



People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry Of Higher Education and Scientific Research
University of Mohamed Boudiaf –M'sila
Faculty of Letters and English Language
Department of English



Intergenerational Trauma in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*

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Candidate:

Ms. Chaima BENDIB

Supervisor:

Ms. Amel BENIA

To be Defended before the following jury

Mr. Boutkhil Guemide	M'sila University	Chairperson
Ms. Amel BENIA	M'sila University	Supervisor
Mr. Bachir SAHED	M'sila University	Examiner

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled “Intergenerational Trauma in Toni Morrison’s *God Help the Child*” is my work and all the sources I have quoted have been acknowledged utilizing references.

Signature

Date

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DEDICATION

This work is proudly dedicated to my lovely parents

Larbi and Fatiha

The most treasurable people I do not dare to live without.

To my sisters Hanane and Sara and my lovely brother Ayoub.

To my friends Ikram Tabi (Miss Shakespeare), Amira, Hadjer, Annissa, and Ozleum Okaty,
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List of Abbreviations

PTSD: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

PTSS: Post Traumatic Slaves Syndrome.

KKK: Ku Klux Klan.

Abstract

The current study examines intergenerational trauma in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child* (2015) and its effects on different African American generations. Therefore, the main focus of this study is to investigate the Legacy of slavery on modern day African Americans and how its trauma is still transmitted from one generation to another. Morrison depicts the characters' lives in a way that highlights the racist ideologies that are still enduring in post-racial America. This depiction is analyzed in this study to explore the traumatic effects of slavery such as Post Slave Syndrome, interracial racism, and racialized beauty standards. To achieve this, the work attests to analyze the childhood traumatic experiences of the characters and their effects in their adulthood decisions. The study adopts trauma theory as the main theoretical approach to explore how trauma as a process of transmission transforms racial subjects from one generation to another and how the aftermath of slavery is still a contemporary interest. The study concludes with the fact that time is always repeating itself but never changes, racial ideologies still have destructive roles in the blacks' lives.

Keywords: Intergenerational trauma, interracial racism, Trauma transmission, Morrison, African Americans.

Table of contents

Declaration.....	I
Acknowledgment.....	II
Dedication.....	III
List of Abbreviations	IV
Abstract(English).....	V
Table of Content.....	VI
General Introduction.....	1
Chapter one: The Legacy of Trauma: Socio-Historical Context of African	
American Existence.....	7
1. An overview of Trauma	7
1.1. Psychological Trauma	10
1.2. Historical Trauma.....	11
1.3. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	14
2. African American Trauma	16
3. Intergenerational Trauma	21
4. Trauma in African American Literature.....	28
Chapter Two: Reading Intergenerational Trauma in <i>God help the Child</i>	
1. Toni Morrison’s Legacy	33
2. The Novel	35
3. Individual Trauma.....	37
3.1. Lula Ann’s trauma.....	38
3.2 Booker’s Trauma.....	42
3.3. Intrusive Borderline Personality Disorder	44
3.4. Borderline Personality Disorder.....	47

4. Collective Trauma and Post Memory	49
5. Intergenerational Trauma.....	50
6. Narrating Trauma: Magic Realism.....	53
Conclusion	58
Works Cited	62
Abstract (Arabic).....	65

Introduction

Over the decades, Literature has been mainly about the profound connection between literary works and historical and cultural realities. Many writers and authors believe that within literature lies the force that connects readers to the conditions of human beings within society. In this regard, Contemporary literature provides an open gateway into some of the realities concerning the lives of African Americans. That it is to say, it portrays their struggle to guarantee their human, social, and political rights and to cope with the traumatic experiences they suffered from such as slavery, racism, oppression.

The late Nobel Prize Laureate Toni Morrison is one of the iconic figures of fiction that explores the struggles and history of African Americans. Her works enjoy high critical acclaim and are best-known for re-visiting the history of wounded bodies and souls of African Americans, and their long journey under racial, social, and psychological oppression. *God Help the Child* (2015) is a compelling story marked by pain and suffering. In this novel, Morrison tackles heavy themes such as Colorism, oppression, inter-racial racism, childhood trauma, and historical trauma. As with all previous works of Morrison, the novel again has succeeded in capturing the attention of readers and critics alike due to its portrayal of African Americans with torn identity. The narrative is mainly a timeline exploration between two different periods of racial policies of the USA in the 20th century that had been passed against African Americans and the present day. It sheds light on the invisible racism within and without the Afro-American communities in addition to the struggles that they go through every day in a Contemporary America

Toni Morrison's novel *God Help the Child* revolves around the childhood trauma of a black woman named Lula Ann Bridewell. As a black child of fair-skinned parents, Lula Ann is abandoned by her father who does not consider her his child, and later by her mother, who never provides her with care and love and treats her as an invisible being. Domestic racism and inter-racial violence established toxic memory from the cursed childhood; behind Sweetness's severe treatment for her daughter is her transmitted authoritative parental style based on detachment and dissociation which is inherited from her ancestors.

Morrison portrays through the character named Sweetness (Lula Ann's mother) how traumatized generations transmit trauma from one generation to another and how those generations survive in today's USA. *God Help the Child* is a story of deep detailed issues and racial matters. It reveals the dimensions of the buried racial past that seems to be non-existent, yet it survives in different ways. This novel is considered as one of the representative works of trauma and critical race as well as the black feminism theory. Therefore, the primary focus of this study will be an aspect of the trauma of slavery and how it was transmitted from one generation to another and how both individual and collective trauma-impacted black African Americans' psychology under racial ideologies. Such ideologies and issues include inter-racial oppression, racism, and colorism. Hence, in this novel, Morrison provides a vivid depiction of the experience of the characters of a couple, Bride and Booker, who are haunted by the effects of post-memory and trauma. This characterization has roots in reality to some extent, yet Morrison does not attempt to challenge the worldwide trauma and its transmission effects, rather, she tackles only the African American context. This research will, therefore, seeks to investigate the intergenerational trauma and psychological effects on the next generation, and the

selection of trauma of slavery as the main concern through the integration of Trauma Theory, Critical Race theory, and Black Feminism.

Judith Herman defines Trauma in her book *Trauma and Recovery*, as “a state of distress and powerlessness resulted from the individual's experiences and subjugation to external atrocities or natural disasters” (24). Trauma theory is concerned with the field of psychoanalysis that was first investigated by Sigmund Freud who was the first to relate the theory to psychoanalysis. Scholars such as Cathy and Judith Herman used this theory to explore the multidimensions of this theory and its roots. This research applies the theory to explore the intersection of trauma with the legacy of slavery that is related to the Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome. It deals with Historical Trauma, genocide, Trauma of the Holocaust, and the traumatic experiences of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. It also utilizes Black feminism and concepts from Critical Race Theory since they intersect with trauma studies. Thus, Black bodies and racial matters have been always a central focus of black feminism that is related to the marginalized race, in terms of injustice and inequality that black women faced such violence, rape, sexual abuse. Thereby, behind each of this maltreatment, there is a silence of an oppressed psyche that would gradually develop a trauma. This is the case for the main characters in *God Help the Child*; both the mother and the daughter have got toxic relations resulting from Lula Ann's body color that established a barrier between them and developed to her childhood trauma.

Much has been said in regards to trauma as a central study in Toni Morrison *God Help the Child*. Manuela Lopez Ramirez in her dissertation entitled *What Do you Do to Children Matters: Toxic Motherhood in Toni Morrison God Help the Child* (2015), explores the subject matter of child abuse through investigating the

role of motherhood in trauma development. She also looks into the impact of motherhood failure in compelling her task. She writes: “Sweetness, with her ironic name, rears Lula Ann in a patriarchal authoritarian way; Lula Ann grows up bereft of affection and love, which destroys the mother-daughter bond” (113).

Furthermore, R.M Prabha, in a thesis entitled “Child Abuse in Toni Morrison’s Fiction” analyzes the novel’s main characters’ childhood traumatic experiences affected by abuse created grief mood to the novel. She argues that “Morrison portrays many child victims to intensify the gloomy mood in the novel” (25). She describes Toni Morrison as an “Author for children” (27) because child abuse is almost a central focus in her fiction and a serious matter that calls the reader “to bear a good responsibility to protect vulnerable children” (27).

In “Musings on Toni Morrison’s *God Help the Child*” (2015), Elizabeth Hodge-Freeman compares *God Help the Child* to her work *The Color of Love* published in (2015). She examines trauma in both texts, asserting that “in direct dialogue with Morrison’s idea, my book, *The Color of Love* offers a sociological and theoretical analysis of the themes, relationships, and family dynamics that have always been part of Morrison’s repertoire since her first book, *The Bluest Eye*. What is different is that I explore the resistance and reproduction of racism in black families in Brazil...” (n.p). Freeman is also making the matter of trauma in terms of color a threat to black generations that make the trauma pass regularly from a generation to another.

Surprisingly, *God Help the Child* has received much attention from critics, who generally think that the story has only one central focus which is Childhood trauma and forms of child abuse and maltreatment. However, there is little

discussion of the issue of intergenerational trauma. That is to say, Bride's childhood trauma is caused due to racial trauma that has been passed down the African American generations since the times of slavery. She can be any a black person who has internalized trauma because of body features. Thus, I opt for this interpretation in my thesis to fill the gaps and explore the fact that trauma is not a simple issue of remaining ashes of the past. However, it keeps a traumatized person haunted in his/her past lives and its consequences develop from one generation to another.

Therefore, the main question that is addressed in this research is as follows: How is the trauma of slavery transmitted from one African American generation to another? To answer this question, this study will attempt to answer the following sub-questions: How does the trauma of slavery affect the characters' lives? How are both individual and collective trauma considered reasons behind intergenerational trauma through the psychology of the characters? How does Toni Morrison portray the image of Traumatized African Americans through her characters?

The work is divided into two chapters. The first chapter is devoted to the theoretical framework and it is entitled "the legacy of Trauma: Socio-Historical Context of African-American Existence." In the first chapter, trauma theory is rigorously tackled along with the interpretation of Sigmund Freud of Hysteria, besides to Judith Herman's perspectives in examining symptoms of types of trauma. The second part of the chapter explores the Historical trauma that would go back to the history of slavery and holocaust survivors. The third part looks into post-Traumatic Stress Disorder as the main effect resulting from traumatized memory, then it investigates the trauma in African-American History and Literature. The second chapter is devoted to the analysis of the novel *God Help the Child* from the trauma of Slavery perspectives to unveil the realities of skin color and race with the

contribution of trauma theory. Furthermore, this chapter is addressing the representation of the characters in the novel as unhealed victims of trauma and their quest for therapy under the umbrella of intersecting oppression of racial society.

