dissertation sheds light on the far-reaching impact of traumatic experiences. In a world where trauma is an unfortunate reality for many, understanding its profound influence on the psyche becomes an imperative. Moreover, the study underscores the power of literature as a mirror reflecting the human condition, enabling readers to empathize, learn, and heal alongside the characters.

The outcome of this research signifies not only a deepened understanding of the intricate relationship between trauma and troubled psyches but also an enriched appreciation for the role of

General Conclusion

literature in portraying and processing such complex themes. The analysis of *God Help the Child* exemplifies the vital role that literature plays in shaping societal conversations about trauma, identity, and healing. By contextualizing the characters' journeys within the framework of trauma theory, this dissertation contributes to a holistic understanding of the human experience and emphasizes the importance of addressing the profound interplay between trauma, troubled psyches, and the path to healing within contemporary literature.

Bibliography

Work Cited

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Morrison, Toni *God Help The child* , 2015.

Secondary Sources

Alexander, Jeffrey C. “Culture Trauma, Morality and Solidarity: The Social Construction of ‘Holocaust’ and Other Mass Murders.” *Thesis Eleven*, vol. 132, no. 1, 2016, pp. 3-16.

Bloom, Sandra L. “Trauma Theory Abbreviated.” 1999.

Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Coetzer, Wentzel. “The Impact of Intergenerational Trauma with Reference To Some Biblical Perspectives.” *North West University South Africa*, vol. 27, no. 03, 2007, pp. 1-22.

Coetzer, Wentzel. “Trauma Survivors.” *North West University South Africa*, 2000.

DeGruy, Joy. *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing*. Uptone Press, 2005.

Dreier, Peter. “Rosa Parks: Angry, Not Tired.” *University of Pennsylvania Press*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2006, pp. 88-94.

Faulkner, William. *Requiem for a Nun*. HarperPerennial Classics, 2013.

Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond The Pleasure Principle*. Standard Edition, Hogarth Press, 1955. ---. “Mourning and Melancholia.” *The Freud Reader*, edited by Peter Gay, W. W. Norton & Company, 1989. ---. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works, Volume 7*. 1955. ---. "Outline of Psychoanalysis."

Gumb, Lynn. *Beyond Trauma Fiction: Constructing the Recovery Narrative and the Ordinary Hero*. Murdoch University, 2017.

-
- Herman, Judith Lewis.** *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror.* Basic Books, 1992.
- Israel.** “Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Its Causes and Consequences on Her Mission to Israel.” *Human Rights Council*, vol. 30, no. 35, 2020.
- Kristeva, Julia.** *Tales of Love.* Columbia University Press, 1987.
- Levine, Peter A.** *Healing Trauma: A Pioneering Program for Restoring the Wisdom of the Body.* 2007.
- López, Carolina.** “The Struggle for Wholeness: Addressing Individual and Collective Trauma in Violence-Ridden Societies.” *Explore*, vol. 7, no. 5, 2011, pp. 300-313.
- Luckhurst, Roger.** *The Trauma Question.* Routledge, 2008.
- Martinez, et al.** “Trauma Informed Care in Social Work.” *The New Social Worker*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2016, pp. 1-12.
- Ponsi, Maria.** "Development of Psychoanalytic Thought: Acting, Acting Out, Enactment." *The Italian Psychoanalytic Annual*, 2013.
- Ramírez, Manuela López.** “‘What You Do to Children Matters’: Motherhood in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*.” *The Grove-Working Papers on English Studies*, vol. 22, 2015. ---. “‘Childhood Cuts Festered and Never Scabbed Over’: Child Abuse in Toni Morrison’s *God Help the Child*.” 2016.
- Ringel, Shoshana, and Jerrold R. Brandell, eds.** *Trauma: Contemporary Directions in Theory, Practice, and Research.* Sage, 2011.
- Saakvitne, Karen W., et al.** “Risking Connection: A Training Curriculum for Working with Survivors of Childhood Abuse.” 2000.

