

Shades of Selfhood: A Critical Study of Identity Formation and Childhood Trauma in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*

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ظلال الذات: دراسة نقدية لتكوين الهوية وصددمات الطفولة في رواية الله يساعد الطفل لتوني موريسون

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Abstract

God Help the Child novel which is written by Toni Morrison digs deep into the negotiation and the complex formation of identity, specifically within the contexts of trauma, race, and the personal growth. This novel focuses Bride, who is an African American woman who is the experiences of her childhood refusal and an emotional neglect shaped her real identity and her self-perception into her adulthood. Throughout her journey, Morrison examined how early experiences of differentiation and familial rejection affect self-worth and the pursuit of acceptance in society. The exploration of identity in the novel has been shown by Morrison's focus on appearance and race revealing the 'intersections of social and personal identity formation. This article analyzes the role of 'societal standards, trauma, and the resilience in shaping Bride's evolving sense of self and

personality, by discussing and examining these themes, the study participates to a deeper comprehending of Morrison's commentary on resilience, identity, and the legacy of trauma within 'African 'American experiences.

Keywords: God Help the Child, identity, Toni Morrison, racial, trauma, racism

مستخلص:

رواية "الله يعين الطفل" للكاتبة توني موريسون تتعمق في عملية التفاوض والتكوين المعقد للهوية، لا سيما في سياقات الصدمة والعرق والنمو الشخصي. تركز هذه الرواية على بريد، وهي امرأة أمريكية من أصل أفريقي شكّلت تجارب رفض طفولتها وإهمالها العاطفي هويتها الحقيقية وإدراكها لذاتها حتى مرحلة البلوغ. طوال رحلتها، درست موريسون كيف تؤثر التجارب المبكرة للتمييز والرفض الأسري على تقدير الذات والسعي إلى القبول في المجتمع. وقد تجلّى استكشاف الهوية في الرواية من خلال تركيز موريسون على المظهر والعرق، كاشفةً عن "تقاطعات تكوين الهوية الاجتماعية والشخصية". تحلل هذه المقالة دور "المعايير المجتمعية" والصددمات والمرونة في تشكيل شعور بريد المتطور بذاتها وشخصيتها. من خلال مناقشة هذه

المواضيع ودراساتها، تساهم الدراسة في فهم أعمق لتعليقات موريسون على المرونة والهوية وإرث الصدمة في التجارب الأمريكية "الأفريقية".
الكلمات المفتاحية: الله يساعد الطفل، الهوية، توني موريسون، العنصرية، الصدمة، العنصرية

1. Introduction

In the novel of *God Help the Child*, Toni Morrison presents an effective reconnaissance of identity, trauma, and healing through Bride's life, a young African American lady navigating the psychological wails left by her disturbed childhood. Bride's experiences are experienced by the hard treatment that she receives from her mother, Sweetness, who rejects her daughter because of her dark and different skin tone, a feature that her mother believes will mark her as a target of racial partiality. This refusing leaves Bride strive and struggling with feelings of weakness and self-doubt, which it follows her into her adulthood and shape her relationships with the surrounding community, self-worth, and comprehending of who she is. Morrison's shading light on identity in *God Help the Child* novel expands beyond the personal and taps into broader themes of racial identity, societal acceptance, and the profound 'influence of childhood trauma on the life of adult Set against the backdrop of the contemporaneous social standards that always equate worth with physical appearance, Bride's story reflects the challenges that many individuals face in the reconciling of the personal identity with societal anticipations. (Gallego, 2020, p: 47).

By drawing Bride's challenges to overcome and defeat her past life, Toni Morrison detects how social perceptions, and foundational experiences can really damage an individual's sense of identity and self, also how elasticity or resilience can be emerged in the search for healing

from the trouble of past life. Through an analysis of Bride's life journey, this research studies Toni Morrison's drawing of identity as evolving and a dynamic concept that is shaped by both internal elasticity, resilience and external effects. This study focuses on Morrison's broader reflections on racism, trauma, and the problems of self-acceptance in a culture where identity is constantly challenged and bound by cultural expectations.