CHAPTER ONE:

The Legacy of Trauma: Socio-Historical Context of African American Existence.

“There are some wounds that never show on the body that are deeper and more hurtful than anything else.”

– Laurell .K. Hamilton –

Trauma has been considered a critical concept within the field of psychoanalysis that is related to the outside and inner variables that may confront the individual. Karen Onderko defines trauma, in her article “Trauma Defined,” as a “response to a deeply distressing or disturbing event that overwhelms an individual’s ability to cope, causes feelings of helplessness, and diminishes their sense of self and their ability to feel the full range of emotions and experiences” (n.p). The definition explains that trauma is the reaction of the individual to certain frequent events, actions, and unforgotten incidents that injure the human psyche and endures for long in the mind.

The breakthrough of trauma studies is related to the traumatic experiences of the Two World Wars and the Cold War. The historical events that took place in the USA, mainly during the early 17th century, were filled with many atrocious events such as Jim Crow Laws, Civil War, and finally the Civil Rights Movement. These events were highly reflective of the blacks’ identity and fragmentation of self that had been repressed due to the systematic exclusion procedures applied against them.

These racist treatments caused not only physical harm but also mental harm to people of minorities.

However, present-day pain still endures under their black skin that reveals the etiology of Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome which is “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” (DeGruy109). Therefore, PTSS explains the remaining effect of generations of slavery and how African Americans use the strength they gained in the past to heal the present.

The present study intends to revisit the history of wounded bodies of African Americans and focus on physical as well as mental forms of neo-slavery narratives describing the horrors of slavery and its impact on black feminism that believes that racism and sexism are bound together (Taylor et.al 608). Their main focus is to highlight the main stereotypes and oppression that women faced for centuries, and still present with an updated version of the traditional psychiatric system related to the gender role in terms of equality between men and women. In this regard, Black feminism has to deal with the sexualism of the African American diasporic context that seeks to liberate women from the boundaries that restrained them (607).

Sojourner Truth is one of the outstanding anti-slavery orators who sought liberation and equal rights of the women’s movement. Her reports were remarkable due to the conventions and main issues she tackled. In 1851, she published her complete recorded publication entitled *Anti-slavery Bugel*. Afterward, twelve years later “in 1863 she published her popular racial inequalities version *Ain't I a Woman?*” In this report Truth battles against gender-based oppression and opposed the social

contributions of Intersectionality” (Sojourner Truth, U.S.National Park Service). She countered the main traditional thoughts acclaimed against women’s suffrage. In *Ain’t I a woman?*, Truth’s major role is to stress on the need to fight for equal rights for African-American women. She stressed on the racism by focusing on the lived experiences and the discrimination between whites and blacks.

1. An overview of Trauma Studies

The study of trauma deals with the psychological, physical, and mental effects of traumatized persons. In these terms, Trauma’s lasting damages are relatively close to traumatic memories and it needs a lot of time to be healed because it refers to the memories of traumatic events that are recorded in the brain. However, “in some clinical literature, the term denotes specific types of post-traumatic memory disturbances such as intrusive memories” (Butler et. al 15). The concept of intrusive memories is related to the flashbacks, nightmares, formed in the past but still threaten the present.

Judith Herman, in her book *Trauma and Recovery*, defines trauma as “a state of distress and powerlessness resulted from the individual's experiences and subjugation to external atrocities or natural disasters” (24). A deeply distressing or disturbing experience may occur to the individual and cause long life scars with the difficulty of moving on with their lives. It is described as a “toxic condition, mixture of intense anxiety, absolute helplessness, and a loss of control of the mind” (qtd in Swart et.al 120). In other words, trauma is a case of dissociation and loss of stability. These effects gradually dominate the mind and diminish the sense of control in the psyche.

Peter. A. Levine defines trauma and its damage to the traumatized person in his book *Healing Trauma* (1997) as “The most avoided, ignored, belittled, denied, misunderstood, untreated cause of human suffering” (01). In another way, Trauma is the individual’s response to a series of actions and overwhelming incidents that eventually diminish the positive feeling and interest. It also leads to the denial of social relationships and families. Moreover, verbal attitudes and reactions of traumatized people show that they have trouble concentrating and sleeping, besides being easily frightened and scared. A traumatized person perceives the world differently with serious issues regarding self-esteem, personal identity, and cultural identity.

Accordingly, Trauma Theory as a field of study was investigated by Jean-Martin Charcot, a French neurologist, the first physician to “investigate the relationship between trauma and illness” (qtd. in Ramtani 05). He developed an interest in hysteria as a psychological wound that is attached to painful incidents. Thanks, to the theories of Jean-Martin Charcot who investigated the psychological effects of trauma. In the late 19th century a variety of articles and studies flourished that built on the charcot's perspectives.

1.1. Psychological Trauma

Jean-Martin Charcot first mentioned the first investigation of the word trauma and it was an unknown disease named Hysteria. Interestingly, the patients were examined physically, without searching for the main sources of the harm since “Hysteria had been considered a disease with incoherent and incomprehensible symptoms” (qtd. in Horvitz 62). However, the focus had changed when Charcot’s student Janet and Freud concluded that “symptoms of hysteria were because of

psychological trauma” (62). Freud’s works and his perspectives are still considered as bases of psychological interpretations and are known as “Neo-Freudian psychological interpretation” in contemporary theories. Cathy Caruth, Lacapra, and Judith Herman are pioneer figures who were highly impacted by Freud’s perspectives.

Sigmund Freud is an Austrian neurologist and the founding father of psychoanalysis. He plays a key role in the presentation of the “theory of seduction.” Freud presented this idea in 1896 which is generally related to sexual trauma and abuse that was experienced by his female patients. Accordingly, “hysterical patients suffer from long-term effects of sexual assaults in childhood” (Israel et.al n.p). He believed that this theory provided the solution to the problems of hysteria but he changed his mind to develop another different theory which is “conflict theory” suggesting that “it was not only external circumstances and events that caused hysterical symptoms but rather the unacceptable nature of sexual and aggressive wishes” (Traumatic contemporary Directions 02). This view contributed to psychologists that trauma cannot only occur when there is some external psychological harm but also when there are inner struggles and internal harm of the mind implant even more harmful damage to the individual.

1.2. Historical Trauma

Historical trauma can be defined as “Cumulative psychological and emotional wounding across generations” (Martinez et.al 01). Accordingly, Historical trauma is unlike the trauma experienced by the individual. It can be seen as a trauma of collectivity as Caruth Cathy explains “History, like the trauma is never simply one’s own, that history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other’s

traumas”(24). This means that historical trauma is a shared emotional feeling between groups of people and the trauma experiences do not only affect the individual. However, it is a common injury between collective damage.

Interestingly, “*An Excerpt from the 2008 Social Justice Report*” explains an interesting idea concerned with Gregory Philips’s division of the Historical trauma based on three areas. The first is “situational trauma” which is the trauma that happens because of a particular event such as a car accident, murders, or natural catastrophes. The second is cumulative trauma: it is the feeling of built overtime such as racism; it means that trauma may be experienced each time people face racism. The last area is Inter-generational trauma which is passed down from one generation to another because it has not been dealt with in the first generations; “if the trauma is not dealt with adequately in one generation, it often gets passed down unwittingly in our behaviors and our thought systems. For example, if you want to heal children and youth, you have to heal yourself as well to break the cycle” (n.p). Historical trauma is a presentation to the shock of the atrocious experiences of world wide’s communities and is considered a horrific fact that investigates the horrible experiences from a collective shared representation of the traumatic memory of an event or incident that took place a year ago for example, but the impact of pain continues to endure (Rigney 241). Historically speaking, collective trauma has been seen through different social aspects of different traumatic events shared by groups of people from the same community through recording memories of such; the same horrible events include slavery in the US, the American Genocide, and the Holocaust.

Collective trauma has a tangible and damaging role against the defense mechanism “Active Forgetting.” The concept is regarded as a cognitive process that

intervenes to reject the decay of the long-term memory that gradually develops memory loss. The process occurs automatically during sleep and its role “has nothing to do with memories fading away but is a positive and active force, a capacity that an individual, a society, or a culture need to live healthy and happy lives” (Aydin 125). Active Forgetting enables the memory to select happy memories that are beneficial for both the present and the future. The defense mechanism of Active Forgetting works in creating positive vibes in the mind through replacing stored damaged memories with new ones. However, a traumatized person is threatened in certain serious levels of trauma by the inability to embrace Active Forgetting because of trauma affects positive memories.

It is believed that “Collective trauma resides in three sociocultural repositories: the cultural, communal, and familial. Within the context of collective trauma, families and communities can carry and transfer beliefs and values to their offspring that establish inherited memories or, as we identify, repositories”. (Tcholakian et al 01). These three key elements are formed through a collaboration of shared image that represents some aspect of trauma that was experienced by the individual. Consequently, Members of a collective group develop their social identities through group membership because communities provide historical images or recollections of the collective trauma. Such recollections include genocides, massacres, colonization, and slavery. Those images or recollections affect both the community and family dynamics such as the Jewish Holocaust and the Native American genocide. In each case, there has been a process of collective trauma that shatters the basic frame of a community (Tcholakian et.al 02). The process that initiates with collective trauma automatically transforms into collective memory. This, in turn, has a deconstructive impact on the system of meaning that allows the groups to redefine

who they are and prompts a threat to collective identity that leads to the transformation of memory.

1.3. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

The dysfunctional behaviors of traumatized individuals that manifest after the traumatic incidents are referred to as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. It is defined as “a mental syndrome associated with trauma and also known as “Shell shock or Combat fatigue” (Winnette et.al 54). The disorder is quietly accompanied by many reflective effects such as flashbacks, nightmares, and feelings of instability, constant fear, and anxiety, besides panic attacks. Robert Scaer describes in his book *The Trauma Spectrum: Hidden Wounds and Human Resiliency* (2005), the clinical symptoms of the disorder as:

In the brain of the trauma victim, the synapses, neurons, and neurochemicals have been substantially and indefinitely altered by the effects of unique life experiences. Not surprisingly, the perceptual experience that constitutes the mind has been equally altered. Trauma thus represents a time-based corruption of Learning. The brain in trauma has lost its ability to distinguish past from present, and as a result, it cannot adapt to the future. This confusion of time further immobilizes the trauma victim, who remains immobilized by a thwarted freeze discharge. Procedural memory is bombarded by environmental and internal cues that represent the old, unresolved threat. (58)

Scaer’s description of trauma’s symptoms combines the physical and psychological impacts that cause the traumatic crisis through neurological processes. *The American Psychiatric Association* refers to PTSD as a “reaction to being exposed to an event

that threatens oneself or others with death or serious injury. It involves helplessness, fear, and horror” (427). The definition lists the common symptoms that may appear on the victim. However, clinical research is still investigating the disorder looking for unfamiliar symptoms, which psychoanalyst neurologists classify based on incident and experience.

