



Attachment and Trauma in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*

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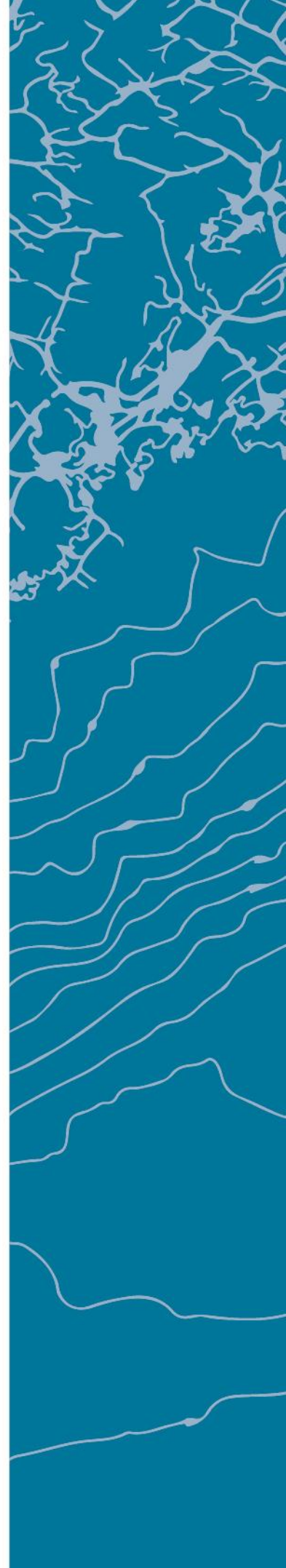
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There are wounds that never show on the body that are deeper and more hurtful than anything that bleeds.

-Laurell K. Hamilton-

From the novel *Mistral's Kiss*

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Chapter 1- Introduction

The moment a person becomes a parent, he has made a commitment for the rest of his life. It is a physical as well as a mentally challenge. Abruptly, another person depends on you, and you have to put aside your own needs and wishes for a period. A parent is not merely a caretaker and a person who should provide a child with shelter and food, a parent is a role model, a person who the child can trust and respect. During childhood, the parent plants a seed through his own behaviour and treatment of the child, which contributes to the development of the child's behaviour, either in a positive or negative direction.

A parent is not supposed to be his child's best friend. A parent's role is to be firm and consistent and to provide the child with boundaries so that he is able to understand how to act and behave in society. The world is fare from a perfect place, and even though parents wish they could shelter and hover their child from danger and pain, a parent's role has to be to prepare the child for future difficulties. Instead of being an overly protective parent, the parents have to teach the child to overcome obstacles, be a listener and to empathize and validate the feelings the child experiences.

The second a child is born into this world, a wide range of worries appear, making the parents' life a bit harder to cope with. One might imagine that the emotional burden eases as the child grows older, however, it only changes character. The very first moment a parent lays his/her eyes on the baby, they know that this person is their most important project. One could say that becoming a parent creates a new chronology, before and after parenthood. Even though it is often described as the happiest moment in a person's life, many would probably agree that it is also a terrifying one. Happy, because experiencing a child being born is nothing less than a miracle, nonetheless terrifying, because the world as we know today, is a place filled with pain and hurt. Still, we know that to shield our child from experiencing both pain and

suffering is impossible. Abruptly, this delicate and fragile human being is depending on you, and at the same time, your life depends on him. The new-born's well-being depends on the choices made by the parents. As a parent, you are forced to rearrange your life-pattern, and for many this is a trial. Still, being a parent does not really provide you with any options. No one asks you whether you are willing to change your routines. Additionally, the experience of becoming a parent is not a process. It is not a role you are given and in which you are allowed to grow into. Abruptly and rather brutally, you have to make choices based on the needs and desires of another person. As a parent, you have to stop and ask yourself; are these choices the best choices for my child, and me? Additionally, you must ask will my decisions influence the life of my child negatively? The choices a parent have to think through are endless; sleep, food, hygiene, mental stimuli, physical stimuli, emotional stimuli and so on and so forth. Moreover, even though one might imagine that the parents' commitments and responsibility for the child's evolution gradually decline, as the child grows older, the reality is quite different. As the child matures, the parents' role changes, but still the worries and responsibility stay the same. The responsibility one has, as a parent, never ceases. The worries and the fear concerning your child's wellbeing never disappear. On the contrary, as the child enters the adult sphere and the parents' are in some sense superfluous, the worries and the fear that your child will experience failure in other areas in life increase.

When a child matures, the parents' role naturally and necessarily alters. The normal development and evolution of an adolescent involves the need to detach from his¹ parents' or caretaker's safe haven, no matter how difficult or even traumatic an experience it is to both parties. Sadly, not all children experience a childhood, from infancy to their adolescence that is happy and filled with tender, loving care. Unfortunately, many children grow up with malfunctioning caretakers who do not handle their role successfully due to different reasons.

^{1 1} Throughout this thesis, the child is referred to as masculine to avoid clumsy constructions.

However, the losing party in such families is always the innocent child and the consequences of such an upbringing might haunt them for the rest of their lives.

In this MA thesis, I am going to give a presentation of attachment and trauma theory. In chapter two, I am going to present the framework of the two theories which will be the background for my interpretation of Toni Morrison's novel *God Help the Child*. To be able to understand the life of the literary characters in her novel, I will provide a thorough outline of these two theories. I have chosen to focus on what happens to the child when he experiences maternal deprivation in combination with a traumatic episode in early childhood. In addition, I am going to discuss some of the possible effects the lack of an attachment figure might have on a child later in life and what the experience of trauma might lead to. In chapter three, I will apply the two theories in the interpretation of *God Help the Child*. The chapter will also include a presentation of Toni Morrison's authorship, a plot summary of her novel, and characterization of the main characters. In chapter four, I am going to sum up my work in a conclusion. A question that dwells in the back of my mind as I work with my thesis is *if the absence of an attachment figure and the experience of trauma in early childhood are in fact two sides of the same story?*

Chapter 2- Theoretical background

2.1 A secure base – a vital start to life?

When a child is born, he could be compared to a blank canvas. Gradually, as he grows older he learns how to express himself through language, and eventually becomes a person with a unique identity and personality. From the second a child is born, he is influenced by

everything that surrounds him; smells, sounds, weather, nature, technology, economy and last but not least the people who take care of him daily.

Sadly, not all children experience the childhood every child deserves. Still, not all of the deviations are apparent to the naked eye, in the same way for example bruises are. If a child acts out or behaves suspiciously, it could be a cry for help or an expression that something is wrong. In order to understand a child's patterns of behaviour, it is necessary to take a closer look at some of the work developed in this field. John Bowlby and Mary D.S Ainsworth are prominent theorists in this area. John Bowlby is known for his work in child psychiatry and psychology. His work is acknowledged worldwide, and in cooperation with Mary D.S. Ainsworth, he established attachment theory. In what follows, I am presenting a close study of attachment theory. Later in this thesis, I will apply attachment theory to understand the main characters of *God Help the Child* by Toni Morrison.

2.1.1 Attachment Theory

To begin with, it is necessary to comment briefly on the features of attachment theory, in order to understand why it is so significant in the process of developing a healthy mind and psyche. Bowlby points out three criteria, which the theory emphasises:

1. The primary status and biological function of intimate emotional bonds between individuals, the making and maintaining of which are postulated to be controlled by cybernetic system situated within the central nervous system, utilizing working models of self and attachment figures in relationship with each other.
2. The powerful influence on a child's development of the ways he is treated by his parents, especially his mother figure.
3. That present knowledge of infant and child development requires that a theory of developmental pathways should replace theories that invoke specific phases of development in which it is held a person may become fixated and/or to which he may regress. (Bowlby, *A Secure Base*, 1988, p. 135)

In other words, according to Bowlby, intimate emotional bonds between human beings, especially between child and caretaker, are a basic need. The need for bodily contact and emotional feedback are necessities for a person to develop the tools and patterns of reaction in emotionally demanding situations further on in life. The relationship between the care seeker (often a child, but it could also be an adult) and the caretaker (often the parent) is a co-dependent relationship. At an early stage in life, the child needs his caretaker to be in close proximity. The child might cry or whine to gain his caretaker's attention, and the child will be calmed down when given the respond it demands. The result will be a child who, as it matures, starts to explore and expand the boundaries it has developed to its caretaker. Ainsworth calls this period "the secure base" (Bowlby, *A Secure Base*, 1988, p. 68). The child develops a kind of independence because of the "safety net" provided by his parents. According to attachment theory and John Bowlby, the mother figure is of superior importance to the child, throughout the early stage of his life. Studies show that an infant is not capable of remembering or discriminating the mother figure before having reached the age of six months. Even though the child is not consciously able to discriminate his parents from other caretakers, it is important to establishing a close relationship from the minute the child is born. During the first months of a child's life, he uses other senses, such as smell and taste, to recognize his mother. In order to understand parenting, Bowlby characterizes the activity of parenting as an ethological one. In his book, *A Secure Base*, he comments on the importance of the relationship between the infant and the mother from an early stage in life:

In re-examining the nature of the child's tie to his mother [...], it has been found useful to regard it as a resultant of a distinctive and in part pre-programmed set of behaviour patterns which in the ordinary expectable environment develop during the early months of life and have the effect of keeping the child in more or less close proximity to his mother figure" (Bowlby, *A Secure Base*, 1988, p. 3).

In other words, the behaviour of the child is closely linked to the reaction pattern shown by the mother figure. The child learns how to attain certain needs through a certain behaviour: "The child's attachment behaviour is activated especially by pain, fatigue, and anything frightening, and also by the mother being or appearing to be inaccessible" (Bowlby, A Secure Base, 1988, p. 3). In the course of a child's first months of life, these patterns of behavioural attachment are activated because of the way the caretaker reacts to the child's behaviour. Accordingly, after the age of nine months a child will respond negatively if taken away from his mother. From an age of three years, he will to a larger degree dare to make explorations of longer durations, for example be able to visit friends and family members for a couple of hours. As the child develops and gets older, this period is prolonged and eventually he becomes a fully independent individual. However, the importance of a secure haven, which the family home represents, will always be of prominent importance. If the child does not experience his home and surroundings as a safe place to be, his development and maturation will be negatively influenced.