As a natural result of a trauma of a childhood, Morrison's (2015) novel *God Help the Child* discusses difficult concerns related to the identity of an individual and how it is formed. Although Morrison's *God Help the Child* initially seems to be examining the age-old argument over whether the identity is constructed socially or innately. It ultimately takes a turn that plays with the idea of a depth and a surface (i.e. skin) (i.e., consciousness). This is really important because of that racism is not only based on racial differences related to the color of skin, but it also instills a fear of blood, infection, and impurity in human beings' societies. The characters of Bride and Booker, the two central characters in the novel, both were trying to avoid going into the depth, but, in very different ways. Bridal in the novel Bride is a protagonist who has blue black complexion and endures for twenty years of her presence now of her birth she is defined as "Midnight black, Sudanese black".

Morrison by her grandmother, who had abandoned her children in order to look white. With an eye towards how racism, trauma, and memory define the individual, Toni Morrison's last book, *God Help the Child* (2015), presents a convincing study of identity. The work builds on Morrison's history of exploring the complexity of Black identity, notably through the prism

of colorism and generational trauma. Scholars have increasingly focused on how Morrison's portrayal of her the main character, Bride, criticizes conventional beauty standards and internalized racism among African American communities. Toni Morrison's final work, *God Help the Child* (2015), explores complex conceptions of identity, particularly those impacted by race, colorism, trauma, and memory. Morrison continues the subject threads evident in her previous works, presenting identity as a dynamic and developing construct molded by internal experiences and external influences. Scholars have approached these topics from a variety of perspectives, evaluating how Morrison's characters represent larger societal struggles over race, attractiveness, and emotional survival. This literature review will focus on four key areas of scientific interest: colorism and building an identity, the role of early trauma, identity performance, and intergenerational healing. (Muthuselvi,2019 p: 10).

2. Theoretical and Critical Framework

In order to investigate the complex relationship between childhood trauma and identity formation in *God Help the Child*, this research references psychological and literary theories of trauma and individualism. The work that Erikson did on psychosocial development offers a foundational scope that can be used to understand the impact that early emotional deficiency has on the individual. The Unsolved childhood problems and conflicts, particularly those involving sensitive neglect or parental refusal, can cause identity fragmentation in later life or adulthood, according to Erikson. This example is especially pertinent when analyzing the main character, Bride, whose identity is molded by social

condemnation because of her dark skin and an absence of mother care. Additionally, the psychological consequences of unhealed wounds are clarified by ideas from trauma theory, particularly those presented by Herman's (1992) *Trauma and Recovery*.

Herman (1992, p.33) refers to how traumatic experiences during childhood, mainly those brought on by caregivers, may interfere with a person's feelings of safety, trust, faith, and identity continuousness. Morrison's story explains these disturbances through its incoherent narrative style and thematic matter. In order to fully understand how Bride's identity is both internally confused and externally challenged by society conventions and standards of beauty, a psychological and sociocultural interpretation is required due to the novel's convergence of ethnicity, gender, and trauma. By incorporating these theoretical viewpoints, the study seeks to reveal the depths of meaning in Morrison's depiction of selfhood and demonstrate how the protagonist's path to recovery reflects a more general discussion of trauma, racism, and resiliency.

3. Analysis and discussion

3.1. Brid's Identity and Self-formation

Bride originally named Lula Ann, serves as the central figure through whom Morrison examines the delicate process of identity formation. Bride's identity is shaped early on by her mother's emotional refusal and the social stigma attached to her dark color of her skin. Her mother, Sweetness, believes that the world is harsh for dark-skinned girls and thus withholds affection in a mistaken attempt to protect her daughter. Yet, this rejection leads Bride to internalize feelings of worthlessness and shame.

In her adulthood, Bride recompenses for her early traumas by humanizing a hyper-feminine, hyper-confident persona emphasizing beauty, fashion, and material accomplishment and success. This external change and transformation, however, masks an unsolved internal struggle. Her identity becomes performative, not deep-rooted in self-acceptance, but in a desire to gain agreement and love. Morrison uses this disagreement to criticize social beauty standards and their role in determining Black women's sense of self.

"I went from being the black little girl nobody could see to being the woman everybody noticed." (Sullivan, & Morrison, 2015 p. 13-14).