-
- Schönfelder, Christa.** *Wounds and Words: Childhood and Family Trauma in Romantic and Postmodern Fiction.* TranscriptVerlag, 2013.
- Swart, L, et al.** “Rape Surveillance through District Surgeons’ Offices in Johannesburg, 1996-1998: Findings, Evaluation and Prevention Implications.” *South African Journal of Psychology*, vol. 30, 2000, pp. 120.
- The American Psychiatric Association.** *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders DSM-IV-TR.* Fourth ed., American Psychiatric Association, 2020.
- Villar, Feliciano.** “Intergenerational or Multigenerational? A Question of Nuance.” *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2007, pp. 115-117.
- Weisner, Lauren.** “Individual and Community Trauma: Individual Experiences in Collective Environments.” 2020.

Appendices

Appendix A

The Biography of Toni Morrison

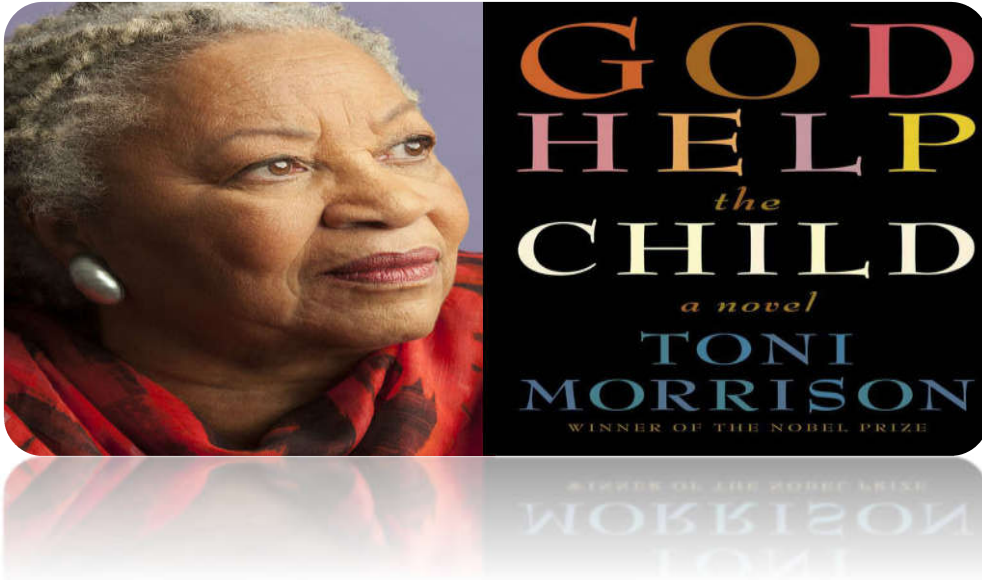


Toni Morrison, born Chloe Ardelia Wofford in 1931, was a highly acclaimed American novelist, essayist, editor, and professor celebrated for her profound contributions to American literature, particularly her exploration of themes related to race, identity, and trauma within the African American experience. Growing up in Lorain, Ohio, in a predominantly African American neighborhood, Morrison's parents nurtured her love for literature and storytelling, which laid the foundation for her future literary career. She pursued her studies in English at Howard University and later completed a master's degree in English at Cornell University. Morrison began her career as an editor, advocating for emerging African American authors. In 1970, she published her debut novel, "*The Bluest Eye*," which delved into themes of beauty and self-esteem among African American girls. This marked the start of a prolific writing career that produced celebrated works like "*Sula*," "*Song of Solomon*," "*Beloved*," and "*God Help the Child*." Her remarkable literary journey earned her numerous accolades, including the Nobel

Prize in Literature in 1993, making her the first African American woman to receive this prestigious award. Toni Morrison's legacy lives on, influencing writers, scholars, and readers worldwide, as her novels remain essential texts in the study of American literature and the exploration of complex human experiences. Despite her passing in 2019, her writings continue to ignite important discussions about identity, trauma, and the human condition.