Being a parent does not involve any form of education or teaching. Still, in some cases, it most definitely should be required. Even though most people are biologically capable of have children, not all are mentally capable. It is scary how a grownup's behaviour might harm and scar an innocent child both physically and mentally. To be mentally abused in childhood might leave deeper, harmful and long-lasting wounds than physical abuse: "There is today impressive and mounting evidence that the pattern of attachment an individual develops during the years immaturity- infancy, childhood, and adolescence- is profoundly influenced by the way his parents [or other parent figures] treat him (Bowlby, A Secure Base, 1988, p. 139). A child is dependent on the caretaker in order to establish and develop a satisfactory attachment. In order for this to happen, the child needs predictable and caregiving patterns of reaction in accordance with his demands. Love, affection and security are

keywords for establishing a secure base. According to Bowlby, every human being, from the moment he is born, has an innate need for both bodily and mental closeness with another human being. If the caretaker and the child manage to create such a base, the child has a bigger chance of developing into a well-functioning, social competent, human being. This relationship between the infant and one caretaker, Bowlby labels monotropy. Monotropy means that "a child initially only forms one primary attachment" (McLeod, 2009). The relationship between mother and infant starts when the child is laid on his mother's breast only seconds after his birth. Some would even claim that the mother establishes a relationship to the child during pregnancy. When the child is born and the mother starts caressing her baby, the child seeks to her breast for food and the pain and exhaustion from the delivery has vanishes into thin air. From this moment, the mother needs to learn how to understand her child; she needs to spend time with him in order to get to know him. She studies each inch of him and as time passes they establish an understanding of each other: "Human infants, we can safely conclude, [...] are pre-programmed to develop in a socially cooperative way; whether they do so or not turns in high degree on how they are treated" (Bowlby, A Secure Base, 1988, p. 10). The child is dependent on the caretaker from the moment they enter this world. Not only in the terms of being fed and getting the amount of sleep they need in order to grow, but also in order to establish a behaviour that will develop them into well-functioning human beings from a young age and further on in their lives.

A lack of monotropy might result in deviations in behaviour such as clingy behaviour, delinquency, reduced intelligence, increased aggression, depression and/or affectionless psychopathy. All of the previously mentioned outcomes are serious conditions and all of them cause the child to develop negatively.

Sometimes, the child lacks confidence that the caretaker will provide him a secure childhood. The child expects that he will be rejected as he is often met with a mother who

withdraws when he approaches her. Hence, he becomes emotionally self-sufficient and might even be diagnosed narcissistic. To be diagnosed narcissistic as means that the person has "a lack of empathy for other people, and a need for admiration. People with this condition are frequently described as arrogant, self-centered, manipulative, and demanding. They may also concentrate on grandiose fantasies (e.g. their own success, beauty, brilliance) and may be convinced that they deserve special treatment" (Psychology Today, 2018). During such an upbringing, he does not experience a safe grownup, and he does not even expect one, quite contrary, he expects rejection and therefore develops an anxious-avoidant attachment to the caretaker.

The above-mentioned patterns of attachment all depend on the degree of communication present between the caregiver and the care receiver:

Once we focus on the degree to which communication between the parent-child pair is free-flowing or not, it quickly becomes apparent that, from the earliest days of life, the degree of freedom of communication in the pairs destined to develop a secure pattern of attachment is far greater than it is in those who do not [Ainsworth, Bell, and Stayton, 1971; Blehar, Liberman, and Ainsworth, 1977] (Bowlby, A Secure Base, 1988, p. 148).

Communication between people happens on so many levels. The interaction between mother and child happens through glances, facial expressions, intonation and body language. Studies made in this field also reveal that secure pairs communicate better than insecure pairs. As the insecurity of the child increases, the communication follows the same pattern. Additionally, the content of the communication differs between a secure and an insecure pair respectively. The secure pairs interact openly and emotionally, while the development for the insecure pairs takes a negative direction. The child learns from the mother's destructive and harmful pattern of reaction, and initially there is a severe breakdown in communication between child and caretaker. The child is unable to express emotions or the desire for comfort and reassurance, because he does not have a person who perform as "scaffolder": "When a mother responds

favourably only on certain of her child's emotional communications and turns the blind eye or actively discourages others, a pattern is set for the child to identify with the favoured responses and to disown the others" (Bowlby, *A Secure Base*, 1988, p. 149). According to Bowlby, the child should learn through the mother, what favourable conduct is and what is not. If the mother does not provide this knowledge, the child most likely will suffer and develop into a malfunctioning human being. Therefore, children who experience growing up in a caring and loving environment are better skilled to develop a good mental health than those lacking such things. At the other end of the scale, we find the children who are in danger of developing poor mental health and who are in danger of experiencing breakdowns. The adult should function as a caregiving person, while the child as it grows older starts to explore the world. One might think that it all is rather contradictory. That as the child matures, he gradually withdraws from the safe and protected environment created by the caretaker; he is no longer in need of comfort and security from an attachment figure. However, the act of withdrawal of the mother and the exploration of the child complement each other. The child should have the possibility to return to his attachment figure, and seek comfort if he experiences threatening situations. He will develop into a self-reliant and autonomous human being if he experiences an established secure base. Yet, for a child who does not have a caregiver who provides him this security and stability, the outcome will make itself visible as the child matures.

In this first section, the relationship between mother and child has been the focus. In what follows, I will shed a light on the importance of other attachment figures in a child's life. Is it really of any significance whether it is the mother or someone else close to the child who provides him with support and safety?

2.1.2 Attachment Theory and Parental Alienation

Through the work of Bowlby and Ainsworth, attachment theory is known to encompass the role of the parent, almost exclusively the mother, in an infant's life and throughout adolescence. To establish *a secure base* early in childhood is the most important role a parent beholds, in order to found a well-functioning child with the best possible starting point in life. When it comes to a good mental health and a toolbox of how to behave and react in social settings, the child needs to learn how to handle such situations by its caretaker.

Still, theorists and psychologists have debated whether it is fair to give the mother this prominent role in parenthood. They ask themselves; how could it be that the child's only need for comfort and safety relies on the presence of the mother? Why is the father's absence in a child's life given so diminutive attention? In fact, is not the role of each of the parents equally important in a child's life? Ludwig F. Lowenstein has written the article "Attachment Theory and Parental Alienation" where, he argues that the secure base and attachment theory established by Bowlby and Ainsworth, to some degree, is used against its purposes and that people who, for example, find themselves in an acrimonious divorce misuse the theory in order to gain parental custody. Hence, depriving the child in keeping contact with the non-custodial parent, most commonly the father. The argument in these cases is that the primary caretaker fears the child will lose the secure base if disturbed by the absent parent appearing in his life from time to time: "An infant seeks proximity to an attachment figure [...], failure to provide such attachment is likely to result in a dismal future for such young people, including their turning to juvenile delinquency " (Bowlby, 1944). Thus, often in custody trials, the mother is given the main custody of the child(ren). However, attachment theory does not necessarily state that this role has to be given to the mother. In Lowenstein's article, this fact is his main concern. He believes that a child does need the closeness of attachment, though in his opinion, this closeness could be provided not merely by one person, but by

numerous people, such as for example mother, father, siblings, grandparents or uncles and aunts. All of these are persons in a close relation to the child, nevertheless it is important to make notice that biological bonds are not of great importance during the first months of a child's life: "[...] toddlers in their first months have no preference for their biological parents over strangers and are equally friendly to anyone who treats them kindly [...]" (Lowenstein, 2010, p. 159). The first months in a child's life represent a critical period as the foundation to build a good mental health and social life is made during this period. Adopted children who are separated from their biological parents at an early stage in life, will have the same opportunities as a child growing up with his biological parents, presuming that the adoptive parents provide him with the security, both emotional and materialistic, as a biological parent: "On the whole, infants become attached to adults who are sensitive and responsive in social interactions with the infant and who remain consistent caregivers for some time [Ainsworth; 1969 Bowlby;1969]" (Lowenstein, 2010, p. 159). Still, even if in attachment theory the mother is given the primary role in caregiving, yet, there is nothing in the theory that suggests that the father cannot become the principal attachment figure. I believe that the mother is automatically given the primary role in providing care for the child because she is the one going through the pregnancy and automatically is expected to be the one in closest proximity emotionally to the child. Sadly, there are cases where the mother is not capable or even present to attach to her child emotionally. There are multiple reasons why this might happen, but it might for instance be due to maternity depression or that the child is given up to adoption and therefore grows up in an institution. In such cases, it is essential that the father or another caregiving person take the primary role and provide the child with the care it needs in order to survive. If this does not happen, the result might be a limited emotional development and other disastrous effects such as the child developing into a dysfunctional person.

It is important to consider the roles of both parents in a child's life, and not use attachment theory to annihilate and underestimate the role of one of the parents. If the parents are well-functioning and focus on the child's well-being, both of them should have a prominent role in their child's life. Studies have shown that having several people in a child's life plays an important role in promoting attachment. The most important element in being a caregiver should be to have the child's interests in mind. Alienation happens when a child is met with hostility and absence even by parents who are present in their life. To be present does not merely mean to be visible and in the same room, it also involves being present emotionally. It includes to care for and create a safe home for the child.