This quote reflects not just a shift in appearance but a desperate attempt at re-writing the past through the body. Unluckily, Bride's color of her skin tone is problematical in the terms of bias, subsequently it might be seen as a sign of pure African lady. What must remain unaddressed in her family's commitment to "whitening up" is the suffering endured by those ancestors who were viewed as less than human because of the color of their skin, particularly as the project of the sexual abuse of their female ancestors was the catalyst for the whiteness process. "The African Americans must hold with illustration of African genetic origin, as the pantheistic absence in the interior of terms that related to the desacralized auto poetic field of denotation of the "Judeo Christian West" *The Black woman*, according to Hortense Spillers, also transforms into "the primary point of transit between both the human and non-human worlds by the systems of servitude. Her issue emerged as the central theme of a perceptive differentiation, both visually and cognitively, and ontologically as how the dominating male determined the line

between humanity, and also "other" in other words, the black person demonstrated what a humankind or an individual was not for the culture around her". (p.155) emphasis in original (Eudell,2015, p: 21).

Fultz (2003, p. 44) asserts that "Morrison explodes myths about variance by refiguring aesthetics in what has conventionally been deemed ugly, unnatural, freakish all the negative baggage we bring to physical difference. It must be noted, nevertheless, that such notions of difference are generally measured against some standard of normative color, phenotypic features, presence or absence and arrangement of certain body parts".

At first look, the bride's plan seems to show that she is claiming her independence and denying her renunciation of her mum. By saying her name out loud, she emotionally, and physically cut herself off after any family relations as she runs away to Los Angeles with the help of a "total person designer" (Morrison, 2015, p. 32), She transforms herself into the antithesis of her former perception. While her mother saw her skin color as "awful" and her first pursuits relegated her to obscurity, her transformation renders her skin tone an asset rather than a detriment. She attires herself in pure white and refrains from using makeup; she articulates that

"Wherever I went, I received double takes, but not the vaguely repulsed ones I used to get as a child." These were admiring yet ravenous stares" (p. 34).

Bride, Conversely, she harbors an internalized racialized attitude of abjection that she must perpetually combat.

Consequently, she terminates her maid's employment because

"I couldn't bear the appearance of her fat, with cantaloup breasts, and watermelon beyond" (p. 57).

Bride's character reinterprets the inhospitable not as a color from which she may flee or dictate, but as her own body, which she can manipulate for the moment due to her youth and financial means to get a trainer. The bride is rejecting past confrontations and employing her identity against those who previously opposed her by adopting a new name. a fully comprehensible sensitive stance. Fundamentally. The bride's character is a imaginary persona devised by the young woman to act as a surrogate for Ann who she perceives as too repugnant to embody. By eliminating the presence of female's child, Bride instigates a series of removals that jeopardize her identity.

Furthermore, the name that she chooses, also Bride, places her in a liminal space, neither daughter nor wife, unrecognized by both father and husband in that second and thus bearing the name of neither". By rejecting the Father's Name, Law, and interposition, the bride is excluded from what Lacan designates where we are a part of the symbolic order, the social order that is based on language. Bride is mired in the mirror stage of self-deception, where she sees herself as an integrated whole devoid of external influences and totally dependent on her own abilities. The bride becomes so engrossed in her reflection that she begins to draw comparisons between her real life and things she has seen in photographs or on screen, simplifying the incredibly complex human experience to a computer-generated representation which renders her deepest thoughts and emotions unavailable to herself and others. She reflects on the men with whom she has previously been involved.

"none [were] interested in what I thought, just what I looked like" (p. 37) but admits that she had created "a shield that protected her from any overly intense feeling, be it rage, embarrassment, or love" (p. 79).

It is Bride relies solely on media constructs, which have supplanted authentic depiction, rendering her unable to comprehend the reality of her own existence. She likes her friendship with Booker to the extent that she determines that her personal romantic relationship is inadequate. She is accustomed to the sight of an elderly couple clutching hands.

"Steps matching, looking straight ahead like people called to a spaceship where a door will slide open and a tongue of red carpet rolls out. They will ascend, hand in hand, into the arms of a benevolent Presence. They will hear music so beautiful it will bring you to tears" (p. 39).

The couple's journey to paradise, of course, reveals a great deal about her personal objectives. Bride, in her capacity as her mother, experiences a sense of isolation due to her absence of cultural heritage and Black female role models with which to identify. It is necessary for the bride to have a chorus of mothers and relatives who can assist her in the development of her own sense of self-worth and identity. These connections are essential for the development of self-love and forgiveness, as well as for the establishment of healthy and positive community relationships. Toni Morrison's works have consistently been centered on the theme of maternity. Her creative perspective has consistently been captivated by the examination of the Black mother-child relationship. emphasizing that the relationship between mothers and their offspring is a determining factor in

their psychological development and identity (Keita, F. 2018, p. 46).