According to the American Psychiatric Association’s diagnostic, manual Post Traumatic stress disorder was manifested by war veterans who took part in the Vietnam War. The symptoms are described as “emotional, physical and mental changes that arouse long after having experienced or witnessed one single horrible event, being war combat, rape or natural disaster”(Ramtani 26). Symptoms of PTSD have also been manifested by soldiers after World War I with unusual symptoms such as “uncontrollable weeping and screaming, memory loss, physical paralyzes and lack of responsiveness” (Trauma contemporary Directions 02). However, many victims fail to heal damage such as body fragility, faints, flashbacks, imaginations.

The American Psychiatric Association categorized Post Traumatic Stress Disorder according to the war veterans into three categories. The first category and almost the most common one is called “hyperarousal.” It is related to the physical fragility of the victim such a case is featured by the fragility of the body and its inability to gain control over the inner self (Weston 1). The second is called “intrusion,” unlike “hyperarousal” it is considered “the most difficult category, it is related to terrible events that the individual stored in his/her memory and cannot overcome. The traumatized person becomes imprisoned within his past and cannot lead a healthy life. Judith Herman points out the fact that adults of trauma survivors are at great risk of recurrence of victimization at adult life (81). She mentions that witnesses are just like victims they are both subjected to trauma (01). Intrusion

trauma either can occur directly or can be witnessed, but the result is the same because trauma is transmitted from the victim to the witness. As for the last category is called “destructive”; it happens when all organs and self-defense of the person decrease and as a result his struggle against memories and flashbacks is weak, so, at last, he/she accepts the abuse and psychological harm (Weston 2).

2. African American Trauma.

Slavery is one of the most insidious causes of collective trauma; “it started about the 1680s when millions of Africans were brought to America to recover the labor shortage faced the Southern plantations of the thirteen English colonies” (Ramtani 13). Africans were kidnapped from their countries to recover the shortage of labor in American tobacco and cotton plantations. European settlers got their benefits from African slaves since they were cheaper, productive, and powerless. As a result, slaves were sold and traded to different parts of Europe to enrich their business and income (Black History Milestones n.p)

This commerce is known as the Transatlantic Slave Trade. BabacarM’Baye, in his article “The economic, political, and social impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on Africa” defines transatlantic trade as a “small commercial system based on the exchange of African material or human capital, such as gold or slaves, with few European material goods, such as guns and silk” (607). At the very beginning, the trade was small, but the situation got worse by the end of the 16th Century. The trade became a large market and slaves’ transportations increased and developed into a systemic and continuous process of economic exploitation towards Africa (608).

Enslaved Africans were considered property within the Europeans; they treated them with prejudice and constant physical abuse. They were beaten mercilessly. Therefore, the enslaved people got no political or economic rights. Enslaved women were forced to do labor in agriculture and factories; they experienced degradation and sexual abuse by the masters. Women were seen as objects in the eye of the law and had no voice. They were forbidden to get any basic rights. Besides, they were torn from their husbands and children. As for the children, they were deprived of their mothers and sent away, whereas, older children worked in plantations as their mothers do (Ramtani 14).

Although African Americans were emancipated after the Civil War and had acquired more fundamental rights, white supremacy of the South did not acknowledge their rights and caused them even more damage. The Jim Crow Laws were passed against black people, which legalized discrimination and segregation against them. This meant that the black people got the worst schools, hospitals, and services; Jim Crow Law is derived from a fictional name, originally related to a theatrical character that used to mock African Americans. It came once again to signify the “white social and legal racial segregation upon blacksmith south of the United States” (Tischauer 1-2). Jim Crow Laws were a set of rules and laws aimed to uproot the Blacks and erase their identity. It prohibited them to vote or participate in any political parties either, in addition to prohibiting interracial marriage. These laws continued to provoke the Blacks’ emotions and feelings of inferiority. White supremacist practices made blacks’ lives unbearable and devastated their sense of identity, both personal and cultural identity.

One of the most traumatizing and horrifying episodes in the struggle of African Americans is the terrorizing acts of the Ku Klux Klan which

isanAmericanwhite supremacist hate group founded in 1865, whose primary target is African Americans. They claim to be the knights of the invisible Empire and their hate crime continued even after the Civil Rights Movement. The Movement had effectively achieved a constant change, especially in social aspects, and was dedicated to putting an end to the legalized discrimination. Thereby, it can be seen as African Americans' reaction to the refusal of the Americans to be equal with the colored people. Despite the privileges that the various new amendments granted them to gain more equality between the races "Blacks" and "whites," white people rejected that decision and denied them their basic rights (civil rights movement History 2017). The struggle sought to restore the African Americans 'rights to citizenship. Therefore, one of the main reasons that let the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement was the incident of Rosa Park. The incident increased Blacks' necessity of revolution against racist laws (Dreier 94). This incident had forever changed the United States laws and political system.

The trauma continued to be a great part of Blacks' lives because of repeated cases that occurred to them. Despite all the efforts of the African Americans to achieve freedom and to end the legacy of slavery, racism and white supremacy still endure in modern times. That is why African Americans came to internalize racism and believe in their inferiority in front of their ex-masters. In this regard, Internalized racism is a psychological system that contributes to a deep construction of people of color to believe in white supremacy. This in turn created Interracial oppression, which is a conflict between two different races, based on some physical characteristics such as skin color, nose size, eyes color, and lips shape. This can be extended to social class, caste, and ethnicity (Ramtani18). Therefore, interracial racism occurs when marginalized groups are disgusted by their features.

Donna K.Bivens' "What is Internalized Racism?" provides a clear explanation of Internalized Racism and its function in society. Because people of color are victimized by racism, they internalized it. It means that people of color develop a firm belief that they are constantly under white supremacy. She further explains that "This internalized racism has its systemic reality and its negative consequences in the lives and communities of people of color" (44). It is systemic oppression that undermines people of color and makes them feel inferior, not capable to live, or get access to their basic needs and cannot compare themselves to the whites either.

Because internalized racism is systemic oppression, it is quite important to make a clear idea about it as systemic by meaning it is structural and rather than thinking about it as a problem of individual thoughts. Then, Internalized racism must be understood as a system that controlled the entire society. Toni Morrison provides us with one of the most chilling portraits of internalized racism in her remarkable novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970). She introduces the concept of internalized racism through the character Pecola Breedlove. The protagonist has a long story of internalized racism, and due to her black skin she undermines her beauty and sees herself inferior compared to her parents lightened-skin, she hated the curse of the black and thought that all series of horrible events, such as the scenes of the rape she was victim to, and her parents' neglect all, occurred due to her skin color.

With internalized racism came a concept named Colorism. It is one of the subtle effects of a long history of slavery and a manifestation of the tension between the races. The concept is defined by Merriam Webster's Dictionary as prejudice or discrimination especially within a racial or ethnic group favoring people with lighter skin over those with darker skin. The feminist author Alice Walker is considered to

be the “first using the word Colorism, in an essay that appeared in her 1983 book: *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens*. She defines colorism as prejudicial or preferential treatment of same-race people based solely on their color. Colorism is considered one of the major causes of segregation to the colored people to demean them (403). Historically, the practice of colorism started with the slaves when they were brought to the New World. Slaves were treated as objects and the dark skin is demonized, unlike those lighter-skinned people.

People of color or the offsprings of raped slave women and their masters have lighter skin, which gives them slightly more privileges than other blacks although their white fathers do not acknowledge them. Racism based on skin tone has great significance on black families that would affect family dynamics. Racism has a great impact on shaping people’s perception about the way of seeing beauty, significantly, standards of beauty exclude black women and favor the pale skin, blonde hair, colored eyes as criteria that classified the rate of beauty that women should maintain.

Thereby, the Black feminist movement raised the philosophy against the internalization “devaluation and rejection by the mainstream culture, which overvalues European aesthetic and undervalues the aesthetic of other racial /ethnic groups”(Bryant 80). In an article written by Susan L.Bryant entitled “The Beauty Ideal: The Effects of European Standards of Beauty on Black Women,” Bryant mentions a study published by Kenneth and Mamie Clark about the effect of skin color and self-perception. This study is called the “Doll Test” which is the experiment conducted with 253 black children; the children were shown two dolls one is black-skinned and the other is white and they are asked to choose one. The result is obvious that the majority of children choose the white-skinned doll. The

experiment was recorded with video to analyze their answers, but the common answer was it “looks bad” (80). One key aspect is when a black girl selected the black doll but when she was asked which doll looks like her, she first touched the white but then she took the black doll (82). They maintain that “The findings of the doll study did not change, suggesting that internalization of self-hate among black children based on European beauty standards still exists” (83). The body issue has been always a critical perspective that dominates society due to the deep internalization thought that contributed to the Blacks’ minds.

3. Intergenerational Trauma

People who are exposed to trauma are unable to repress undesired emotional memories and flashbacks due to neural and behavioral disturbance in their brains because it is repetitive and intrusive. People who experienced trauma will contribute to passing trauma from one generation to another. The genetic process of trauma transmission on the simplest level is known as Trans-generational or Intergenerational trauma.

The concept of Intergenerational trauma is a psychological term related to the theory that has been a recent focus within trauma studies. It explains that trauma can be transmitted from one generation to another. It was first identified by the term “survivors’ syndrome” in 1980. It was noticed by psychologists who have examined common symptoms on several children “survivors of the Nazi Holocaust seeking treatment in Canada” (coetzel01). Most Holocaust survivors were children, now known as “second-generation survivors.” They are defined as “European-born Jews who had experienced the Holocaust either in hiding, in the underground resistance, as refugees, or in concentration or forced labor camps” (Scorcher 494). That is

related to the atrocities and brutalities committed against Jewish children “No part of all the bloody work is as shocking and terrible as that of the million Jewish children whose blood was split like water throughout Europe” (494). All children suffered during this time, “they were separated by force from their mothers who tried to hide them murdered and thrown out of trucks in the camps” (Krell 378). Most children suffered and died and some “who concealed themselves in every conceivable hiding place and survived by grace and mercy of Christian neighbors who hid them at home” (378). Although the children survived the Holocaust, they could not escape fear, hysteria, and phobia because of the traumatizing events they witnessed.