What then, when the parents for some reason do not fulfil the requirements demanded to establish a secure base for their child? Lowenstein's article on this subject primarily concerns children who experience loss of a parent because of divorce. Still, I believe that a child, who has lost contact with one or several caregivers early in life, to some degree, will have the same pattern of reaction. Lowenstein points out a list of effects of divorce in his article: "poor school performance, low self-esteem, behaviour problems, distress, and maladjustment [...]" (Lowenstein, 2010, p. 163). It is significant to notice that children who grow up in a family with malfunctioning parents living together could develop similar difficulties. In such families, the main conflict is to a degree equal to one where the parents do not live together. The parents cannot manage to maintain their role as caregivers and establish a stable and secure base for their children, thus developing insecure and malfunctioning children.

To summarize the findings of Lowenstein, I would say that the most important part of being a parent; married or divorced, is to appear as a secure and predictable adult. A caretaker's responsibility is to act towards the child in a manner that gives him the tools required to develop emotional and social competence to handle future situations in life. If the

parent fails in doing so, the outcome could be disastrous, and follow the child from infancy into old age.

2.1.4 Social-emotional development and social integration of adolescents

So far, I have been scrutinizing the field of attachment theory, especially the work presented by Bowlby. Additionally, I have supplemented his work with the views of Lowenstein in order to get a clearer vision on what he considers important for a child to develop emotionally, establish an attachment, and further on a secure platform in life. The focus has mainly been on the role of the mother or the caretaker in closest proximity to the child as well as the child during its first months and years in life.

Still, even though what we experience in early childhood is of great significance later in life, the advance of security and attachment not only evolves during this period in life. I would be so bold as to say that as we mature and enter puberty, attachment and security is just as important as when we were toddlers and unable to take care of ourselves. Growing up and entering adolescence is a challenging period in life. All of a sudden, people expect different things from you than they did when you were younger. Being a youth gives us a chance to make independent decisions, but also forces us to interact with new people in close relation to us on a new level different from before. New social arenas require new social roles and this is where our tools from the childhood are essentially important in order for the young person to be able to function satisfactorily, both for himself but also in interaction with colleagues, friends, peers, romantic partners and so on:

In the course of development, the fundamental qualities of secure or insecure attachment are thought to become cognitively encoded by means of different internal self- and other-representations [Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991], also referred to as

internal working models [IWMs; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007] " (Martin Debbané, 2017, p. 555).

In other words, how a child is treated and how the caretaker in closest proximity to the child provides the child with a secure or an insecure standpoint further on in life will leave traces in the child's life as he matures. These internal working models (IWM) are regarded as relatively stable. Therefore, if a child establishes positive IWMs early in life he will benefit from these throughout the rest of his life, in situations like meeting new friends, starting a new job, or finding a life-partner. IWMs are established mental patterns that influence the perception a person has towards others but also towards himself. If he has had a secure and stable caretaker, he will, to a larger degree than a person growing up in an insecure environment does, develop a positive self-image and consider his value of importance to others. In addition, he will find it easier to seek out others and create positive interpersonal relationships than a child growing up with an insecure caretaker, who has a bigger chance of developing anxiety and avoiding new people and circumventing meeting new acquaintances: "These self- and other-models may be particularly important during adolescence, because one of the key development tasks of this period consists of engaging in new meaningful relationships with peers and adults outside the family context" (Martin Debbané, 2017, p. 555). As the child grows into adolescence, he has to face new challenges on his own. As an infant and a young child, he is supported and guided by the caretaker in difficult and demanding situations. Yet the guidance gradually ceases as the child grows. Eventually, the teenager gradually separates from his caretaker(s). The quantity of time he spends with his closest family decreases and the amount of time spent with new acquaintances increases. This requires a great deal from him in terms of social skills, but also in terms of self- and other- representations. Moretti and Peled (2010) have done a study on adolescents and the importance of a secure attachment during this period in life:

Their summarized findings indicate that secure (vs. insecure) adolescents enjoy more positive relationships and experience less conflict with family and peers,[...] and experience fewer mental health problems and conduct problems in general, and fewer weight-related concerns and less frequent eating disorders in females specifically (Martin Debbané, 2017, p. 574).

Based on these data, we can conclude that the secure base Bowlby talks about, established from early infancy throughout childhood and further on into adolescence provides the child with a platform of positivity and gives him a positive self-image and strength, which he will benefit from throughout his life.

2.1.6 Addiction from an attachment perspective

As mentioned earlier, a child suffering from the lack of an attachment figure is to a larger degree, than children growing up in a well-functioning home, likely to develop into a malfunctioning adolescent and adult. Some of the consequences of such a childhood might be alcohol abuse or other forms of addictiveness later in life. Edward Khantzian views on this matter are "that people who are addicted are 'in need of 'being understood not so much as pleasure-seekers or self-destructive characters, but more as individuals who are in pain and seek and need contact and comfort' [Khantzian, 2014 p.33]" (Gill, 2014, p. 1). People who are addicted, whether it is to cigarettes, drugs, alcohol, sex or food, have an urge to fill a void within themselves. Even though this conduct is destructive, it is important to understand the underlying cause for the abusive behaviour. Khantzian believes that all addiction can be traced back to early relations and attachment trauma. Put differently, children who has experienced neglect and who has not established a close relation to an attachment figure might experience an individual trauma in which they tackle through addiction later on in life. Such traumatic experiences cannot be treated in isolation; rather recovery can only take place

within relationships. The challenge in situations like this will be to both map the cause of an addictive behaviour, but also to get the addict to realize his situation. Otherwise, the addict will not be able to open up to people and get the comfort and contact he initially seeks through the abuse of for example alcohol or food. Khantzian's studies specifically show that there is a clear connection between early trauma and addictive behaviour later in life. As mentioned earlier, as a child grows up to become an adolescent or even an adult, the need for a caregiver or a close relation to an attachment figure does not disappear. As Bowlby claims:

For not only young children, it is now clear, but human beings of all ages are found to be at their happiest and to be able to deploy their talents to best advantage when they are confident that, standing behind them are one or more trusted persons who will come to their aid should difficulties arise. The person trusted provides a secure base from which his (or her) companion can operate (Bowlby, 1973 p. 407).

In other words, even though the focus in this chapter has been on the importance of an attachment figure in early childhood, Bowlby additionally states that people of all ages need support and help in demanding situations. Maturity does not involve a process of detachment. Throughout life, the importance of a secure base will always be essential in order for a person to experience a good quality of life. In some cases, "[...] a person might come to rely on alcohol before people, and to trust alcohol to 'look after' them more reliably than any person could or might" (Gill, 2014, p. 58). Alcohol acts therefore as a substitute for something missing in a person's life, and often it is used as a means to numb feelings. When a child grows up in an environment characterized by neglect and unpredictable behaviour, additionally to not being taught "how to self-soothe, the potential to rely on alcohol becomes much greater" (Gill, 2014, p. 58). Consequently, this fact illuminates that a child who experiences a parent who is unable to carry out as a caregiver, is not only in danger of developing a malfunctioning behaviour, additionally maternal deprivation exposes him to seek comfort and regulate feelings through alcohol abuse.

2.2 Trauma theory

Previously in this chapter, I have discussed the importance of an attachment figure in a child's life from infancy to adulthood. In the following, I will shed light on childhood trauma and the consequences it might cause later in the child's life. Ultimately, I will show that trauma and the lack of an attachment figure often occur simultaneously and therefore how the one fortifies the other and complicates the situation additionally.

2.2.1 Individual Trauma

First, it is necessary to define what is to be considered a traumatic event. There are numerous definitions. However, Roger Luckhurst says it brilliantly in his book *The Trauma Question*: "Trauma is a piercing or breach of border that puts inside and outside into a strange communication. Trauma violently opens passageways between systems that were once discrete, making unforeseen connections that distress or confound" (Luckhurst, 2008, p. 3). To experience something traumatic, in other words, is a ground-shaking episode which both causes surprise and confusion to the victimized because of its extemporaneous nature. The range is wide when it comes to how we define and frame the concept 'traumatic events'. We can categorize the traumatizing event as either interpersonal or non-interpersonal. The interpersonal trauma is to a larger degree harmful than the non-interpersonal ones, because they are intentionally imposed by another person. Such traumas might be physical or emotional abuse performed by someone close to the maltreated. Non-interpersonal trauma is a traumatic event that does not involve an episode between two or more people, as the name non-interpersonal, suggests. Such traumatic events might be car accidents, illness and so on.

Naturally, as an event is systematically repeated over time, the more severe and harmful it will be to the victim. Still, it is important to bear in mind that "trauma refers to the psychological impact of some violent or otherwise shocking event, producing deep-rooted effects which are difficult to those individuals affected to come to terms with" (Dawson, p. 62). Trauma, in other words, is a wound on the mind, and whether it is severe or of minor character, trauma is difficult to heal. Whether it is interpersonal or non-interpersonal, the trauma experienced by the person affected might be just as severe.

A person who has suffered a traumatic event might never fully recover. This does not imply that the victimized will suffer greatly his entire life, but in order to live a full life, he has to learn to live with his experiences. A victim of trauma: "must be the author and arbiter of her own recovery" (Herman, 1992, p. 133). Even though the trauma might never really disappear, the victim has to both recognize but also learn to control the behaviour it provokes: "No intervention that takes power away from the survivor can possibly foster her recovery, no matter how it appears to be in her immediate best interest" (Herman, 1992, p. 133). However, if you as a child experience abuse, either physical or psychical, inflicted upon you by a trusted person, the wound to the child's psyche is most likely more severe than a non- interpersonal traumatic event ever will be. The reason for this is that when a child experiences an interpersonal trauma, the event is fortified by both disappointment and betrayal. To be hurt by a trusted adult, in one way or another, is harmful and devastating enough, additionally the child has to cope with confusing behaviour and disloyalty: "Chronic childhood abuse takes place in a familiar climate of pervasive terror, in which ordinary caretaking relationships have been profoundly disrupted" (Herman, 1992, p. 98). Children, at an early stage in life, develop a sense of justice. They adapt and observe from peers what is 'normal' and anticipated behaviour for adults as well as children. When adults fail to match such expectations, the child will consider the situation even more threatening.