The novel illustrates the pathos of charm that is specific to the light skins who are the black individuals. Geraldine's character, who is also cognizant of this, alludes to it as colored. "*The line between colored and nigger was not always clear; subtle and telltale signs threatened to erode it, and the watch had to be constant*". (p. 87). The unfortunate thing is that Sweetness, who is everything but sweet gives birth to an infant who has black complexion, which thrusts her straight into the racial horrors of the past. These are the words she uses to begin her narration: "*It is not my fault. So, you can't blame me. She was so black she scared me. Midnight black, Sudanese black.... Tar is the closest I can think of yet her hair doesn't go with the skin. It's different straight but curly like those naked tribes in Australia. You might think she's a throwback, but the throwback to what?*" (p.48).

Bride's character is viewed as an enemy according to her own family, a risk to their societal identity. Even though she is innocuous. In fact, the unidentified man looks like an angel. His unassuming appearance makes him a pleasant individual. Paradoxically, the pedophile has attained a position of subjectivity with social legitimacy due to his physical attributes and complexion. Nevertheless, Booker (2018, p. 51) critiques the hypocrisy and silliness of this prevalent attitude towards persons who have spared the doom of abjection, saying, they often claim: "*He wouldn't hurt a fly*"

Due to her disgust, she is unable to instill in her daughter a powerful sense of ethnic identity. Like her grandmother Jadine who associates with the overcoming culture and

principles of society. Sweetness, on the other hand she realizes that "*something was wrong truly wrong*" during her initial encounter with her child. When her daughter's skin darkens, she gets a dreadful feeling: "*Midnight black, Sudanese black*" (Morrison, 2015, p:3). The eyes of Her child, she feels, have a blue hue, and something witchy about them. Sweetness harbors such intense disdain for her daughter that she considers either murdering her or abandoning her in an orphanage, perceiving the experience of nurturing her as akin to having a pickaninny suckling at her breast. (Ramírez 2015, p.112).

Baillie (2019, p: 292-294) declares that Morrison shows how Bride's character is connected to her dark skin tone throughout the story. Morrison has been studying how discrimination affects people's minds since 1970. His work is both like and different from the Dark-Skinned Power nationalist movement of the late 1960s and more modern claims of post-racism. In order to bring transnationalism back, Morrison puts together personal experiences with post-racial ideologies. But if Toni Morrison is regarded as a transnational writer of such the Black Atlantic works that maybe because that she finds the basis of Bride's individuality crisis in the "Othering" techniques that were required for the racial economics of slavery but have been repurposed. Because globalization, despite its progressive spells, promotes new types of abuse and marginalization.

Equiano (1814, p. 60) recounts the events surrounding the voyage crossways the Atlantic Water or Ocean, claiming that the Africans who lived considered themselves as children without mothers and that the African people who are under the trauma and who were shackled and cuffed, as well

as those who were purchased, and sold away, were traumatized. They were seized from their homes and taken away from their societies stripped of their value. This frightening of children in the country of Africa would absolutely create a terrible wound that would span generations.

Collins (1991, p. 54) claims saying Black moms went through unbearable pain as a result of the slavery system. Because of the pain they were in, they decided to kill their infants instead of raising them the way society expected. As a result of legacy of slavery, Black moms and daughters find themselves in unique circumstances. Because of the hostile environment in which they are raised, black daughters who are raised by moms are continually torn between their emotions more about variance between both the perfect forms of motherly love that are predominant in general culture, and the severe, and frequently the suffered mothers or in another word the mothers who are in troubles who are in their exists or lives. Kindness and beauty are emotionally drained because her spouse abandoned their newborn after she was born.

Rich (1976, p: 204) In his analysis of the challenges faced by mothers who bring up their children alone, she makes the following case:

“The black mother has been charged by both white and black males with the castration of her sons through her so-called matriarchal domination of the family, as worker- decision-maker, and rarer of infants in one. Her power as matriarch is extremely limited by the bonds of racial discrimination, sexism, and deprivation. What is misread as power here is really survival power, guts, the determination that her children’s lives shall come to something even if it means

driving them or sacrificing her own pride to feed and clothe them”.