A normal child with safe background possesses a well-stored recollection of memories such as happy images of family and daily life and sweet flashbacks of home. However, children survivors’ memories are often fragmented and distorted because they “were not blessed with the opportunity for systematized chronological collection of ordinary personal history” (Krell 379). Remembrance was impossible for children of the second generation due to the fear and horror they experienced. The youngest of them cannot remember their caregivers or experience of the family they lost memories due to the damage they faced.

The issue of intergenerational trauma has been genetically investigated within the family context and described in terms of parents-to-child relationship, as it is known by parental transmission. Wentzel Coetzer, in his article “The impact of Intergenerational trauma with Reference To Some Biblical Perspectives,” provides an account of how children of traumatized Holocaust survivors are affected, both directly and indirectly, by Post-traumatic symptoms of their parents; such symptoms include violence, impulsive outbursts, anger management issues, and many others. This is psychologically explained by the process of the unconscious transmission of

thoughts, beliefs, and dysfunctional behaviors from parent to child causing personality problems such as maladaptive behaviors, codependence, and inadequate maturity (02).

The study of how trauma is transmitted from one generation to another is still in the early stage of development in the field of psychoanalysis. However, many theories have discussed some aspects of Trauma's transmission. First, there is "Empathic Traumatization" and it is related to the parent-child emotional transmission of trauma. It occurs when the child attempts to understand or share their parents' wartime horrible experiences and memories. The Intergenerational transmission of trauma "occurs when the traumatized parent implants his or her emotional instability into their Children" (Coetzer 03). That is to say, the parents' storytelling of the incidents would instantly establish the link between the traumatized parent and the child. At this process, imaginations of different events would create the same impact experienced by the caregiver. Children affected by their parents' trauma internalize their behaviors, actions, and sayings or rebelling against parents' silence or loud responses. However, in all cases, they are exposed to trauma second-hand.

Another aspect of trauma transmission is a transmission from the pregnant mother to the fetus. Due to the increase in cortisol levels (the body's stress hormone), "it permanently changes the ground zero level of stress for the fetus, making it hyper-responsive to any stressors that come once it's born. The stressors experienced by a pregnant woman, combined with the pre-existing stress the woman's body is under while pregnant, change the epigenetic markers on the fetus' DNA" (Wilson 5). This medical evidence explains the effects of trauma's stress on the decedents of traumatized women and their anxiety while producing traumatized

future generations. Trauma can occur directly or indirectly. In other words, the transmission of trauma is possible to happen as a result of “Secondary Traumatization” (Wilson5). Therefore, people can encounter trauma without experiencing physical and psychological harm directly. Thereby, learning about traumatic events provides “the possibility that offspring might indeed develop PTSD symptoms in response to hearing about their parents’ trauma, particularly if these children subjectively stated that such information elicited fear, helplessness or horror” (Coetzer04). Therefore, trauma has been transmitted from one generation to another.

Thomas Hodge introduces in *The Ghost of Times Past* the case of trauma in African American history with six stages of trauma. The first is called “Economic Competition” (27). At this period African Americans were deceived into working in plantations, manipulated, and exploited by Europeans. The second stage is the “Extermination Period”: it is the period when they experienced genocide and were massacred collectively. In reaction, their memory was stored with unbearable events that affected their inner psyche. They were burnt and killed in front of their children and wives (27-28). The third stage, considered as the most sensitive and repressive condition that African Americans experienced, is called “subjugation.” This action describes the oppression and pressure of European control when many African Americans were voiceless and oppressed and could not express their weakness and helplessness and were coerced into silence and detachment from their original communities and environment (29).

The following phase of injury was the boarding school period of the 1930s. During this time, children were separated from their families and caregivers and were placed in boarding schools, which were devoted to erase traditional culture and

replace it with the mainstream heritage of white American culture. Consequently, black children generated double consciousness in an attempt to assimilate within white society. Yet, they were rejected and their progression within a Euro-centric society was impossible. Hence, some African American cultural norms started to fade away such as their native language, since children were forced to speak a foreign language and were forbidden to use their language. Otherwise, they will receive physical abuse. (29) The last phase of trauma is referred to as “The Termination Period” which is continuous institutionalized racism. Blacks were oppressed within their religious choice and were unable to worship their god, instead, they were supposed to follow the white community’s god. African Americans gradually started to lose their native language, culture, customs, and traditions. As a result, a culture of grief starts to develop over several generations. They were described as dumb or objects (29).

In the case of African Americans, intergenerational trauma is exposed experience by Race related stress that is defined by psychologists Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman as “the race-related transactions between individuals or groups and their environment that emerge from the dynamics of racism, and that are perceived to tax or exceed existing individual and collective resources or threat (Wilson 04). Race-related stress could be noticed in different aspects through collective experiences with racism. In this regard, the Intergenerational transmission of PTSD from parents to their offsprings has been tackled in African American literature related to the series of historical events that are referred to Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome (PTSS). The concept was established by Dr.Joy DeGruy In her book *Post Traumatic Slaves Syndromes: America’s Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing* (2005). DeGruy succeeded to establish a work that is considered as a

reference to understand the link between PTSS and intergenerational trauma. DeGruy aims to educate the dominant culture about the systemic oppression of the African American community.

Post Traumatic Slaves Syndrome is a theory that is a testimony that the legacy of slavery and racism persists even centuries after the abolition of slavery. It is defined 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.) It has to deal with past consequences of Trauma and the various events that led to the diagnosis. Historically speaking, PTSS is related to the Great Tragedy or the Transatlantic Slave Trade, which is known as “Maafa” a Swahili term that stands for the name of “African Holocaust” to signify “the immense impact of the commercialized slave trafficking system of Europeans on Africans” (Hacks 24).

A commercialized form of slavery emerged in this time through different continents of Europe, and African slaves were considered as commodities and property. The slaves were chained to the ships and were packed at top of each other with vomit, urine, and rotting and decaying bodies (Hacks 25). They were treated as animals or even worse, they faced cruel traumatic maltreatment of sexual, physical, and psychological abuse. The Middle Passage was the transatlantic diasporic culture and identity of many slaves caught from different regions. The majority of the slaves died because of the hyper torture and illness due to the lack of space on the ship. Nevertheless, “Some people tried to starve themselves to death, but the crew forced them to take food by whipping them, torturing them with hot coal, or forcing their mouths open by using special instruments or by breaking their teeth”(Hacks 08). Enslaved people lost their dignity and got a sense of meaninglessness, so some

committed suicide, and others fell begging for forgiveness and mercy. However, this was a prelude to what is coming next; “The abducted African cargo in human form that survived the Middle Passage was offloaded and confined to cells until they were auctioned off and sold into chattel slavery to the highest bidder in exchange for merchandise (usually coffee, rice, sugar, cotton, or tobacco)” (Hacks08).

The theory is used to explore mainstream public systemic thought that never changed and exists in the USA today. It aims to revisit the buried history of the transatlantic trade of slaves who were captured and forced to be obedient. PTSS reveals the deep existence of racism despite the efforts of legal political progress, social development of the USA. Racism is considered a serious matter in the present day because it still contributes to significant danger in post-racial America. As an example, Toni Morrison “herself was quick to comment that Obama’s election corresponds to a time when we should reflect on race as a construct with very real consequences. For instance, after the death of Freddie Gray, an African American man who died in police custody in 2015, Morrison noted the necessity to examine the enduring significance of race” (qtd in Gras 03). BBC News published an article entitled Freddie Gray’s Death in police custody. The incident happened in 2015; the Black young man of 25 years old was arrested by police accused by possessing a knife. Gray fell in a coma and was taken to shock trauma center; his death was due to injuries by the six officers while transporting him to the trial; Freddie killed harmfully and without mercy.

The interesting point in Freddie’s story is that the US Department of Justice issued no charge against police officers. They claimed that they are men of mission and they were doing their job and Freddie Gray’s killing is a legal necessity. Consequently, his funeral was followed by such great protest to achieve the legal

law searching for equality. However, the protest turned violent and caused many deaths of furious blacks as a reaction to the incident. Morrison represents the accident of Freddie Gray to the centuries of misery and injustice of the legacy of slaves and racism, to show that nothing is changed from the past decades until the current time.

4. Trauma in African American Literature.

African American Literature initially started during the 17th century and was dominated by autobiographies of realistic events. This genre is known as Slave Narratives. Such narratives include the works of Frederick Douglas, Olaudah Equiano, and Phillis Wheatley, to name a few. Their writings focused mostly on slavery's physical as well as mental damage of the enslaved people and the prisoners of war. It has also raised cultural and national consciousness towards the necessity of freedom and liberty. The works succeeded to become an inevitable part of Black Americans' fight for emancipation.

However, During American Civil War, the focus of the literature has been shifted from the memories of enslaved victims who had escaped the legacy of slavery into national issues such as inequality, injustice, racism, and human rights. The theme of trauma that has started from the period of slavery was strongly present in Literature because of the many events that haunted African Americans and affected them in many aspects. Afterward, a new era started that is known as the Harlem Renaissance and also was known as the "New Negro movement." It was characterized by the rise of poetry which played an important role in African Americans notions

Many early feminist writers presented the theme of trauma in their literary texts such as Maya Angelou, Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, etc. They focused on the theme of trauma in their writings. Their writings are retelling experiences of African American trauma. In her seminal autobiography *Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1970), Maya Angelou recounts her childhood experiences to portray the effect of trauma on the life of slaves and black people. In *the Color Purple* (1982) by Alice Walker, the story revolves around a black female Celie, who at the age of fourteen was impregnated by her father. The story follows her hardship (both when she was a child and during her adult life) and her oppression because of her skin color and the legacy of slavery.

Toni Morrison, the iconic American author and the first African American woman to win the Nobel Prize in Literature, is well-known for her writings about race and African Americans' struggle during different time spans in the US history. Her writing is characterized by visionary force about the curse of color and its impact on destroying individual victims as well as a collective community. Hence, *The Bluest Eye* (1970) is a representation of blacks' attempt to assimilate and find ways fit in within whites' community. The story is about "Pecola Breedlove, a young black girl who prays for her eyes to turn blue so that she will be as beautiful as the blond, blue-eyed children in America" (Bloom 20).