Caroline Garland writes in her book *Understanding Trauma - A Psychoanalytic Approach*: "Freud used the word (with reference to *trauma*) metaphorically to emphasise how the mind too can be pierced and wounded by events" (Garland, 1998, p. 25). It is a challenge to be a victim of a traumatic experience. The reason for this is due to the nature of the trauma. If we placed five children in a line, and the mission was to pick the one who were traumatized, it would be hard to determine based on the appearance of the children. Having a psychological wound is not necessarily visible to the naked eye, and therefore in many circumstances even harder to deal with. A person who suffers a mental disease, such as trauma, does not have any visible symptoms. Garland continues by pointing out how Freud considered the mother figure or the role of the attachment figure as crucial in order for a child to develop filters and a strong mental health. If a mother teaches her child how to maintain a mental equilibrium and to cope with difficult and demanding situations, the child will be better equipped to tackle traumatic events. Again, we see that the caregiver's role in an infant's life affects the child later in life. The outcome of good parental guidance will establish an autonomous human being who will be able to take care of himself not only on the materialistic level but also mentally:

One of the most critical factors in determining whether a traumatized person will develop long-term traumatic reaction (as opposed to short-term stress reaction) is the quality of the individual's attachment system - his or her ability to derive comfort and hope from others. This requires that there are persons who are able to provide such assistance and that, furthermore, the traumatized individual is able and willing to receive it (Catherall, 2004, p. 17).

An attachment figure's role in the life of a person, infant or adult, is of great importance not only to establish a secure base but also to provide comfort and hope in challenging situations. As I mentioned in the attachment theory section, a secure base in early childhood helps a child to better tackle adolescence. As the child detaches from the primary attachment figure, for example the mother, he applies the knowledge learned in his childhood in encounters with

new people in order to develop attachment to fellow students, colleagues and life partners. However, if the child has not experienced a secure and predictable grownup, it will be a greater challenge to handle both a traumatic event and additionally try to figure out how to share it with someone. Still, it requires both an effort from the victimized to actually open up and be willing to receive help, just as much as it is the responsibility of the caregiver to provide such help. If the right circumstances do not occur, the victim of trauma might suffer a long-term traumatic reaction. Being deprived of an attachment figure might also characterize as a traumatic event:

Kids with problematic attachment have learned, through repeated experiences over time that feeling bad can be disastrous and overwhelming. If you are cold, you might get warm, or you might stay cold and miserable. If you are hungry you might get fed, or you might just get hungrier (Rickey, 2005, p. 15).

A child who experiences this is, to a larger degree, in danger of finding himself in a situation where he might suffer from long-term trauma. In addition, the nature of the trauma might differ. Some traumatic events occur once, and never again. Researchers on trauma differ in their views regarding this topic. In Alan Gibbs' book *Contemporary American Trauma Narratives*, he comments on Laura Brown's essay 'Outside the Range' where she states that "trauma is always the result of a single event" (Gibbs, 2014, p. 16). Such episodes might cause great distress in a person's life. However, other researchers operate with different concepts. For example, chronic traumas, traumas which last over a long period, similarly perpetrate the victimized with traumas of a severe kind which have grave symptoms and which are correspondingly hard to treat.

Previously, I have defined what we consider a traumatic event and divided trauma into interpersonal and non-interpersonal trauma. Whether the trauma is caused by negative human interaction or by an accident, will affect the timespan of the suffering and gravity of the trauma. In addition to understanding the nature of the trauma, it is important to make a

dichotomy between *individual trauma* and *collective trauma*. It is important to establish an understanding of these two kinds of trauma because not all trauma is based on one individual's experience alone. This fact does not imply that one kind is more severe than the other. Quite the contrary, both of them are equally distressing for the people who live through them. It is important to mention that for my thesis, my focus will be on individual trauma, however, it is important to be acquainted with both of the expressions. Therefore, individual trauma will be the main focus in this thesis.

Individual trauma, as the name implies, is a trauma lived through and experienced directly by one person. The trauma is closely related to the person's own life, whether he has lived through the event first-hand or via others. When an individual goes through for example physical or mental abuse or is in a car accident, the person himself lives through the trauma, consequently defined as an individual trauma. Additionally, if for example a child loses his parents in a car accident, the event might lead to trauma, even though the child did not directly experience the event which caused it. This type of individual trauma can be evoked because of testimonies performed by people who at first-hand have experienced something traumatic. Testimonies of all kinds of traumatic events might inflict wounds on the psyche of the bystanders, whether they come in the form of pictures and stories told by TV-reporters from a warzone or true stories we read in books. To be a witness or to listen to testimonies could actually traumatize people to the same degree a personal experience might.

The opposite of individual trauma is collective trauma. Even though this type of trauma is not relevant to my thesis, it is important to be aware of the duality of trauma: "Trauma has had its references extended, to encompass psychic processes that impact on whole communities and cultures" (Dawson, p. 62). Collective trauma is, in other words, trauma experienced by a community or an entire society. The traumatic event is not an event directed towards one individual; rather it encompasses an entire people. Through history, the

world has experienced such events for example during World War I and II, the terror attack of 9/11, and in Northern Ireland during 'The Troubles'. All of the former mentioned atrocities have had a negative impact on innocent people. However, the experience of individual trauma as opposed to collective trauma is quite different. An individual trauma is one person's struggle, and often it alienates him from the rest of society. Collective trauma, on the other hand, ties people of a community together and makes them stronger. An example of this is the massacre that took place on Utøya July 22nd 2011. Instead of dividing the population, the event led the Norwegian people to seek comfort in each other. When a person experiences individual trauma, he does not necessarily experience to be understood by fellow humans.

2.2.2 Childhood Trauma

Above, I have defined what trauma is and made a dichotomy between individual trauma and collective trauma. Whether the trauma is experienced individually or as a group, it is important to remember that the event a person or a people have experienced has left a wound on the psyche of the person(s) involved. Unfortunately, this is a state all people, infants and grown-ups might live to experience. In the following section, I am going to focus on what kind of traumatic experiences a child might be exposed to, how these affect the traumatized child and the child's potential reactions. Finally, I will make some brief comments on what treatment these children should get in order to heal the wound of the trauma.

In 2018, one might be of the impression that children growing up in a decent and established home, with educated parents and a respectable income, are in an advantageous position when it comes to avoiding a traumatic event. However, studies show that: "Trauma during childhood and adolescence is now so common as to be normative" (Greenwald, 2005, p. 10). If you are born into a well-functioning family or in a family of greater disadvantages

that does not give you any advantage. Later, I will comment on the treatment and the degree of recovery from a traumatizing childhood. Is the deviant behaviour due to diagnosis as for example ADHD, or are there other underlying reasons that cause the child to act out as a cry for help?

In order to understand why children act out and misbehave, we need to shed a light on what causes that behaviour. Often, children who behave badly have experienced some sort of traumatic episode. What then, could be the nature of such a traumatic episode? An episode where the child experiences physical hurt could be a terrible experience. However, a child might be just as damaged mentally and taken by surprise by physical abuse. Put differently, if a child falls and injures himself while skiing, it could be both hurtful and traumatizing. However, if a child experiences to be physically abused by an adult he trusts, the mental wound will probably take more time healing than the physical wound.

As mentioned earlier, an event might prove traumatic even though the child does not experience it directly. To witness the atrocities of a warzone on television, to see pictures of casualties in the newspaper or online might also traumatize a child under special circumstances. However, the closer in proximity the event is, the bigger the chance for a traumatized child. Take the 9/11 terror attack as an example. The world witnessed it on television and online. We saw pictures of people covered in ashes, and worst of all, others who jumped and faced certain death. Children, who in one way or another had family members present in the towers or in New York at the time of the attack, would have a proximity to the event, which increases the chance of them suffering from trauma. How the child is emotionally connected to people that might be injured or affected by a serious tragedy influences his experience of it as traumatic.

The proximity of the event also include the proximity of the victimized or hurt: "Children take it very personally when a parent or a sibling is victimized or hurt. On the other hand, it is

important not to underestimate the impact an apparently distant event can have on a child" (Greenwald, 2005, p. 11). A child's ability to think rationally is not fully developed, and a child often draws conclusions that to grown-ups appear unreasonable. Still, to the child it is a mental process, which to them is of highly rational character. Situations like these might be episodes where the child blames himself, even though he was not in close proximity. A harmful thought can be sufficient to result in a child blaming himself for an accident, which for example happened to a classmate.

It is important to keep in mind the temporality of a traumatic event. Often, we are so focused on the traumatic event that took place that we forget the aftermath of such an episode. For a child and adults as well, a number of other episodes that succeed the traumatizing event might fortify the experience of trauma. Put differently, when someone lives through an unpleasant episode in life, numerous things he faces daily might contribute in making the unpleasant experience traumatic. For example, if a child loses a sibling, this sibling will come to mind every time the family do something together which might remind the others of their dead brother or sister. What might be considered a cosy family outing could in fact be an extremely painful experience to the child. Such settings might evoke feelings of loss that are unbearable. The point is, when a child experiences something traumatizing, what happens after the episode is just as important as the actual traumatic event. A traumatic event that happened during a child's early years might even blaze up and traumatize a person later in life: "it is not just the event itself but the circumstances surrounding and following the event that may make it traumatic rather than merely upsetting" (Greenwald, 2005, p. 11).

In the earlier section on attachment theory chapter, I quoted Bowlby on the importance of creating a *secure base*. By this, he means that when children grow up surrounded by one or more caretakers who provide a predictable and loving environment, the child will become fit to cope with challenging experiences further on in life. The protecting adult and the exploring

child should work together in order for the secure base to be established. Nevertheless, this might alter *as* the child experiences a traumatic episode in life. All his life, he has trusted his attachment figure to establish a secure and comforting environment. Suddenly this changes due to trauma, and the one person who the child depended on to keep him secure, failed. The world does not appear to be a safe place any more: "Trauma can disrupt the attachment, in part because the attachment figures have, by definition, failed to protect and an unimaginably bad thing happened" (Greenwald, 2005, p. 15). Even though the attachment figure is not to blame for the traumatizing episode, the child blames the person of closest proximity, because of the nature of their relationship. The attachment figure's task is to protect the child, though for the child, the attachment figure failed.