It is a foundational theoretical approach developed in 1970 that is varied in its submission and calls into question the widely held perception that historical writings and historical narratives are obviously objectives. The objectivity of historical records and narratives was presumed to be the case by historian’s antecedent to the development of New Historicism, and historical theory, this rift in historical thinking makes room for the writers’ new possibilities and interpretations, which they provide in their book (Stayton, 2017, p. 13).

As a famous literary author and a big scholar Toni Morrison used the Historicism theory of modernity to rewrite the history of the oppressed members of her race, turning the tables on the human condition and giving a platform to those who have never had one before. Her work can be understood in many different ways. Morrison maintains that literary works serve as both ideological incubators and temporal capsules. To help African and Americans to move their terrible past, Morrison tries to change the course of history. Morrison is concerned in memory, which he describes as the capability to tell and recount stories about the past.

Goulimari (2011, p. 12-13) asserts that Morrison’s writings may be regarded subjective, as stated. Morrison, on the other hand, doesn’t attempt to present an independent and objective account of the history through all her literary works and writings; rather, she supports the independent perspective consistent with the literary school of New York. Morrison’s (2014) tries to depict the black feminine experiences inside a white dominated culture and to detail the ways

that dominant cultural standards effect the identity of the African American females.

As Davis (1999, p: 7) also notes that all of Toni Morrison's characters exist in the world that defined by their blackness, and the white society in which both violates, while protesting its existence. The insecurity that Black Americans experience is heightened by the horrific forms of cultural repression that appear in the literature that written by Morrison. The pattern of prejudice that has been repeated is apparent.

According to Fragkouli (2017, p. 21-22), Lula Ann (the heroine) aspires to conform to the ideal images of the exotic black skinned womanlike. Also, Lula Ann She is ecstatic with the stereotypical image of the voluptuous, alluring Black woman from the 1990s. The incorporation of Bride into the beauty industry, he adds, and depends on her external form and the color of her skin color. The extensive impact is illustrated in the book of established western standards of beauty on the African American society, on the black moms, and on the defenseless black ladies, whereas they are rising up under the administration of both the leading white cultures and black skin ladies are damaged not just by whites' thoughts and behaviors, but by their mother's point of views and attitudes. Massey and Denton (1993, p: 85) claims that "*The Morrison 's God Help the Child novel describes the facts of modern America from the beginning of 1990s to the first era of the 21st century and also it investigates whether the black woman's disorder has improved. Aside from the fact that the color of the skin really remains an effective foundation of social delamination in America*".

Toni Morrison demonstrates that when the gender is associated with sexist notions of white supremacy, it may engender

widespread prejudice. According to Wiegman (1995, p:1), "*Morrison depicts the ways the social violence of race and gender*". African American girls' lives and psyche are influenced by this. The historical violent of united states and destructive exclusions (Wiegman, 1995: p 9) and social inequalities are shown. Toni Morrison's imaginary black skinned female characters are viewed as subhuman and as gender objects and property of the male.

Davis (1999, p: 12) asserts that Morrison's heroes are subjected to dual victimization: first by gender-based prejudices and subsequently by racial discrimination. Morrison's work contextualizes the condition of African American females and the effect of white American culture on the black community, illustrating how her protagonists are doubly victimized by both sexist biases related to their gender, and prejudiced beliefs about their skin color. Contextualizing Morrison's oeuvre concerning the condition of the females who belong originally African also the influence of the culture of White American people on the black society.

As Morrison (2015, p: 31- 32) explained in one of her essays that, "*Disgusting Things are Unspoken and that despite of the fact that African American artists have been acknowledged and thoughtful scholarship has moved from quieting the witnesses and removing their meaningful place in, and involvement to American culture*". African American writing is usually dismissed as inferior extravagant, sensationalist, imitative (simply), and intellectually bankrupt. Contemporary white culture perpetuates demeaning and stereotypical portrayals of African American literature.

Ramirez (2017, p. 39-40) asserts that Bride clothes in lightness to establish her

submission to the Western views about beauty and financial values. (2017) also mentions that the fairy story which is written by Henderson titled “*The Ugly Duckling*”, Duckling’s character finds out his honest identity with helping of his transformation into a swan and ultimate acceptance by the other animals, and people. The character of Bride in “*God help the Child*” novel is only associated with her physical form and monetary values that are viewed as shallow because of her obedience to enforced standards of prettiness.