The concept of colorism because of centuries of subjugation is often a major issue in the writing of Morrison. Indeed, from *The Bluest Eye* (1970) to *God Help the Child* (2015), "Morrison endeavors to communicate the suffering of hundreds if not thousands of children under abuse and molestation. She strongly insists on the emergency of recognizing the devastating effects of this phenomenon at the same time requests protection to these children" (Ramtani03). Her recent novel, *God Help*

the Child (2015) is a reflection of the years of disregard and neglect of childhood maltreatment as well as Inter-racism among colored people. Moreover, the novel is a modern design of slavery's bodies that are treated as the property sold and bought as commodities, which is considered as slavery by another name.

In African American Literature, trauma has been always a primary theme in literature that addresses issues of memory and post-memory remembrance. In the 1830s, the memories of the transatlantic Slave Trade were revived. It came to be known as Transatlantic literature which featured the traumatic events and the transmission of its significance throughout generations (Thamarana 262). Whenever a work deals with the presentations of themes such as quest of reality, rationality, and questioning of identity, the concept of Magic Realism stands out. It is a literary technique that "refers to the style of writing technique includes Magical as well as Supernatural events narrated realistically without any doubt about the improbability of events" (Thamarana 263). It is a narrative style that combines fact and the supernatural.

All in all, the theoretical framework, consists of the trauma of slavery as the main concern and black feminism concepts since it deals with Colorism and Standards of Beauty. The perspectives presented in the chapter explore the assumptions based on the findings of the pioneers of the psychoanalytical field such as Jean-Martin Charcot, Sigmund Freud, Caruth Cathy, and JudithHerman. The chapter concludes that there is a relationship between types of trauma and the historical events that occurred in the past and still endures across generations.

CHAPTER TWO:

Reading Intergenerational Trauma in *God Help the Child*.

“What you do to children matters, and they might never forget”

-Toni Morrison -

God Help the Child is Toni Morrison's excellency worked out. The original title was initially meant to be *Wrath of Children*, which was preferred by Morrison herself (Walker 02). The work as a whole represents an illustrative content that embodies the characteristics of trauma theory. Through the presentation of African-American atrocious experiences of slavery and its legacy, Morrison reveals in this novel different forms of racism, such as Domestic abuse, violence, intra, and interracial violence and discrimination. Therefore, Morrison emphasizes the effects of the tragedies and traumatic experiences of the African Americans' Holocaust. She explicitly explores the inequality between races and racial ideologies passing through generations that still endures in post-racial America. Interestingly, her novel *God Help the Child* offers insights into inter-generational trauma and interracial racism.

Thereby, this chapter analyzes the theme of inter-generational trauma in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*. It explores the original background of the novel's character traumatic experiences and the impact of the trauma and its ensuing long-terms results on the individual and society. Particularly, it investigates the specific way the novel depicts the two main characters, Bride, and Booker's experience of

trauma, relying on Judith Herman's views of trauma theory and DeGruy's explanation of PTSS as a reference to the inter-generational trauma transmission. Morrison stresses on the outcomes of Blackness and the expansion of slavery through various façades. Although the title of the novel might indicate the individual experience of trauma, Morrison, as usual, speaks to the collective and universal. She tackles the traumatic experience of other child characters like Brooklyn and Rain who faced molestation and child abuse. Interestingly, the story goes deeper to analyze different critical perspectives that are considered in this chapter and seeks to show the real façade of racial ideologies the world is witnessing today.

1. Toni Morrison's Legacy.

The author Toni Morrison, Cloe Antony Wafford, was born in 1931 in Ohio and was the first African American woman to win the Nobel Prize in Literature. She wrote 11 novels and her works gained wide critical acclaim. Her first novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970) is about a young girl named Pecola who prays night and day to get perfect charming blue eyes to be accepted within whites society. This success was followed by *Sula* (1973) which explores good and evil through the friendship of two women who grew up together. The work was nominated for the American Book Award. *Song of Solomon* (1977) became the first work by an African American author to be a featured selection in the book-of-the-month club since *Native Son* by Richard Wright. The lyrical story follows the journey of Milkman Dead, a Midwestern urban denizen who attempts to make sense of family roots and the sometimes-harsh realities of his world. Morrison received several accolades for the work and *Tar Baby* (1981) received the National Book Critics Circle Award. In awarding her the Nobel, the Swedish Academy cited her literary work as "visionary

force and poetic import, through which she gives life to an essential aspect of American reality” (Walker23).

The first of her novels to have a historical setting (set after the Civil War), is her successful masterpiece and most notable novel *Beloved* (1987). It became one of the major works that impacted contemporary literature. The story revolves around a slave who escaped from the plantation with her four children; she later slaughters her third child, whom she names later on Beloved, rather than see her brought back to the horrors of slavery. *Jazz* followed in 1992 and *Paradise* in 1997, then *AMercy* in 2008 and *Home* in 2012; the novel has not succeeded to gain attention as it should have, and critics classified it as a less remarkable work of Toni Morrison (Walker39).

Besides her fascinating eleven fictional works, Morrison wrote some significant essays and non-fictional works. The most influential among them is *Playing in Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* published in 1992. She also wrote *the libretto* for “Margret Garner” an opera by Richard Daniel that received its world premiere at the Detroit opera house in 2005 (Walker 29). Toni Morrison’s style is poetic and elaborate. It mixes between the techniques of modernist and postmodern literary traditions, as it makes use of flashbacks, post-memory, as well as a stream of consciousness, which together help to connect the narrative to historical events. Also, she uses the postmodern technique of minimalism, “which strives to play down characterization and details to appeal to the readers’ interpretation and insights into the phenomenon being described in it” (Ramtani 21), and this can be seen in *God Help the Child*.

Her latest novel is a multi-voiced narrative structured and divided through different narrative perspectives, that embody Mikhail Bakhtin's characterization of the polyphonic novel. Interestingly, the voice of Morrison did not come between the reader and the character. That is why the story is divided into four parts devoted to different points of view. The multiplicity of views analyzes reality from different perspectives and suggests that truth exists in the plural and not in a single form. More importantly, through these various perspectives, the author recovers and intends to grant the authority to the black females, in particular, to be voiced and heard to narrate their stories.

2. About the novel.

A young girl named Lula AnnBridewell, later on, shortened to Bride, is born with blue-black skin to a light-skinned couple. The day she is born she is neglected and abused by her parents who are ashamed and embarrassed by her skin color. Lula Ann's skin is as black as the night; her eyes are of mixed color with a blue tint. Lula Ann's mother cannot believe her own eyes. How could it be that she has given birth to a child this dark-skinned? Lula Ann's father, Louis, reacts similarly to the birth of his daughter. Furthermore, he accuses his wife of adultery and ends up leaving them.

Lula Ann grows up to be a beautiful woman, the kind of woman who turns the heads wherever she goes; she is an elegant woman that dresses always in white to reflect the beauty of her dark skin. As she applies for a job at Sylvia, Inc., she changes her name to Bride. She finds it more sophisticated and interesting than Lula Ann; a name she finds too countrified. The job at Sylvia Inc. is the start of a great career. Bride eventually is responsible for her own cosmetics line called YOU,

GIRL. She is proud of what she has managed despite her upbringing. Yet, the name is not the only change to the character. As she starts working at Sylvia Inc., she also starts wearing white clothes only she does not wear any makeup.

Within Bride's memories and flashbacks, she remembers when she testified in the courtroom against her innocent teacher Sofia Huxley with other four kids about her molestation and abuse. But as she grows up, she wanted to alter her sinful lie because she remains haunted to her toxic flashbacks and guilt, so she visits her teacher to admit her perjury. Bride thought that Sofia forgot the past, she refused her coming and hit her violently. She bled her and destroy her shape of the body leaving long-term scars. This incident leads to another tragedy for Bride when her partner Booker leaves her and breaks up their relationship.

The story does not revolve only around Bride who had a traumatic childhood due to her birth abandonment, maltreatment, then abuse. However, Bride and Booker are not the only children that the title refers to. Actually, there is a hidden part of Booker's story that was behind his cold behaviors and superficiality in his relationship with Bride. It turns out Booker had a brother, Adam, to whom he was so close. Nevertheless, his brother was a victim of molestation and was found dead not long after his disappearance; this event traumatized Booker long through his adult life. In addition to Bride and Booker, other child characters were abused, mainly Rain (the child Bride meets as an adult) and her friend Brooklyn.

After the couple ended their relationship, they got separated and each one of them turned away to focus on their individual lives. However, Bride's obsession with Booker was unbearable; so, she follows her passion and drove to the forest to search for him. But unexpectedly, she was taken to such a strange rural valley in an

unknown place she admits that she never visited before. She crushed a tree and harshly broke her leg with unbelievable pain as for her it marked with serious scars and slumps

She was found by Evelyn and Steve, a hipster couple, who took care of her wounds and injuries; this encounter turns out to be her way to healing and liberation. Later on, she continued to search for Booker until at long last she found him. Booker and Bride confess to each other the past events that endure haunting them and cursing their present life, Bride confessed about her biggest dark secret, and she tells him about her accusation of Sofia Huxley then about her provenance; Booker confessed that he is terrified whether their child would be an abuser and genetically he would do the same as the man did to his brother. At last, they agreed on their coming child by managing to prepare for their kid the best life that would not transmit their memories to their child.

3. Individual Trauma.

Memories are almost like video or audio recordings, and their main function is storing flashbacks and memories of certain events, that afterward gradually, will create significant effects on humans' psyche. Therefore, some past events could entirely change life whether positively or negatively. However, in the narrative of Lula Ann and Booker "The past is never dead, it is not even past" as the saying of William Faulkner goes (qtd. in cult 20). Accordingly, they were victims of the shock of their childhood that contributed to them having marginalized personalities in their adulthood. The main characters of the narrative Bride and Booker endeavor within their present life and fail to function well in society due to disordered childhood

experiences. This stands out from the impact of trauma and the way it controlled and shaped their lives.

3.1. Bride's Trauma.

Lula Anne is a black young woman persecuted by discrimination from her birth due to her skin color. She always behaves well and grasps no attention in her attitudes, so she eventually, becomes invisible to her mother. She spent her childhood with no maternal relationship with her mother and called her ironically by "sweetness." Lula alters her name to Bride when she becomes 16 years old. She dresses in white to cover her body's color "I was Ann Bride for two years until I interviewed for a sales job at Sylvia Inc., and, on a hunch, shortened my name into Bride" (11). As she starts to dress up in white, she farewells her dissociated relationship with her family and left home forever. She was convinced to live her present life without looking at the ashes of the past. She starts her journey to establishing a new identity and created a new persona as a Bride. Her life shifted greatly from detachment, neglect, abuse, to personality changes, and she transformed into such a charming and beautiful black female dressing always in white.