In Luckhurst's book *The Trauma Question*, he points out the importance of time in connection to trauma: "A further Freudian paradox is the strange temporality of traumatic memory: an event can only be understood as traumatic after the *fact*, through the symptoms and flashbacks and the delayed attempts at understanding that these signs of disturbance produce" (Luckhurst, 2008, p. 5). Accordingly, we understand that trauma is something that occurs *after* an event and not as it actually happens. A person might experience something horrible, like the cruelty of Auschwitz; still, the trauma appears a while after the actual stay in the camp. Cathy Caruth has been an important proponent for this view. She states: "trauma is therefore a crisis of representation, of history and truth, and of narrative time" (Luckhurst, 2008, p. 5). In this, we understand that the event is repeated in the mind of the victimized and continues to come back and haunt him.

2.2.3 Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

In the following section, I am going to take a closer look at the reactions a child might have after being exposed to a traumatic episode in life. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter,

a traumatic experience in childhood does not only affect the child in the moment it occurs. Children might face stressors that will cause long lasting psychological disorders and hinder them in getting well. We cannot view a traumatic episode as a single event, isolated from the rest of the child's life. I previously wrote that an episode happening during childhood might haunt you for the rest of your life due to elements that trigger feelings and emotions attached to that one particular awful happening in the past.

In 1980, the American Psychiatric Association came up with a new name to the disease the world had been familiar with for a while. After World War I, the illness was classified as 'shell shock' and after World War II people knew it as 'combat fatigue' (American Psychiatric Association, 2017). The illness got its name due to how the people who fought in the two world wars reacted. Not only people who had experienced war trauma suffered symptoms. Therefore, after years of studies the American Psychiatric Association renamed the illness *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* (PTSD).

At first PTSD was only attributable to those directly involved, but 'secondary' victim status now includes witnesses, bystanders, rescue workers, relatives caught up in the immediate aftermath, a proximity now extended to include receiving news of death or injuries of relatives (Luckhurst, 2008, p. 1).

As Luckhurst points out, and as mentioned previously, 'secondary' victims might also develop PTSD because of their experiences. A secondary witness means that the traumatized person has not been directly involved in the episode which led him to develop PTSD. Luckhurst mentions for example children who have lost a parent, but who does not witness the accident. Still, not all people who witness or experience a gruesome episode in life develop PTSD. In the succeeding section, I comment on what the opposite reaction might be.

2.2.4 Post-Traumatic Growth

The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche once stated, *that which does not kill us, makes us stronger*. (Nietzsche, 1888) In other words, disturbing and harmful experiences should, according to the German philosopher, not inhibit the victimized in evolving and go on with his life. Quite the contrary, Nietzsche claims that challenges, that do not cause our death will only contribute in a strengthened self. Some people, after having experienced a traumatic and disturbing episode in life, find courage and hope in the trial they have been through. Life-changing experiences are often related to illnesses or accidents, not trauma related to deaths of a loved one. To recover from a severe illness often makes the recovered person see life in a different way. He is given a new chance and because of having felt the fear of losing it all, he reflects more than a person who has not experienced something life threatening. A person who has suffered cancer but recover from it, has been through rough treatments. Both physically and mentally, the disease has caused him pain and suffering. Still, he claims that life has changed to the better because of it. People who have experienced something harmful, such as wars, accidents, terrorism, abuse and bereavement might in fact prosper and benefit mentally despite of the harmful character of their experiences. Theorists call this phenomenon posttraumatic growth (PTG). A person, who is diagnosed with PTG, manages to experience personal development and change despite a traumatic episode. Alternatively, we might say, the person experiences growth *because of* the traumatic experience:

Numerous positive psychologists and philosophers have proposed that some people who undergo significant trauma and suffering can not only recover from their episode but surpass the level of functioning they had before the traumatic event occurred, 'It is through this process of struggling with adversity that changes may arise that propel the individual to a higher level of functioning than which existed prior to the event' (Kate Hefferon, 2009, p. 343).

Experiencing a distressing and harmful episode in life, most often leads to negative outcomes. Still, some victims of trauma benefit from what they have been through and develop into

stronger individuals. However, people who experience PTG, undergo change in several areas of their lives "changes in the perception of self, changes in the experience of relationships with others, and changes in one's general philosophy of life" (Lawrence G. Calhoun, 2006, p. 5). People who show this ability to gain something positive out of a demanding and challenging experience have a natural ability to do so. Just as some people are better in drawing and painting than others are, people who experience PTG have an innate advantage. The ability to gain positively from a traumatic event is not something granted to all people. Additionally, to be able to gain positively from a traumatic experience requires some sort of reflection around the cause and effect of the event. PTG is something a person benefits from as he grows up, matures, and develops a consciousness regarding his life, both the present and the future. A child does not consciously reflect on his trauma and turn it into something positive. However, as the child matures and is capable of reflection concerning his experience, he might be able to benefit from the trauma and use it to both develop into a stronger and better-equipped person than someone who has not been through the same experiences.

2.2.5 Reactions and Recovery

However, not all people are so fortunate as to gain positively from a traumatizing event. As mentioned above, children are the least likely. They have not matured mentally and they lack life-experience. *Time heals all wounds* is another expression used to comfort and ensure people in pain that everything will settle for the best, eventually. However, this is an over-simplified way of both looking at a problem and handling it. Time cannot possibly heal all wounds. If so, there would not really be diagnosis such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), for example. Time alone cannot cure; still time is essential in combination with other treatment for recovery to take place: "You remember, you talk to others, you take a walk, you write, you cry, you laugh. [...] Along with the emotional processing, we have organized the

elements of the experience into a coherent story, including a perspective that allows us to move on" (Garland, 1998, p. 12). In combination with time, the traumatized person needs to work through his emotions; both to understand the nature of them but also to be able to heal. Healing can only be the outcome *when* the victimized is conscious of his own trauma.

The process of recognizing the trauma is in itself a traumatic experience to the victimized. The reason for this is, when a person comes to terms with his past, and realizes the suffering and pain his experiences have caused, he does not merely say goodbye to the trauma, additionally he has to accept that his old self is something that belongs to the past. The person who once was formed by the trauma does not exist anymore. Through the recovery of trauma, a new person arises, which implies that the former victimized needs to create a new identity and a new self: "Survivors whose personality has been shaped in the traumatic environment often feel at this stage of recovery as though they are refugees entering a new country" (Herman, 1992, p. 196). Suddenly, all of the conventions and rules are altered and the victim, who for example might have suffered domestic violence, has to adapt to new structures and expectations. Just as a refugee of war has concerns about his new life in a new country, a person who has experienced a traumatic childhood fears life post-trauma. Because, even though the victimized has started the process of healing the wounds from the traumatic event, he will, from time to time, be forced to face situations in life that are a reminder of his past trauma. In situations like this, it is important that the victimized is able to perform self-defence. This type of self-defence is related to the victim's mental health. Instead of escaping the challenging and uncomfortable situation that evokes memories in relation to his trauma, the victim has to face the fear of re-living the traumatizing memories, talk through the emotions it evokes, in order to ultimately, benefit from experience of remembering the trauma.

Eventually, in the process of recovering from a traumatic event, the traumatized person should be able to come to terms with his new self. "The survivor no longer feels possessed by her traumatic past [...]. She has some understanding of the person she used to be and of the damage done to that person by the traumatic event" (Herman, 1992, p. 202). In other words, the traumatized person does not use the trauma as something that defines who he is, yet, the trauma will always be a part of him. Still, he needs to move on as a new and stronger person.

Chapter 3 Attachment and Trauma in *God Help the Child*

3.1 Toni Morrison and *God Help the Child*

Toni Morrison (born February 18th 1931), is an African American feminist writer. Her authorship has made a major impact on African American literature from the 70s to the present. In 1993, she won the Nobel Prize of Literature for her work that is "characterized by visionary force and poetic import that gives life to an essential aspect of American reality" (Streitfeld, 1993). Morrison is proud of her black heritage and through her literary work; she expresses her love for black culture. Through her work, she illuminates political and social discrimination against blacks. In her novels, she talks on behalf of black females who have experienced injustice and prejudice. A central theme in several of her novels is the experience of being a black woman in a white society. She writes about the black's hardship, the struggle towards integration and acceptance, the desire for equality and the importance of establishing an identity. At the same time as Morrison's stories are fictional, her novels are of both historical and social importance, as they shed light on historical significant events, in addition to covering social problems experienced by black people in a modern and white-dominated

society. In *The Trauma Question*, Roger Luckhurst argues that *Beloved* "helped established some of the basic narrative and tropological conventions of trauma fiction" (Luckhurst, 2008, p. 90). Among her notable works are *The Bluest of Eyes* (1970), *Beloved* (1987) and *God Help the Child* (2015). *God Help the Child* is welcomed by some critics. Once more, one responded, Morrison had managed to write a novel where there was "that magnificence, burning beneath the surface of every word. The language, shifts in point of view and the audacity of the novel's premise are overwhelming. Morrison remains an incredibly powerful writer who commands attention no matter the story she is telling" (Gay, 2015). Another critic claimed that Morrison touched important topics, reveals that "In the world of *God Help the Child*, there are few caregivers or true friends, no therapists or social workers, and so the adult victims cultivate thin shells of resistance and scabble to seek justice [...]. Children become adults and carry with them a trauma imprinted on the body and memory" (WALKER, 2015). The following section consists of a short plot summary and characterizations of the main characters in of *God Help the Child*. After that, an interpretation of the novel in the light of attachment and trauma theory follows.

The novel *God Help the Child* is divided into chapters titled according to which of the main characters the story revolves around. It is not a chronologically told story as it shifts from present to past numerous times throughout the entire story. The story is mainly told in the first person point of view, except from a few chapters, which are untitled and told from the third person point of view.