Morrison highlights how “Bride’s character is a commodity that is offered with other makeup. 'Bride 'whose self 'love is in trust with her environment where she lives and of her makeups firm (2015, p.133). Bride is indifferent about leave-taking her makeup job behindhand”. She embarks on identity search to a rural California to confront her boyfriend, and confront his rejection, and unexpected departure. “Which was the same as confronting herself, standing up for herself” (2015, p 98). 'Later on she starts to lose all the things that bound her to the material universe, such as her clothes, car, and cell phone. Serpel (2015) asserts that Bride dies figuratively and loses her material and touching relaxations. As a result, her visit to California represents her commitment to what is required and crucial in her life. Following her mishap in the jungle and during a scary night. Bride’s character senses “World hurt an recognition of the forces of malign replacing her from a brave adventurer hooked on a fleeting” (2015, p 83).

Scholes (2015, p. 69) claims that, nobody else appears to be cognizant of these alterations. It is difficult to determine if they are authentic or a manifestation of

Bride's imagination; yet, the symbolism is unequivocal. She appears incapable of transcending both her past and her physical form. The bride happily immersed herself in the water after weeks of cleaning birds, persisting in the washing process until the water decreased completely. She observed that her chest seemed flat when she rose to cleanse herself. Entirely flat with only her mamillas signifying that she wasn't supine. Her shockwave was so profound that she collapsed back into the murky water grabbing the hand towel to her chest as though it were a shield. The destruction of her femaleness follows Bride's self-discovery journey, which ultimately culminates in the rebuilding of her genuine females via love and motherhood. In the novel contrasts the bride’s consumerism with the hippie couple idealism.

3.2. Colorism and the Construction of Identity

Colorism, or the preferential treatment of lighter skin tones over those who are darker, is one of the most extensively debated issues in *God Help the Child*. Bride's dark complexion becomes the focal point of her estrangement, starting with her mother's Sweetness, who treats her with emotional coldness and shame. According to (Martin 2016, 301–315), Morrison portrays colorism not only as a societal issue, but also as a psychological force that influences identity development beginning in childhood. Critics like Cheryl A. Wall (2000) and Harris (1991) have also looked at how Morrison's multifaceted representation reflects her conceptual commitment to the difficulties of Black identity. Colorism is a major part of one's identity in Morrison’s mentioned novel, and Morrison confronts it via the lives of her heroine, Bride. Bride, who was born with exceptionally dark

complexion, is treated coldly and shamefully by her mother's Sweetness, who feels that society would punish her for her appearance. Sweetness' rejection is Bride's first and most formative experience with self-perception. Martin (2016, p. 18-19) argues that "*Morrison uses Bride's skin color as a metaphor for the ways in which beauty standards and internalized racism shape Black identity*".

This is reliable with previous critical work by Harris (1991) and Hooks (1992) who emphasize that how Black female's bodies have customarily been places of fight and rejection. The bride's claim for external confirmation, with fashion and physical charm, stems from this early refusal. Her identity is built in dissimilarity to the self-dislike put on her by her mother. Toni Morrison analyses how affected oppression preserves cycles of misery and alienation by representing colorism inside African American families, rather than only in the main society. Bride's identity aspect highlights a larger image on the psychological consequences of racialized standards of beauty.

3.3. Trauma and Experience of Childhood

Bride's early involvements with abandonment and refusal form the cornerstone of her adult identity. Many investigators, such as Baillie (2018, p. 17), claim that Toni Morrison seats the trauma of childhood as a critical issue in defining how persons manage love, confidence, and self-respect. The use of novel of traumatic memory, a recurrent theme in Toni Morrison's writings, highlights that identity is frequently has been changed by prior events, the trauma of childhood has a significant influence on the formation of identity in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*. Bride's emotional growing is hampered by an absence of parental love,

especially from Sweetness, who refuses affection in an effort to prepare her daughter for a racist community. According to (2018, p. 23), Morrison shows trauma as a power that persists into maturity, shaping Bride's romantic relationships, self-respect, and sense of love. Trauma affects.