Appendix B

God Help the Child: A Synopsis



Toni Morrison's novel *God Help the Child*, published in 2015, is a powerful exploration of identity, race, trauma, and the lasting impact of childhood experiences. Set primarily in contemporary America, the story follows Bride, a successful and confident young African American woman who has overcome a painful childhood marked by her mother Sweetness' rejection. When childhood friend Booker reenters her life and criticizes her lack of understanding of suffering, Bride embarks on a quest to confront her traumatic past and the consequences of her mother's actions. The novel delves into themes of racial discrimination, intergenerational trauma, and the search for identity as Bride encounters individuals who provide clues to her past, leading to a deeper understanding of herself and the power of forgiveness. "*God Help the Child*" weaves together intricate narratives, highlighting the resilience of the human spirit and offering a thought-provoking exploration of the enduring effects of childhood experiences.

Résumé

Résumé

L'émergence de la théorie du traumatisme en psychologie et en littérature a ouvert la voie à une compréhension plus nuancée des multiples dimensions du traumatisme. Des penseurs tels que Judith Herman, Cathy Caruth et Sigmund Freud ont jeté les bases théoriques pour saisir l'impact psychologique complexe du traumatisme. Ces théoriciens ont mis en lumière comment le traumatisme peut perturber la cohérence narrative de la vie des individus, entraînant des psychés fragmentées et des symptômes psychologiques troublants. La littérature, souvent un reflet des préoccupations sociétales et des expériences individuelles, explore de plus en plus le traumatisme et son impact sur la psyché humaine. *"God Help the Child"* de Toni Morrison, publié en 2015, illustre cette évolution en capturant l'interaction complexe entre les souffrances personnelles et les forces sociales plus vastes. Cette thèse s'attelle à l'examen de l'affinité entre le traumatisme et les psychés tourmentées au sein du récit *"God Help the Child"*. Les personnages du roman reflètent les luttes psychologiques résultant du traumatisme, tissant une trame de résilience et de douleur qui met en lumière l'interaction complexe entre traumatisme et psyché. Au-delà de l'analyse littéraire, cette recherche souligne l'impact du traumatisme sur les individus et la société. Elle évoque également le rôle puissant de la littérature pour explorer et traiter des thèmes complexes. En contextualisant les voyages des personnages dans le cadre de la théorie du traumatisme, cette thèse enrichit la compréhension de l'interaction entre traumatisme, psychés tourmentées et cheminement vers la guérison dans la littérature contemporaine.

ملخص

ظهور نظرية الصدمة في علم النفس والأدب قد فتح الباب أمام فهم أكثر دقة لأبعاد الصدمة المتعددة. قدم علماء مثل جوديث هيرمان وكاثيري كاروث وسيغموند فرويد، بين آخرين، الأسس النظرية لفهم تأثير الصدمة النفسي المعقد. هؤلاء المفكرون أوضحوا كيف يمكن أن تفتقر الصدمة التماسك السردي لحياة الأفراد، مما يؤدي إلى نفوس مشوهة وظهور أعراض نفسية مزعجة.

الأدب، الذي غالباً ما يكون انعكاساً لاهتمامات المجتمع وتجارب الأفراد، بدأ يتناول بشكل متزايد استكشاف الصدمة وتأثيرها على النفس البشري. "ليكن الرب في عون الطفل" -ل توني موريسون، والذي نُشر في عام 2015، يُظهر هذا التطور من خلال استيعاب التفاعل المعقد بين المعاناة الشخصية والقوى الاجتماعية الأوسع.

تتناول هذه الأطروحة دراسة التلازم بين الصدمة والنفوس المضطربة في إطار رواية "ليكن الرب في عون الطفل". يعكس شخصيات الرواية الصراعات النفسية الناجمة عن الصدمة، وتتشكل من خلالها نسيج من الصمود والألم يسلط الضوء على التفاعل المعقد بين صدى الصدمة والنفس. بعيداً عن التحليل الأدبي، تسلط هذه الدراسة الضوء على تأثير الصدمة على الأفراد والمجتمع. كما تسلط الضوء أيضاً على الدور القوي للأدب في استكشاف ومعالجة مواضيع معقدة. من خلال وضع رحلات الشخصيات في سياق نظرية الصدمة، تُثري هذه الأطروحة فهم التفاعل بين الصدمة والنفوس المضطربة ومسار الشفاء في الأدب المعاصر.