The first lines in the novel are the words of Sweetness, Lula Ann's mother.

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 (Morrison, 2015).

Lula Ann is the daughter of two light-skinned parents. However, when she is born her mother is shocked by the appearance of her daughter's skin. She cannot understand why her daughter is so dark. Lula Ann's skin colour causes problems for Sweetness and her husband, and their marriage falls apart as a direct result of their daughter's birth. Sweetness' husband blames her for their daughter's dark appearance and treats Lula Ann as a stranger - an enemy even. He refuses to get emotionally involved in his daughter's life. Actually, he never touches her. In the end, he leaves his wife and daughter, and Sweetness is left alone with the responsibility for her daughter.

Sweetness' feelings for Lula Ann, are somehow similar to the ones the father experiences, still, she cannot escape. She is stuck with a child she does not love. She tries to love her but she finds it difficult; because of Lula Ann's appearance, she feels alienated from her daughter. Lula Ann struggles to gain her mother's love and attention. She feels that she fails in so many areas, especially in attaining her mother's care and love. However, when a teacher at her school is accused of child molesting, Lula Ann and her fellow pupils are called to the witness stand to testify. During the trial, Sweetness treats her daughter differently from what she has done before. She is kind and affectionate and for a short while Lula Ann feels loved. This episode will have an impact on Lula Ann as she matures and becomes Bride.

Time goes by, and Lula Ann is 15 years older. She is 23 years old, has changed her name to Bride, and works as a cosmetics distributor. She lives alone in a city far away from her mother. For Lula Ann's teacher, Sofia Huxley, 15 years imprisonment are over and she is out on parole. Even though Bride is successful, something is bothering her and preventing her from being able to live a peaceful and happy life. Episodes from her past haunt her and complicate her present life, and Sofia Huxley holds the key to her own release.

Brooklyn is Bride's close friend and colleague. Similarly to Bride, she, too, has had a difficult childhood. She grew up together with her mother who shut her eyes to what her uncle

did to her daughter. When Brooklyn turned 14 years old, she managed to escape her childhood home and from that day, she struggled her way up the social ladder. Through her work, she meets Bride.

Booker is Bride's lover. Early in the novel, we learn that he leaves Bride very hastily one day, without saying why or for how long. Gradually, Booker's story is revealed. When he was a child, his older brother, Adam, was murdered. This episode changed Booker's life dramatically, and when we meet him as an adult, Adam's death still controls his life. Booker finds it difficult to go on with his life, when the brother he worshipped is dead. Six years after Adam's death, the man who killed Adam and five other boys was caught, and convicted of sexual abuse. Booker is devastated and struggles to go on with his life. When Booker meets Bride, his life suddenly gets a new meaning. Their relationship is uncomplicated, he thinks. Bride is not like other girls. She does not ask him about his personal life. However, after a six-month relationship Booker escapes, without giving Bride an explanation. Why this sudden exit from something that seemed so good? At first, Bride accepts Booker's escape. All her life, she has had to deal with disrespectful, deceitful, and disloyal people. However, she suddenly realises that her relationship with Booker was of a different character. He was unlike anyone she has ever had in her life. Additionally, she cannot seem to forget him and how he made her feel. She decides to hunt him down. If not for love, at least for answers.

Her journey towards finding Booker is troublesome and dramatic as she is in a car accident and has to stay with Steve and Evelyn, a random couple who take her in as she recovers from the accident. There she meets Rain. Rain is a young girl who has experienced a childhood even worse than she has. During her time her, she finally see for herself how important it is to establish a secure and comforting environment for a child, and her friendship with Rain becomes an important experience for her.

After a while, Bride has finally recovered and she has to leave Rain and her caretakers in order to find Booker. Her journey towards finding Booker culminates in a dramatic and emotional scene between the two of them. Both are exhausted by the trauma inflicted upon them in their early childhood, which has haunted them and held them in an iron grip until this day. However, it seems that there are better days to come for Booker and Bride. Bride reveals that she is pregnant. Together they conclude that this child will have the happy childhood they never experienced. As a team, Booker and Bride will give their unborn child a good start to life and the secure base they never had.

3.2 Characterization of the main characters in *God Help the Child*

Lula Ann/ Bride

Lula Ann is the daughter of a light-skinned couple. The day she is born, her mother immediately states that something is wrong with her daughter. Lula Ann's skin is as black as the night; her eyes are of mixed colour with a blue tint, her hair is not even of "the right kind" (Morrison, 2015, p. 3). 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 for adultery, and ends up leaving them.

Lula Ann grows up to be a beautiful woman. As she applies for 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 her

character. As she starts working at Sylvia Inc., she also starts wearing white clothes only: "You should always wear white, Bride. Only white and all white all the time. Jeri, calling himself a "total person" designer, insisted [...]. 'Not only because of your name,' he told me, 'but because of what it does to your liquorice skin,' he said" (Morrison, 2015, p. 33). Jeri also advises her never to wear colour of any kind, if she has to, she should limit it to shoes and purses. In addition, she does not wear any makeup. Jeri tells her that all she should be is herself: "A panther in snow. Just you girl" (Morrison, 2015, p. 34). Based on the decisions made for her by Jeri, it is obvious that Bride is not a self-confident woman. Instead of making her own choices, she allows Jeri to control her and create an identity for her. We follow Lula Ann/ Bride from an age of seven to the age of 23. We get to witness how her deprived childhood has shaped her and provided her with both weaknesses and strengths.

Sweetness

Sweetness is Bride's mother. She is a light-skinned woman, married to a light-skinned man. When she gives birth to a black child, her life changes. Her husband leaves her and she is left with what she considers a burden. The burden to take care of a child who she does not love and who everybody glares at. For most people, having a baby is the most joyful moment in life, but not for Sweetness. From the very first line in the novel, Sweetness presents her daughter as a fault, and she takes no responsibility for it.

I hate to say it, but from the very beginning in the maternity ward the baby, Lula Ann, embarrassed me. Her birth skin was pale like all babies', even African ones, but it changed fast. I thought I was going crazy when she turned blue-black in front of my eye (Morrison, 2015, p. 5).

When Sweetness stops breastfeeding her daughter the minute she comes home. She feels alienated from the little black baby, and cannot find it in herself to let her baby daughter come

near her, not physically or emotionally. Throughout Lula Ann's childhood, Sweetness continually sets limits and boundaries for their relationship. She finds it indecent that a child as black as Lula Ann, and with what she consider too-thick lips, should call her Mama or Mother. Therefore, she decides that she can call her Sweetness instead of Mother. In addition, Sweetness is strict. She believes that it necessary to teach Lula Ann about how to behave in an inferior manner and not draw unwanted attention and cause any trouble for the both of them. To Sweetness, Lula Ann's colour will always be her burden in life. In the end of the day, it is important that Lula Ann learns how to handle her destiny. As Lula Ann grows up, Sweetness loses contact with her daughter. Bride moves to California, far away from her mother. They are separated from each other, both physically and emotionally. They never talk, but Bride shows some sort of emotional bond to her mother through the financial support she gives her mother every month.

Booker

Booker Starbern is Bride's boyfriend. He is a mysterious young man and throughout their six-month long relationship, Bride does not really get to know anything about him. Both Booker and Bride are satisfied by the absence of communication that has characterized their relationship. However, this changes the day Booker escapes. Bride does not understand why her boyfriend has left her so suddenly and without an explanation. She realises that the two of them have never really talked, and even though she likes Booker, she does not know anything about him. However, as the story evolves, we learn the true story about Booker.

Booker background is very different from Bride's childhood. He is raised in a well-functioning family consisting of mother, father and three siblings. One day, at an age of approximately seven years old, his life changes dramatically, when his brother Adam leaves

the house never to return. As the story continues, we learn that Booker's elder brother is raped and killed. This traumatizing event, will trouble Booker for a long time. When he meets Bride, he initially believes that she is his rescue and that she represents a turning point. However as their relationship evolves, he realises that she is not the right woman. In fact, she is the reason why he remembers the traumatizing episode in his childhood.

Brooklyn

Brooklyn is Bride's colleague at Sylvia Inc., and her only friend. Brooklyn and Bride contrast each other in appearance. Bride is black-skinned beauty contrasting Brooklyn who is "- chalk white with blond dreadlocks" (Morrison, 2015, p. 131). Despite their differences in appearance, they go along quite well. Bride trusts Booker, and their friendship consists of mutual understanding and support, until the day Booker shows up. Brooklyn is determined that there is something fishy about him, and does everything in her power to reveal his true nature. At the same time, she struggles to cope with her own traumatizing past, a childhood filled with sexual abuse and neglect. When Bride disappears, Brooklyn realises that she has lost her friend. She cannot believe that Bride is willing to sacrifice her job for a man. At the same time, Brooklyn is a rather cynical girl and concludes that she might benefit from Bride's disappearance and be promoted at Sylvia Inc.

Rain

Raisin is a very young girl. She has emerald green eyes, and "resembled no one Bride had ever seen- milky-white skin, ebony hair, neon eyes, undetermined age" (Morrison, 2015, p. 86). One of the most precious belongings in Raisin's life is her kitten, Silky. Raisin lives

with a couple named Evelyn and Steve; however, she is not their biological child. They re-named her Rain, because that is where they found her, in the rain. They picked her up from the streets, literally. At a very young age, Rain escapes the inhumane conditions at her mother's place. Her childhood there was characterized as an upbringing filled with sexual abuse and neglect. Her mother took money from men who in return got to have sex with Rain. When Steve and Evelyn find her hiding in a dark spot at a parking lot, she is a scared and unmanageable child. At Evelyn and Steve's place, she finds comfort and a secure base. Even though they do not have a lot of money, they do not consider themselves poor, because they have what they need and they are happy.