However, Lula Anne's story does not end here. She acts as if she has recovered and overcame her past parental neglect and abandonment. It should be questioned whether detachment and skin color are the only sources of Bride's trauma. Judith Herman defines trauma as "a state of distress and powerlessness resulted from the individual's experiences and subjugation to external atrocities or natural disasters" (24). The definition confronts the context of trauma to centralize the status of Bride. It is with no doubt, that past trauma derived from her parental

neglect, Bride attests to the phenomenon of neglect in her childhood and lacks the attachment from her caregiver because of her skin. She was born to fair-skinned parents, and both parents were unwelcoming towards her birth as a Sudanese black girl. Sweetness explains in a chapter devoted to her, her harsh treatment, and the 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. (03)

Nonetheless, Bride's skin color is not her own choice or responsibility. Rather, it is a genetic factor that leads to her long life complexions. Accordingly, the origin of her skin color is from the times of Jim Crow Laws; it has been described by Sweetness at the beginning of the narrative. She tells about the racist environment where she was raised and grew up to explain the supremacy of the white people and their racist control when everything was separated between "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" (07). Sweetness's behavior could be explained to an extent since Bride's father left home and could not accept a black daughter; He even accused Sweetness of cheating on him. As an abandoned wife, Sweetness blamed Lula Ann for all the consequences.

Sweetness fails to provide caring and a safe domestic place to her child. In opposition, her toxic motherhood was an initial factor that provided suffering to Bride. She never acted as mothers do, she gives no sympathy but vicious feedbacks such as, screaming and punishing her. As a matter of fact, Sweetness is intended to present the authoritative parental style the way she treated Bride even she locked the door on her to frighten her daughter and prevent her from misbehaving. Another method of punishment was that Sweetness never touched Lula Ann's skin to the extent that the child would misbehave on purpose to be punished and touched by her mother; and even then, Sweetness still didn't touch her. This is typically common to Maya Angelou's female protagonist, Marguerite Ann Johnson (herself) in her autobiography *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings*. The protagonist encountered many personal traumas in her life. Her parents abandoned her for being a black female, therefore, Maya was lonely and isolated. Thereby, her hunger for love and craving initiates a struggle in her life. Therefore, the lack of attachment ravaged the life of both characters. Maya enclosed all the time when she was displaced to the stamps village to live with her grandmother. She was put in her room. Her story corresponds to the life of a jailed bird its feet have been tied to prevent it from flying and being free. It is a symbol that represents the predicament of marginalized, mistreated African Americans.

Sweetness was locking little Lula Anne at home to prevent her from going outdoors to not frighten people. So, for Sweetness her daughter's skin color is quite disgusting and scary. As she goes to school, she abnormally warns her not to act or complain, and to be cautious from exclusion from school. Bride bears her mates' maltreatment and insults with silence. She is seriously affected by individual trauma

through the personal experiences that she encountered that implants by somebody who does damage to her.

Another episode that causes little Lula Ann to be traumatized is when she witnesses the rape of a little boy by the landlord in their backyard “The boy’s little hands were opening and closing, His crying was soft, squeaky and loaded with pain the man’s trousers were down around his ankle”(19). This implants on her interpersonal trauma although she did not experience it directly. However, scenes of rape and the boy’s pain was shared among them. Lula Ann kept silent about this scene because she and her mother could be kicked from their apartment by the landlord. 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” (10). Because of this, her mother prevented her from retelling or mentioning this scene to anyone which also traumatized little Lula Ann.

However, if Sweetness had the responsibility and devoted herself to her child, perhaps Lula Anne could find Attachment and remedy in expressing her oppressed thoughts. But Sweetness's behavior corresponds to what Mary Ainsworth explains in her study “patterns of Attachment: Psychological study of a strange situation”. She explains that “securely attached children showed the capacity to explore the world and use the mother as rescue base” (n.p). When a child does not develop a safe relationship with the caregivers, the child is likely to show one of the two insecure attachment styles identified by Ainsworth: Avoidant or Ambivalent. Finally, she concludes that the child’s attachment style is shaped by the parent’s characteristics ways of relating to the child. Rather than suffering from long-term

trauma, Sweetness was able to provide emotional support that would perform as a therapy to Bride. But her case was particularly related to her skin color.

Blackness is not only a color that is different from whiteness. The color black causes damage and harm for almost all black children in America. The story of Bride started from an internal domestic affair that is characterized by toxic motherhood that affected the mental equilibrium of Bride during adulthood. Sweetness has claimed the effects of racism and the skin color on people justifying her treatment with the fact that the outside society does not forgive or tolerate the difference in race. Colorism distances Bride from her mother. This context is quite similar to Pecola Breedlove who has prayed day and night to get blue eyes like her parents.

Another inter-personal traumatizing incident occurs when Lula Ann falsely attests against Sofia Huxley. Therefore, Lula appears satisfied because finally, she got her mother's acknowledgment and the love she missed from her childhood. However, when she is grown up she could not let go of what she has done against Sofia Huxley. As a result, she endeavors in her life to atone for her lie, yet she struggles in establishing a social relationship and fails to preserve her relationship with her beloved Booker. Sigmund Freud has stated that females who encountered domestic violence and sexual abuse are confronting long-term effects of sexual assaults in childhood" (Israel et.al n.p). His findings clarify that the caregiver is the main figure that would sustain and develop children's mental equilibrium (Semerani 02). Hence, Bride did not get the opportunity to express her repressed feelings to anyone. Therefore, what keeps Lula under the control of trauma is her inability to express herself, but as an adult, she was able to express the repressed image of rape to Booker. As a result, he functions as the main attached figure to Bride.

3.2. Booker's Trauma.

Booker Starbern is Bride's romantic interest who has an ambiguous persona. At first glance, he appears as a simple or rather lazy character with nothing interesting to offer. His relation with Bride seems superficial and unhealthy. It seems obvious that there is no connection by souls as any passionate lovers because each one of them is dealing with his/her trauma. Gradually, the reader gains access to Booker's dark side established by the unforgettable past where he has experienced intense events in his childhood. Otherwise, Booker is different from Bride in terms of family attachment; he has got the chance to feel a sense of family, he was raised in a happy domestic environment by a comfortable mood where technology and television were available to him. However, some disturbance occurs to Booker's personality when his older brother Adam disappears. Adam was the soulmate of Booker who has got a close relationship with each other. The family had notably broken down with his sudden disappearance until the police find Adam in a culvert. They come to Starbern's home to confirm the identity of the corpse.

Adam's rape was the reason behind Booker's trauma. Also due to the tight and strong emotional relationship Booker had with Adam, the trauma was transmitted to Booker. He narrates that "The maggots, overfed and bursting with glee, had gone home leaving fastidiously clean bones under the strips of the mud-caked yellow t-shirt. The corpse wore no pants or no shoes." (25). Thereby, Adam is not the only one who faced sexual abuse and killing. Rather, Booker was impacted by his brother's incident. The naked view of his brother Adam as a corpse with no soul created such an image that damaged Booker's memory, Therefore, according to trauma theory, and depending on Booker's apparent personality, he has individual trauma that was brought about with the accident of his cherished brother Adam.

Though he is not the victim but still impacted and traumatized because of the sharing process of the experience with his brother. Therefore, Booker's "Intrusive trauma" occurs when descendants try to understand their siblings or parents' trauma as illustrated by Herman's theory. Intrusive memories of traumatic events hinder the development of survivors' life. This means that Trauma does not necessarily manifest its symptoms right away, but they are rather visible after months or rather years, and it can be acted out in adult life. In the case of Booker, he is traumatized because of the terrible death of his sibling by a child molester. The death of Adam cursed his memory and flashbacks. However, Booker unconsciously regressed to the state before the traumatic event and became unable to establish a healthy life. According to the Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association, Freud defines regression as

A defense mechanism leading to the temporary or long-term reversion of the ego to an earlier stage of development rather than handling unacceptable impulses more adaptively, regression occurs when an individual's personality reverts to an earlier stage of development adopting more childish mannerisms. (01)

Booker is forcing "Active forgetting"; to live his present life and to establish a romantic relationship with Bride to rectify and recover from his disorder and pain. Unfortunately, he finds himself soaked within the same situation when Bride decides to help the child molester Sofia Huxley, without knowing that Sofia was not the real culprit. Consequently, Bride fails to function in Booker's therapy in terms of active forgetting as a remedy to overwrite traumatic memories with fresh happy ones. Both Bride and Booker's experience add salt to their childhood wounds. Booker remembers his brother's molestation controlled by Adam's ghost.

3.3. Intrusive Borderline Personality Disorder.

God Help the child revolves around the outcomes of repetition of the past's terrible experiences and its makeup of the present in the post-memory of childhood trauma. In this regard, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is haunting the adulthood lives of both the protagonist's Bride and Booker. As stated by Judith Herman in her book *Trauma Recovery* she links the impact of Intrusive Borderline Personality Disorder to PTSD because Intrusive memories of Traumatic events hurdle the normal development process of the survivor's life. This means that trauma's impact does not appear directly and is not felt at the constant moment of the traumatic experience, sooner in the years that follow the accident.

This case of the study examines the outcomes of the haunted life of Bride and Booker. Bride's memory functions as post-memory that has stored traumatic events of childhood, which were caused by her caregiver's rejection and avoidance (both emotional and physical). Bride narrates about her mother's conduct with her when she was a child; she says: "I could say, distaste was all over her face as I was little and she had to bathe me, she continues, 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" (59). Yet, Bride still remembers how happy she was when she marked the bed linen with her first period's blood because then Sweetness slapped her, "Her shock was alleviated by the satisfaction of being touched, handled by a mother who avoided any physical contact whenever is possible" (134). Nonetheless, Bride is aware that this reaction is not an act of care and love. She compares it to the beating and body blemishes she got from Sofia Huxley when she visited her at home "Being beaten up by Sofia was like Sweetness's slap without the pleasure of being touched. Both confirmed her

helplessness in the presence of confounding cruelty” (135). Bride has visited Sofia after she was discharged from prison to attempt to ask Sofia for forgiveness. But it turns out that Sofia does not recognize the adult new Bride, she only remembers her when she mentions the name of Lula Ann. What Bride was seeking from her visit to Sofia is a recognition of the child she was.