Booker, has his own trauma of childhood from seeing his brother's awful death, which has a significant influence on his emotional obtainability and worldview. *God Help the Child* increases the topic of identity beyond the gender and, race, representing how sorrow of individual builds a psychological armor that can hamper growing and connection. Morrison's story declares that identity is essentially linked to early experience, and that healing requires confronting those repressed memories. Additionally, Morrison's use of numerous viewpoints, including Bride, Sweetness, Booker, and others, underlines the particular nature of trauma and memory. Each character's awareness of their past, as well as how they narrate it, effects how they see themselves and how they see others. This way supports the notion that identity is a broken, commonly contradictory construction, formed by both what is remembered and what is suppressed.

Bride's sensitive fragility surfaces when her boyfriend, Booker, leaves her, activating a collapse of the carefully built identity she had created. This emotional rupture is symbolic of the deep cracks shaped in her infant and childhood. Toni Morrison represents this separating through physical regression Bride's body starts to be changed, losing adult features as if returning to a childlike state. This magical-realist element embodies how trauma can regress the self to earlier steps of psychological development. Judith

Herman's trauma theory helps to explain this phenomenon. Unsolved childhood trauma often resurfaces in moments of emotional pressure, leading to dissociation or regression. Morrison exemplifies this strongly through Bride's trip, viewing that healing requires not just external authentication, but challenging the original cause of pain her relationship with her mom. The beginning of a genuine identity change one founded upon reconciling with the past rather than beauty or romantic love is marked by the bride's final encounter with Sweetness.

4.1. The Role of Society and Beauty in the Formation of Identity

Morrison offers a scathing study of the ways that colorism and other socially constructed beauty standards effect the process of self-discovery in the novel of *God Help the Child*. Bride's upbringing was characterized by refusal because of her dark skin, not only because her mother but also from a larger social gaze that connected beauty with lightness. Bride's adult identity revolves around visual excellence: gorgeous skin, and fine clothing, and a confident manner. Her beauty assists as both armor and cash. Nevertheless, Toni Morrison proves that this externally determined identity is weak and insufficient. Bride's need to the societal approval makes her susceptible to emotional failure when that approval is threatened. Her companion's refusal, for example, leads to an emotional and physical failure, representing how unconfident identity based on may be only on beauty. Beyond personal experience, Morrison's reproach touches on a broader one, the novel examines why Black females, mainly, are under pressure to meet Eurocentric beauty standards in order to be seen, appreciated, or to be loved. Bride's narrative serves as an example of

what happens when people internalize such ideals, they become disconnected from who they really are, and their inner feelings are quieted.

"It didn't matter how stylish or successful I was. That deep-down shame wouldn't let go." (Sullivan, & Morrison, 2015 p. 22).

The above quotation describes the painful reality that attractiveness alone cannot alleviate suffering or anchor oneself. Morrison uses Bride's story to argue for a more holistic and true identity that includes both past grief as well as current strength, behind the mask of beauty.

4.2. Performance of Identity

Bride's transition into a hyper-feminine, confident lady, replete with all white attire and a dazzling presence, is frequently cited as an instance of identity as performance. According to critic Gillespie (2016, p. 44-45), Morrison complicates this performance by displaying the sensitivity and anguish behind the surface. Bride's physical transition later in the novel, in which she loses her curves and becomes infantile, might be seen as a symbolic retreat to a point when she must confront her actual nature. Throughout *God Help the Child*, Morrison demonstrates how identity may be played or built for survival. As an adult, Bride remakes herself as a self-assure fashionable, and successful cosmetics business professional. She dresses entirely in white, which differences with her dark skin, in what some spectators see as a trying to recover beauty and brightness.

According to Gillespie (2016, p. 34) Bride's meticulously manicured beauty is a performance intended to cover her interior scars and create her value between people that formerly considered her unlovable. Morrison compounds this act by incorporating a mystery physical alteration in Bride after she emotionally rejected by

Booker, she reverts to a more infantile condition, losing her curves, making her ears look smaller, and becoming noticeably younger. This change is not genuine in the sense of magical realism, but rather characterizes her emotional decline. Bride is enforced to confront the kid inside her, the version of herself who was not loved or protected. Morrison's anxiety in the performative dimensions of selfhood is emphasized by the notion that identity may be made and destroyed with equal ease. Bride's experience demonstrates that external prosperity and beauty cannot replace internal totality. The breakdown of her adult character allows her to recreate an identity that is integrated, real, and based on self-acceptance.