3.3 Attachment in *God Help the Child*

3.3.1 Sweetness- the primary caregiver

"Sweetness" is the title of the first chapter in the novel, and throughout the chapter, we learn that it is also the name of Lula Ann's mother, or more precisely, it is what she prefers Lula Ann to call her: "I told her to call me 'Sweetness' instead of 'Mother' or 'Mama'. It was safer" (Morrison, 2015, p. 6). It is rather ironical that Lula Ann's mother wants her to call her Sweetness, when we know the nature of her personality and her feelings towards her own flesh and blood.

The word "sweetness" evokes positive sensations. If something is sweet, it is also comforting, calming and associated with a positive ambiance. A person characterized as sweet, is absolutely someone we would love to encounter and spend time with in order to build a relationship. However, Sweetness' nature is the opposite of what her name suggests.

She is hateful and bitter because of the situation she finds herself in after giving birth to her daughter Lula Ann.

After the birth of Lula Ann, Sweetness' life changes dramatically and she finds herself in a situation she has difficulties in handling. Being a parent for the first time, is an upheaval. However, for Sweetness the change is of a rather different character than other parents' experience: "I thought I was going crazy when she turned blue-black right before my eyes" (Morrison, 2015, p. 5). Sweetness realizes that something is 'wrong', as she puts it, the minute her daughter is pulled out from between her legs. Most parents are worried about their child's health and well-being, starting with pregnancy and throughout the child's life. However, Sweetness is not like most parents, and her concern does not include the well-being of her daughter. Her one and only concern, from the minute her daughter is born, is the colour of her skin. Lula Ann is black-skinned, while Sweetness and her husband Louis are light-skinned. She does not get the maternal feelings a mother experience at once her child her born, quite the contrary, Sweetness starts to evaluate her choices. She considers whether she should give her daughter up for adoption, or leave her on the steps of a church. She even, for a second, holds a blanket over the baby's face and presses it. She is so disgusted by the nature of her daughter's skin that she almost kills her. However, she comes to her senses. As the novel starts, the reader is instantly drawn into the life of Sweetness and Lula Ann. Through the text, Morrison creates an "'empathic unsettlement' in the reader" (Luckhurst, 2008, p. 91). This empathy emerges because of Sweetness' lack of love for her daughter. It makes the reader feel Lula Ann's sorrow. The reader does not merely sympathize with Lula Ann, and feel sorry for her. Even though Lula Ann is a literary character, Morrison gives the character of Lula Ann a personality and an identity to whom the reader can relate.

According to Bowlby's attachment theory, the most important phase in an infant's life is the first couple of years of childhood. The child has to establish healthy and useful "tools"

in order to mature and be able to develop into a well-functioning human being. The caretaker must provide the infant with love and establish a feeling of safety. The person of closest proximity to the child; a person who is present and accessible if necessary, is the only one who could establish this security. The infant's way of communicating is through crying and whining, and through the soothing touch and gentle voice of the caretaker, the infant will establish security needed later in life. Unfortunately, Sweetness does not find herself capable of taking care of her daughter. Her feelings for her daughter are of an extremely derogatory character, close to hatred. Instead of being a loving and caring parent, she distances herself from her baby in every possible way: "[...] nursing her was like having a pickaninny sucking my teat. I went to bottle-feeding soon as I got home" (Morrison, 2015, p. 5) . Sweetness cannot find herself capable of loving her child. This is expressed through both her words and her actions. First, in this quotation the degrading word "pickaninny" illustrates the depth of how disgusted she is by her child. Secondly, the fact that she deprives her daughter the best nutrition and closeness breastfeeding provides a child, illustrates that Sweetness' actions as a parent are vulnerable to criticism. Because of the first person point of view, Morrison invites the reader to have a glimpse of what goes on in the head of Sweetness. It results in a closeness to the event and the circumstances Lula Ann is born into that additionally enforce the reader to sympathize with the child.

However, Sweetness does show a certain degree of self-knowledge later in life. She realizes that the way she treated her daughter, her strict upbringing, the lack of love and affection, have deprived her a good relationship with her daughter. Still, she explains her way of educating her daughter as a way of protecting her. Because of the colour of her skin, Lula Ann needs protection from the rest of the world. Like her own mother, the world will not accept her even though discrimination against blacks is illegal by law. Sweetness knows that reality is different from what is written on a piece of paper. Reality is tough, and she makes

excuses for her own shortcomings by blaming society. Therefore, instead of providing Lula Ann with the love and security she needs in life, Sweetness trains her to avoid trouble, and to act as if she is invisible:"[...] her black skin would scare white people or make the laugh and trick her [...]. See if I hadn't trained Lula Ann properly she wouldn't have known to always cross the street and avoid white boys" (Morrison, 2015, p. 41).

According to attachment theory, the primary caregiver, the person closest to the infant, should provide the child with both love and nutrition in order for the child to have a healthy and normal development. What Sweetness does to Lula Ann is the opposite. The way she "trains" her to avoid danger and unwanted attention, only makes her weak and unable to handle future difficulties. In addition, through her actions, Sweetness tells her daughter that her appearance makes her different in a negative way. Instead of telling her daughter to be proud of her identity, she does the opposite, and tells her to hide. Not literally, but when she tells her to avoid other people by crossing the streets, she indirectly says to Lula Ann that there is something about her that others might dislike. Instead of making her feel loved and secure, Sweetness points out her 'faults' and teaches her how to be invisible. This quotation is one of numerous defining scenes in the narrative that constantly reminds the reader of Sweetness inadequacy and neglect.

Sweetness claims that the way she treats her daughter is her way of expressing her love for Lula Ann, despite the colour of her skin. Still, she fails to succeed in her parenting. For Sweetness, her parenting does not include what Bowlby claims to be most important in an infant's life, emotional security, closeness and love. Sweetness, on the other hand, deprives her daughter closeness and love and instead gives her advice and tools to handle the rough reality. In the end, when Lula Ann is a grownup, Sweetness is treated the same way in return. Lula Ann does not care for her mother, at least not the way a child loves a parent. Sweetness realizes this when Bride has moved away and she is left alone. "What you do to children

matters. And they might never forget [...]. She sends me money and stuff, but I ain't seen her in I don't know how long" (Morrison, 2015, p. 43). In a cold and institutionalized manner, Lula Ann provides money and things for her mother every now and then. Yet, love and closeness are absent in their relationship. Lula Ann has experienced what Bowlby calls maternal deprivation. In her case, her mother was present, but she did not give her the love and attention every child needs from their primary caregiver. Still, as a reader it is impossible to empathize with Sweetness. This novel is not Sweetness' novel. On the contrary, the novel is the voice of all the children who have experienced a childhood filled with neglect and abuse. In a way, we sympathize with Sweetness, we feel sorry for her because of her inability to be a good parent, but we do not feel her pain and understand what could be the cause of such a behaviour.

3.3.2 Lula Ann/ Bride, Booker, Brooklyn and Rain – products of the absence of an attachment figure?

Lula Ann is born into a world where she does not experience love and affection. Her mother is disgusted by her appearance. Her father abandons Lula Ann and her mother shortly after they return from the hospital. Louis, Lula Ann's father cannot find it in him to accept his daughter, and renounces all responsibility: "We had three good years together but when she was born he blamed me and treated Lula Ann like she was a stranger - more than that, an enemy. He never touched her" (Morrison, 2015, p. 5). Lula Ann's life starts with two parents who never really adapt to their role as caregivers. Her mother, Sweetness, sticks to her responsibility when it comes to providing her daughter with a roof over her head. Emotionally, she is detached from her daughter. Her parenting is merely restricted to keeping Lula Ann alive and teaching her how to get through the day without causing problems for

herself and others. Louis escapes and does not provide Lula Ann with anything. He regards his daughter as the enemy, and I believe that the reason for this is that he suspects that she is the result of his wife's adultery. After months away from his family, he starts sending Sweetness fifty dollars a month. This action shows that he accepts his biological relation to his daughter. Nevertheless, she is the reason why his marriage failed, and he never returns to take his part in parenting but leaves his share of the responsibility to Sweetness. Sweetness is physically there for Lula Ann, still there is an enormous void between them. For Lula Ann, this gap will only grow bigger and bigger, and leave Lula Ann with longing and loss: "Lula Ann quickly dashed a bright memory of Sweetness humming some blues song while washing panty hose in the sink, little Lula Ann hiding behind the door to hear her. How nice it would have been if mother and daughter could have sung together" (Morrison, 2015, p. 87). The song represents their relationship. They sing different songs. Sweetness sings one of her own, one in which Lula Ann cannot take part. She on the other hand sings her own song, one of which Sweetness cannot or will not learn the lyrics. The narrative is constantly shifting from one point of view to another. We learn the inner thoughts of the main characters, something that contribute in the reader establishing emotional bonds to the characters. The reader has an urge to find out more about their story and background, even the ones who are less sympathetic.

Lula Ann is left with one parent physically absent from her life and the other physically present yet emotionally absent. Sweetness is able to provide for her daughter economically; nevertheless, it is not sufficient in order to establish a secure and comforting childhood for Lula Ann. The bodily contact all human beings need, both children and adults, is lacking, which causes Lula Ann to make decisions later on in life, which will have consequences in her adulthood.

Evolutionary considerations (cf. MacDonald, 1992) suggest that emotional closeness and security of attachment address different functional systems. We assume that maternal sensitivity during early face-to-face interactions is related to later emotional

closeness, whereas the contingency of maternal reactions towards the infant's signals is related to later security of attachment (Susanne Volker, 1999, p. 921).