According to Herman, the present life of adults’ trauma survivors is under great risk of recurrence of victimization at adult life (81). Herman’s perspective is the center focus of Bride’s re-experience of violence and being again a victim of the abuse when she visited Sofia Huxley. She felt weak, oppressed, unable to defend herself. She restored the maltreatment way she faced in her childhood returning to little Lula Anne the unvoiced little black girl. Lula Ann faced domestic violence which is based on neglect and avoidance besides social construction based on skin color that segregated Lula because of her blackness as Bride says “I reverted to the LulaAnn who never fought back. Ever. I just lay there while she beats the shit out of me [...] I didn’t make a sound didn’t even raise a hand to protect myself when she slapped my face then punched me in the ribs before smashing my jaw with her fist then butting my head with hers” (21).

Bride feels always unwelcomed and unwanted both domestically and socially. She sustained the feeling of inferiority and shame at school and in the street, her color makes her a center of insults for her classmates calling her by epithets such as “Nigger”; then the unconscious remembering of flashbacks that buried once, it occurs again with even more damage than before. Herman points to the witness of trauma, she mentions that witnesses are just as victims because both are subjected to trauma (01). Although Booker does not experience direct trauma like Bride.trauma was transmitted to him through the accident of his brother. As a

result, Booker's memory got shocked due to the incident he witnessed. Although Booker seems to have gotten over his traumatizing memories, he remembers the incident when Bride decides to help Sofia, the child molester. Then, he simply rejected her with "you not the woman I want" (08). Because Booker could not simply erase the death of his brother, the word child molester is still a significant matter for both Bride and Booker. Sofia Huxley was a representation of past unhealed trauma, and functions as a reminder of the repressed injury; she re-opened the wounds of both Bride and Booker, and as a result, Booker isolated himself to keep himself away and protect his life from recalling past traumatic events.

3.4. Borderline Personality Disorder

Accordingly, Borderline Personality Disorder investigates the history of children of trauma survivors and their inability to establish a full identity and consistent healthy relationships. Herman, extremely concerned about childhood abuse as the origin of adulthood psychological disturbances, explains that "Unstable relationship is one of the major criteria for making this diagnosis [borderline personality disorder]" (90). In this term, we tend to study Borderline Personality Disorder as a starting point to tackle the process of the contribution of trauma and the cycle of its transmission through children of survivors and its transformation from one generation to another.

In *God Help the Child*, Bride and Booker are present trauma survivors; they attempt to maintain their life and establish both social and familial relationships without suffering from identity crisis or fragmentation of memory to cope with their childhood traumas and recover. Nevertheless, they are struggling to sustain stable identities and relationships as adults. As we have seen, Bride relocates to California

and she changes her name Lula Ann to Bride. She becomes an editor in a popular fashion magazine, and one of her friends advises her to dress all in white; she says “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” (44), this tip changed her completely; “True or not, it made me, remade me” (49).

Similarly, Booker leaves his family to take history and economics courses and sings in a street band. Besides, both are escaping their traumatic past and underwent a journey to find therapy, refuge, safety, and love in each other. Bride’s relation with Booker is the alternative attachment to a person who would offer protection from the threat that she faces in life. These are the qualities she was denied as a child, and a person in her state would recover those qualities “By idealizing the person to whom she becomes attached” as Herman explains (51). Thus, to avoid exploitation or abandonment, their relationship was all-important to Bride “What was important in our relation, other than our lovemaking and his complete understanding of me was the fun we had” (107). Booker looks also for peace in his relationship with Bride who does not bother him or seek to know about his past; Bride never asks him a single question about his private life. After knowing that Bride intends to help Sofia, Booker breaks up with her without justifying his reaction. The unjustified and sudden breakup made Bride furious; she jumped to conclusions about his reaction and said “I guess I threatened his ego by doing some Samaritan things not directed to him. Selfish bastard. I paid the rent not him and the maid too. When we went to clubs and concerts, we rode my jaguar or in cars, I hired” (08).

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder represents deep traces in the life of adults that may sometimes develop into a borderline personality disorder. Patients who

experienced traumatic events are under the desire of suicide and death as salvation for their damaged brain as a curative solution(Dreier 02). Morrison in her novel offers a happy conclusion elaborated by a hope of therapy and psychological relief encouraging her reader with a new beginning and to find out ways to deal with such situations especially marginalized black people.

4. Collective Trauma and Post-memory

Collective trauma is unlike the individual experience of trauma; it can be seen as “cumulative psychological and emotional wounding across generations” (Martinez et.al 01). The story begins with Sweetness’ description of dominant racist ideologies based on the skin color in society. In this vein, Cathy Caruth explains that “History, like trauma, is never simply one’s own, that history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other’s traumas” (24). This means that trauma is a shared feeling between collective groups of people and the traumatic experiences do not only affect the individual but the community too. Accordingly, Sweetness was cautious about the issue of her daughter’s skin color because of the racial trauma shared between African Americans. What she has mentioned about her family history is significant because it shows how much her ancestors have suffered, and it shows that her reaction to her daughter’s skin color is a direct result of centuries of racism. She narrates about how her grandmother assimilated into whites society: “You should’ve seen my grandmother; she passed for whites and never said another word to any one of her children” (05).

According to Gregory Philips’ division of historical trauma, Sweetness’s case is related to cumulative trauma; Philips argues that feelings built overtime such as racism will cause trauma reactions whenever the person is subject to that feeling

again even after many generations. Accordingly, Sweetness reacted against her daughter because Lula Ann's skin color brought back to her mind long years of slavery, oppression, discrimination, inferiority, shame, and embarrassment. Sweetness is a subject from an unhealed sub generation who suffered from racial persecution. Collective trauma is a direct result of the shock of the atrocious experiences of black history that is considered a horrific fact that investigates the horrible experiences from the collective shared representation of the traumatic memory of events that have taken place years ago.

Morrison illustrates this in the birth of Lula Ann and the shock of Sweetness of producing a black baby with whom she had to be so strict and careful. Regarding how Sweetness raised Lula Ann, she confesses that she has been "Very careful in how I raised her. I had to be strict, very strict. Lula Ann needed to learn how to behave, how to keep her head down, and not to make trouble" (08). Moreover, the birth of Lula Ann develops sweetness in the process of "Active Forgetting". According to this concept, it is related to the process of storing memories of damaged past that are related to the past repressed memories related to the black-skinned bodies means buried past of black slaves from the early centuries of the slave trade.

5. Intergenerational Trauma

God Help the Child is a post-racial narrative that forces the reader to be involved with the story and to perceive mental and physical racism and sexism that still endure. Morrison purposely intended the effects of Colorblindness as a result of the PTSS and relating to the "The Great Black Depression" that African Americans

encountered during the Legacy of slavery. This case of study involves mainly the case of the characters Sweetness and her daughter in the worldview of racism and their dysfunctional behaviors within society, and the role of blackness that links the past with the present.

Sweetness is considered as a controversial character in the novel. She is a character that confuses the reader who cannot decide whether to feel sorry about her ancestral, social, and familial background and her experience with racism and segregation or to judge her toxic mothering. Sweetness despised the black standards because she was raised in the racial era of legal segregation when the word “color” had a significant role in society. Sweetness initiates introducing the dominant racial ideologies of racism and skin color so one can observe that cruelty of social norms that categorized African-Americans depends on race, color, and the amount of blood they own. She mentions at the beginning of the narrative that color is now inherent in the blood of white people; “can you imagine how many white folks have negro blood running and hiding in their veins” (04). Besides, Sweetness tries to justify herself and affirms that producing a black-skinned baby is not her mistake and she is afraid from society’s feedback concerning Lula’s blackness “you probably think it's a bad thing to group ourselves according to skin color - the lighter, the better - in social clubs, neighborhoods, churches, sororities, even colored schools” (05).

In the first part of the narrative, Sweetness describes the lives of her ancestors; she considered her mother as Negro blood lucky woman that Owns white skin. Her life passed off whites and she could get what other blacks do not have; “she wasn’t stopped from trying on hats in the department stores or using their ladies' room. And my father could try on shoes in the front part of the shoe store, not in the backroom” (04). The fact is that Sweetness is trying to transform her

preoccupation with the grave danger that is knocking on her door, showing that Black color is a social construct in the USA society and families.

Moreover, through her narratives, it is clear that the females in her family faced the physical impact of slavery which portrays a clear idea to understand the extent of pain and injury of the remaining effects of PTSS that have been transmitted in Sweetness family. As DeGruy explains “it occurs when a population has experienced multigenerational trauma resulting from centuries of slavery and continues to experience oppression and institutionalized racism today” (DeGruy 109). The key aspect of this concept Sweetness’s family showed the effect of the etiology of internalized racism and trauma transmission which started from her grandmother. She internalized her grandmother’s and her parental authoritative style of detachment and abandonment and projected it on her daughter. Sweetness tells the readers that her grandmother since she had lighter skin, denied her Black ancestry and heritage: “You should’ve seen my grandmother; she passed for white and never said another word to anyone of her children. Any letter she got from my mother or my aunts she sent right back, unopened” (05). According to Coetzer, as he mentions in his article “Trauma Survivors”, Sweetness adopted Empathetic Traumatization as he explained this type of trauma transmission. He explains that trauma is transmitted when the child attempts to understand or share their wartime, horrible experiences, and memories (03). And this is what happened to Sweetness; although she did not experience slavery and legal segregation personally, her grandmother’s and ancestors’ experiences are instead transmitted to her, which explains her toxic mothering.

Sweetness’s grandmother experiences detachment and dissociation from her aunts and her mother. She ignored their existence and carried her life as a white

person. This case has been already mentioned and explained by Mary Ainsworth in her study “three patterns of Attachment: A psychological study of the strange situation” she explains that when a child does not develop a safe relationship with the caregivers, the child is likely to show one of the two insecure attachment style identified by Ainsworth: Avoidant or Ambivalent. Transparency and avoidant are some of the figures that contributed to the Sweetness family. Therefore, the elderly generation of Sweetness transforms an effect on Sweetness to present a model of toxic motherhood to her black-skinned daughter.

Similarly, the birth of Lula was not welcomed at all, through the narrative Sweetness is trying to justify herself that her baby's skin color is not her dermal genetic because none of her family is black-skinned. This points to the threat of oppression that she was afraid to face society with black-skinned daughter and to suffer as black people. She considers herself lucky to be a descendent of a white-skinned family. However, Lula Ann is a sign of a repeated past that has never been changed. Sweetness narrates: “I did the best I could and didn’t take her outside much anyway because when I pushed her in the baby carriage, friends or strangers would lean down and peek in to say something nice and then give a start or jump back before frowning. That hurt” (02). This created a sense of inferiority within social rules that dominated society when Lula Anne was born. As a result, it was hard for Sweetness to get over the segregated social constructs to get a house and a normal living because of her daughter’s skin color.