4.3. Intergenerational Identity and Healing

Scholars such as (Krumholz 2017, p: 267–281) have suggested that *God Help the Child* emphasizes the significance of intergenerational healing. The novel implies that addressing and comprehending inherited grief is necessary for recreating one's identity. Morrison employs the tradition of African American storytelling as a means of resistance and reclamation. Another significant part of identity in *God Help the Child* is the belief which trauma, values, and self-perception are carried down through generations. Sweetness' depiction of Bride is shaped by her own experience as a lighter-skinned Black female navigating a racist culture.

Her internalized racism, which origins her to discount dark skin, is a survival strategy inherited from previous generations. According to (2017, p.64), Morrison employs this intergenerational interaction to prove how identity is inherited rather than personalized. The narrative finally provides a road to recovery. Morrison does

not claim that understanding is easy, but she emphasizes that addressing the past is vital for growth, finally at the end of the novel Sweetness starts to think about her decisions, and states sorrow. Bride, meantime, embarks on a physical and intellectual journey that challenges her to rethink her ideals and reconstruct her sense of self. This component of the novel is consistent with wider themes in Toni Morrison's work, particularly in novels such as *Beloved* and *The Bluest Eye*, in which healing is tied to memorizing and recognizing the sorrow. In Morrison's *God Help the Child*, Morrison asserts that identity can only be restored via an honest confrontation with history personal, family, and cultural.

Conclusion

The novel of *God Help the Child* by Toni Morrison shows to the reader that how babyhood trauma and social perceptions form individuality and identity. Through bride's character, Toni Morrison emphasizes the vulnerability of an identity reliant exclusively on outside appearance and the inadequacy standards of beauty in alleviating internal suffering. According to the research, colorism and psychological trauma are significant factors in determining how persons view themselves, by facing and making peace with their past which consider so necessary for genuine recovery in this work of literature, by providing a profound tale of suffering and metamorphosis, Morrison emphasizes the significance of gaining a knowledge of an individual's latent emotional scars in the process of developing their sense of self. through novel of *God Help the Child* the protagonist Ann, endures several painful situations. The novel's protagonist faces two major traumas: ethnic trauma and parental trauma. Lula Ann, the heroine, is

subjected to several traumatic experiences as a result of the color on her color and who she is. This is a result of inequality heading for at the African American society in America, that is reflected upon dealing with her mother. Ann as one of the main characters recognizes that she must not be commoditized, and goes on living her life free of her mother, and ethnic impact. Rejecting the acceptance of stereotypes based on race and embracing her own identity helps Ann live an optimistic and bold life, transforming her identity. Racial trauma generates several upheavals, and challenges to Toni Morrison's feminine African American identity. Morrison uses the book to diagnose the symptoms of the racial trauma and to propose the prospect of recovery through hope.

Overall, extant study on *God Help the Child* shows how Morrison employs narrative structure, development of characters, and symbolic representation to examine the psychological and social formation of identity. Your study adds to the discourse by focusing on how personal trauma, societal standards, and familial bonds shatter and reconstruct identity. The critical answer to *God Help the Child* proves the varied character of identity in Toni Morrison's writing. Morrison's characters, with Bride, establish how identity is effected by social aspects, internalized ideas, early trauma, and familial inheritance. Scholars have investigated these features in both individual and political contexts, reflecting wider concerns of ethnicity, gender, and identity in American culture. This study attempts to add to these topics by focusing on how Morrison creates identity as a fluid process that begins in suffering, faces obstacles by performance, and is made whole through heal.

The reader can also comprehend from this research that It's so worth noting that not just the white racist 'Americans are blamed for wounded black women and girls psyches, broken lives and twisted mindsets as well, but also individuals of the African-American community that subscribe to sexism Ideology, as well as the idea of white beauty a woman of African-American descent authors strive to emphasize the impact of shades, that continues to wield sway over the culture of white Americans and African-American societies, causing psychological trauma. Also The mother's role is critical in the formation of the character of African-American girls, and their transition from girlhood passing to the womanhood. Inevitably of the black mothers are the most helpful woman role models for young black girls. Because moms serve as role models for femininity, daughters take their advice without questioning it.

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