6. Narrating Trauma: Magic Realism.

Toni Morrison’s *Help the Child* is an eminent work that proposes to deal with the postmodern technique of Magic Realism that started with Latin-American

writers with the publication of the prominent figure Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in 1970. Also, "Some women writers used this technique; they are Isabel Allende, Laura Esquivel, and Toni Morrison. The male writers who used this technique are Salman Rushdie, Sherman Alexie, and others" (Thamarana 264). It is characterized by the usage of imaginative style to realistic context by adding elements that would not be expected in a realistic narrative. Such characteristic features of the style are expressed by contemporary fiction by "Characters changes to animals, slaves are helped by the dead, and usage of fairy tales, time moves backward and sometimes it reverses" (Thamarana 264). These elements contribute to the plot climax certainty of events that are tricky to deceive the reader. It has a considerable role in creating a version of reality that distinguishes itself from what is normally supposed to be "real life" (265). What brings the technique into consideration is its usage by such African American women writers such as the queen of metaphorical masterpieces Toni Morrison. Whenever the term Magical Realism is mentioned, her works are invoked especially *The Bluest Eye* and *Beloved*.

"The term is associated with mixing magical or supernatural events into a realistic narrative to have a deeper understanding of reality without suspecting the improbability of these events"(scheub 01). These magical elements are presented naturally "in a clear-cut manner which allows the real and the fantastic to be accepted in the same stream of thought"(01). Magical events' writers can find new points of view and raise different interpretations. These magical events take place in the real-world and through which the stories remain intimate, not unbelievable.

Magical Realism has become a common device used as narrative style for novels written from the perspectives of the socially, politically, or culturally

marginalized and oppressed communities, such as the native people living under colonialism, Cruelty of slavery, women writing from a feminist viewpoint, or black people under the oppression of whites. The main purpose of using this kind of writing is “to challenge the statement of a colonialist or official attitude, to disturb the established version of truth and history, and to rewrite the history from the marginalized perspective” (scheub 02). Within trauma and Magic Realism, there is a link in terms of speaking of the unspoken, meaning that the literary device aims to reveal the hidden truth of the historical trauma that took place years ago, and continues as an unhealed wound that is buried across generations.

Therefore, Magic Realism is a way to rewrite the loss and memory of slavery and functions as a remedy to the oppressed psychology of slaves. Morrison in this narrative has offered a magic realist narrative where Bride reverts from her adult body to that of a child. Right from Morrison’s first work *The Bluest Eye* till *God Help the Child*, abusive mothers were tackled along with the reality of African American parental style intermingled with Magic Realism to represent trauma. As the story offers, Lula Ann was always haunted by her past and jailed within her memories despite her efforts. However, she failed in terms of recovering from her childhood trauma and skin color is only the source of Bride’s trauma. Therefore, Morrison has added the technique of Magic Realism to the narrative to embody the psychological trauma into a physical condition where Bride’s body slowly reverts to a child’s body. This is significant because it shows that the traumatized child Lula Ann is not healed yet and that the wounds of the past must be taken care of since they threaten the present.

Accordingly, the first scene that showed Bride's transformation to a little child is when she decided to visit Sofia Huxley. Her body transformation is the

creation of the flashback of the offense of the courtroom and the sense of guilt of accusation of Sofia Huxley. Her body changes to an innocent girl she was before her sin. The assumption of Bride's body transformation raised the suspicion of whether Bride really encountered these changes to her body or just some illusions created in her mind. In this term, Toni Morrison demonstrates that her experience of her childhood still affects Bride's present life "Christ. Now what? My earrings. They will not go in [...]. I peer at my lobes closely and discover the tiny holes are gone. Ridiculous, I've pierced ears since I was eight years old. Sweetness gave me little circles of fake gold as a present after I testified against the Monster" (15). The fact is that bride is not full-grown. In opposition, her body transforms into a little child and she gradually loses the body parts and characteristics of a grown woman.

The use of Magic Realism to embody trauma in Bride's body shows that Bride did not recover yet from her childhood trauma; whenever she faces or remembers her past she transforms to a little girl, because Sofia Huxley reminds her of the silence and oppression she faced by her mother. The second transformation happens when she goes to search for Booker. However, after she encounters the child Rain, she learns that it is time to confront her trauma and start on a journey of healing. Only after confronting Booker and confessing the truth, her trauma starts to heal and her body goes back to an adult's body, which means that she has overcome her trauma. Toni Morrison selected to be a happy ending to give hope as a remedy to the traumatized people to end up living in jails of memories and head their life.

All in all, Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child* has many dimensions that lead to multiple and often conflicting interpretations. The novel should not be read only as a text, one should be a critical thinker to observe that Morrison has not shown the lives of the breakup of two couples. However, racist dictatorship

ideologies confined the setting of the story. thus, the analysis of intergenerational trauma has shown how families of colors are still facing the hardship of social constructions related to skin color.

Conclusion

Toni Morrison's literary works have been always read as a commitment and tribute to the African Americans' history. She devoted her works to the Blacks' community, and her literary pieces almost always revisit the traumatic moments in the black history and cultural heritage that were passed down from one generation to the other. Also, she aims to voice the voiceless oppressed minds due to segregation

and experiences of racism. The story of the discussed novel is centered on both individual and cultural trauma and its effects on traumatized victims their role as unhealed generation and its transmission. As a result, racism and skin color have been recurrent themes in her works.

The current research has examined Intergenerational trauma as represented in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child* in the light of DeGruy's interpretation of Post Traumatic Slaves Syndrome which is related to trauma's transmission and in light of Judith Herman's ideas on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. It has outlined black Children's survivors' experiences of trauma in a contemporary American setting and has tackled different forms of child abuse, of both white and black children. As has been revealed in this thesis, trauma has long term effects that form a grave danger on the present-day generations and black bodies' reflection in America today, involving a breakdown in the individual psyche and ruin of human relationships.

God Help the Child is filled with references to the theme of racism as it unveils the traumatic experiences of children that endure at the hands of social constructs and caretakers. As revealed in this thesis, the protagonist Bride in *God Help the Child* is deprived of parental love and compassion and this phenomenon is a process of trauma transmission that has been initiated from Sweetness' family racial background within whites' society. This affected Sweetness' parenting and rendered her into a strict and affectionless mother. Therefore, the characters undertake a journey to find remedy and psychological therapy from the haunted life of childhood horrific experiences to build up their future. Bride and Booker are considered as an illustration of trauma survivals; they firmly struggled to overstep the nightmare of the past to offer themselves a happy living in the present where

skin color does not matter and where children are protected regardless of race or gender.

The first chapter entitled Legacy of Trauma: Socio-Historical context of African American Existence has tackled the theoretical background of this work. It is split into three interconnected parts: An overview of trauma studies, African American literature, and Intergenerational Trauma. Therefore, the first part has attempted to examine the theorization of trauma studies based on Judith Herman's perspectives and its origins, depending on the findings of Jean-Martin Charcot, Sigmund Freud, Judith Herman, and at last CaruthCarthywho was the last scholar who followed the path of earlier scholars in the context of trauma, she found out "neo-Freudian perspectives" through the perspective she succeeded to interpret that trauma is a psychological disorder and it is not only the result of the internal conflict of oppressed psychology. However, external conditions that imply harm to the mind. It also can cause psychological damage that leads to memory loss.

Furthermore, it investigated historical trauma and Caruth Cathy's clarification on how history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's trauma and shared an image of traumatic experiences such as the trauma of the Holocaust. Trauma does not affect only the individual rather, it is a common pain. In light of collective trauma, the chapter has tackled African American trauma as it goes back to explore the trauma of slavery from the 1860s and the insidious events of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and its harmful effects on slavery and other historical events mentioned Such as Jims Crow Law, Civil Right Movement. Last but not least, the chapter attempted an investigation of intergenerational trauma as a process of trauma transmission from one generation to another and its dangerous

effects on the next generations while shedding light on the representation of trauma in African American Literature.

The second chapter provided a general backdrop to the works of Morrison and an in-depth analysis of the traumatic experiences of the child characters and how their trauma was played out in their adult lives the current study has Judith Herman's trauma theory in the analysis of trauma in *God Help the Child* to tackle both individual and collective trauma. The study also used DeGruy's reflections due to the relevance to explain PTSS as a reference to Intergenerational trauma. In addition to that, it discussed how the author used Magic Realism to embody both the individual and Collective trauma haunting the characters and their ancestors. The study also proved to be suitable for real-life experiences that the marginalized characters of *God Help the Child* as represent the frightening experiences of millions of children worldwide.

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الملخص

يهدف هذا الموضوع الذي بين أيدينا إلى دراسة الصدمة بين الأجيال في رواية فليكن الله في عون الطفلة لتحديد مدى تأثير الصدمة النفسية على المجتمع لسنوات طويلة منذ بداية العبودية إلى يومنا الحالي بكونه موضوعا مثيرا للجدل خاصة في الوقت الراهن. حيث أصبحت سياسة العبودية لها أوجه أخرى بسبب تدفق إيديولوجيات مختلفة مازالت تتحكم في التقسيمات الاجتماعية والتمييز العنصري بينهم . ومن هذا المنطلق فان هذه الأطروحة تركز على ظاهرة ارث العبودية وأثارها على العبيد بداية من القرن السابع عشر وما سببته من صدمة نفسية أدت إلى انتقالها جيلا بعد جيل لهذا فلقد صورت الروائية والأسطورة الضخمة المحصلة على جائزة نوبل في الأدب توني موريسون في روايتها الأخيرة واقع المجتمع الأمريكي و معاناة الأفارقة الأمريكيان مع التمييز العنصري ومقاومتهم ضد مختلف السياسات التي أقامها البيض مثل متلازمة العبيد بعد الصدمة ، العنصرية بين الأعراق، معايير الجمال العنصرية وغيرها. ومن خلال التحليل النفسي لشخصيات الرئيسية للرواية فان التحليل يصور صدمة الطفولة نتيجة للتجارب القاسية التي خاضها أبطال القصة في طفولتهم وطغت على شبابهم وتحديد مصيرهم. ومنه فان هذه الدراسة ستستخرج في الأخير ماهو دور الصدمة النفسية وجانبها المظلم في انتقالها من جيل الى آخر .

الكلمات المفتاحية : الصدمة بين الأجيال، انتقال الصدمة، العبودية الجديدة، العنصرية بين الأعراق .