As this excerpt from the article 'Maternal Interactive Behaviour in Early Infancy and Later Attachment' states, the way the mother addresses an infant from an early stage in life, will leave wounds in the child's emotional life as he matures. The sensitivity a mother displays towards her child in face-to-face interactions when the child is born develops an emotional closeness later in life. As mentioned earlier, her daughter's dark-skin disgusts Sweetness, as she is breastfeeding. Consequently, she stops when she returns home from the hospital. She cannot stand looking at her daughter. The emotional closeness Sweetness should have established with her daughter fails to occur. Lula Ann does not experience a consequent mother who responds in a consistent manner. For a child, inconsistency in reaction patterns must be worse than no reaction at all, because of the fear of negative consequences. This leaves Lula Ann with no emotional closeness and secure attachment. The result of the lack of emotional closeness and security reveal itself when Lula Ann is eight years old.

I was only eight years old, still little Lula Ann, when I lifted my arm and pointed my finger at her [...]. My hand was in a fist until my arm was straight. Then I unfolded my forefinger. *Pow!* Like a cap pistol. Mrs. Huxley stared at me then opened her mouth as though about to say something. She looked shocked, unbelieving" (Morrison, 2015, pp. 30-31).

In this quotation, Lula Ann gives her testimony in the trial against Sofia Huxley, an employee at Lula Ann's school who is accused of sexually assaulting pupils. This quotation appears quite early in the novel. The reader is introduced to a traumatic event in Lula Ann's life, which he is incapable of understand the importance of. First, we believe that Lula Ann is merely a witness, like the other pupils. However, because of Huxley's reaction, there has to be more to this event than what is revealed at first. We understand that this a core event of the narrative that will reappear, one way or another. In a way, we might even claim that Sofia

Huxley represents Lula Ann's trauma and that she represents the "traumatic memory, the anachronic intrusion of the past into the present" (Luckhurst, 2008, p. 93). The way she repeatedly returns in Bride's memory shows that Bride's trauma is a constant battle for her. As we continue reading, we learn more about Lula Ann/Bride's life and the truth concerning her testimony is revealed. On the witness stand, Lula Ann gave a false testimony. One might ask oneself why she would do such a thing. To find the answer, we have to return to her upbringing. Her entire life she has been invisible. In addition to literally hiding herself from her mother, her mother has always told her to avoid big groups of people in order to stay out of trouble and to circumvent unpleasant episodes. For Sweetness, all attention is of negative character due to Lula Ann's skin colour. In the courtroom, Lula Ann's contribution leads the attention away from her skin colour. All of a sudden, Lula Ann is important. Her testimony towards Huxley is crucial and this gives Lula Ann a feeling of being loved. She, Lula Ann, for once in her life, matters.

I glanced at Sweetness; she was smiling like I've never seen her smile before- with mouth and eyes. And that wasn't all. Outside the courtroom, all the mothers smiled at me, and two actually touched and hugged me. Fathers gave me thumbs-up. Best of all was Sweetness. As we walked down the courthouse, she held my hand, my hand. She never did that before[...] (Morrison, 2015, p. 31).

The reactions Lula Ann receives from the other children's mothers and fathers astonish her, not to speak of how Sweetness finally, for once in her life approaches her emotionally. She acknowledges and approves of her own daughter in a way Lula Ann has never experienced before. There are many significant elements in this scene. First, for once, Sweetness dares to identify with her own daughter. The positive reactions from the other parents function as an approval of Lula Ann. Lula Ann has done something good and Sweetness is proud of her daughter. She manages to behave as an attachment figure and to create a secure base for Lula Ann in a challenging and scary situation. Secondly, Lula Ann finally experiences how it feels

to have an identity and what it means to be valuable. Sadly, Lula Ann's testimony is not an act of positive nature. She has lied under oath and contributed in sending Sofia Huxley to prison with a verdict of 24 years. For Lula Ann, it results in her finally getting some positive feedback both verbally but also emotionally and physically. During her eight-year-long life, she has only felt the touch of a cold and emotionally deprived mother. Sweetness' touches have not been of the affectionate kind, it has been touches of duty during a bath: "I used to pray she would slap my face or spank me just to feel her touch. I made little mistakes deliberately, but she had ways to punish me without touching the skin she hated [...]" (Morrison, 2015, p. 31). Sweetness' feelings for her daughter's skin are so deeply rooted in her that even when she wants to punish her, she finds ways to do it without involving touching her daughter. As mentioned earlier, caring for a child involves both covering his basic needs like food, sleep and shelter but it also includes giving the child love and affection. Sweetness provides food and shelter for Lula Ann, but she fails when it comes to covering her child's emotional needs.

In the article 'Maternal Interactive Behaviour in Early Infancy and Later Attachment', the authors write:

The infant's early experiences of behavioural contingency might strengthen confidence in acting effectively and, in this sense, the security of self-regulation. Independently of experiences of emotional closeness, the individual may develop a high level of autonomy and will be able to solve problems and to cope with fear without social support. The experience of emotional closeness, on the other hand, may strengthen the ability to relate to others and thus to gain social support" (Susanne Volker, 1999, p. 934).

Lula Ann has never received the emotional support she needs from her mother. Still, she develops into an independent human being who manage to get through difficult situations on her own. Her abilities in managing through rough times are a result of her mother teaching her how to act in threatening and uncomfortable situations. In some sense, these lessons of

teaching Lula Ann how to manage in difficult situations are Sweetness' way of showing love and affection for her daughter. She provides her with tools of how to manage on her own. As a result, Lula Ann is able to manage on her own in on area of life. Nevertheless, Lula Ann lacks the skills of how to relate to others due the absence of love and emotionally support in her childhood. Her emotional shortcomings affect her and Booker's love life.

As mentioned in the characterization of the main characters, Lula Ann changes her name to Bride right after high school. This action demonstrates a shift in her life and identity. The little girl who was told by her mother to stay invisible does not exist anymore. Left is Bride, a black-skinned woman, only dressing in white. She is more visible than ever, and her skin colour more prominent and noticeable next to the white fabric covering her body. In a way, she uses what her mother taught her to her own benefit. She manages to turn the negative into something positive. Instead of hiding and covering her skin, she uses it to establish a life for herself. Because of her skin, she manages to get a good job, where her black skin is valued and even considered unique. Still, even though Bride has developed into a highly autonomous grownup and succeeded in getting a job, she struggles to succeed in relationships. She is emotionally deprived and this reflects in her relationships with all people, both boys and girls.

Bowlby states that all human beings are born with a need for closeness and love, what he calls monotropy. Children who has been deprived one close attachment figure, will most likely suffer socially and develop negative behaviour later on in life. One of the conditions Bowlby mentions is affectionless psychopathy. Affectionless psychopathy means that the person suffering from it will act on impulse and has little regard of the consequences his actions might cause. Bride's contribution in the trial towards Huxley is an example of how she suffers from affectionless psychopathy from an early stage in life. There are numerous examples where she acts without thinking through the consequences. Especially, we see this

in the episode when she testifies against Sofia Huxley. For once in her life, Lula Ann feels important and valuable. She is an eight-year-old child, still her actions cause serious consequences for Huxley. However, for Lula Ann, what is most important are the feelings and positive reactions she receives. She does not seem to reflect on what will happen to Huxley. Of course, her young age has to be taken into consideration, on the other hand, children develop a sense of justice from an early age, and I believe that Lula Ann acts out of selfishness. In the courtroom, people see her and care about her. Suddenly, Lula Ann matters. Her voice is important and adults value her contribution. Her mother does not tell her to hide and to be invisible. Sweetness allows her presence in the public and even encourages her involvement. Finally, Sweetness is proud of her and her ego is nurtured by it.

As Lula Ann grows up and becomes Bride, the ghosts from her past haunt her. Lowenstein comments in his article 'Attachment Theory and Parental Alienation' that he disagrees with Bowlby's views on the mother figure. He points out that children need one attachment figure, but this might be a father or a sibling and as a child grows up this attachment figure might be a friend or a boyfriend/girlfriend. When Bride meets Booker, she finally has one person in her life to support her and to guide her when she needs it. For Bride, talking about her childhood and her past is a new experience. Additionally, the reactions she used to get from Sweetness are very different from Booker's. As a very young girl, Lula Ann witnesses the landlord sexually abusing a little boy:

The boy's little hands were fists, opening and closing. His crying was soft, squeaky and loaded with pain. [...] I leaned over the windowsill and stared. The man had the same red hair as Mr. Leigh, the landlord [...]. I told Sweetness what I'd seen, she was furious. Not about the little crying boy, but about spreading the story [...]. She said: 'Don't you say a word about it.' (Morrison, 2015, pp. 54-55).

As previously mentioned, Sofia Huxley's role in the novel is the one of a ghost that haunts Bride. In the quotation above, we are introduced to another disturbing and significant event in

Lula Ann's life. This too, is a core event and the episode has haunted Bride since the day it took place. When she tells Booker, she is insecure and laughs about the whole thing. Bride laughs in order to protect herself. She does not know how Booker will react. Her insecurity is due to the reaction she received from her mother as a little girl. She does not know whether Booker too will dismiss the episode as her mother did or maybe think it is ridiculous of her to be agonized about something that happened years ago. However, Booker's reaction surprises her. Instead of handling the episode and her feelings concerning it like something insignificant, Booker acknowledges her pain and suffering. He acts like the caretaker she has never had, and he tells her that she is in title to feel pain and that her emotions are important. Finally, the secure base is established for Bride. Booker makes her feel curried, safe and in a sense owned: "When I told Booker about it I laughed at first, pretending the whole thing was just silly. Then I felt my eyes burning. Even before the tears welled, he held my head in the crook of his arm and pressed his chin in my hair" (Morrison, 2015, p. 55). Bride's insecurity, which she shows by laughing at a rather serious matter, is a direct cause of how Sweetness and Lula Ann have interacted. The lack of communication between the two, the caregiver and child, has caused Lula Ann to develop into a self-doubting person because of the unpredictable responds of Sweetness. In their relationship, there does not exist a freedom of communication, and as stated by Ainsworth, Bell, and Stayton: "the degree of freedom of communication in the pairs destined to develop a secure pattern of attachment is far greater than it is in those who do not" (Ainsworth, Bell, and Stayton, 1971; Blehar, Liberman, and Ainsworth, 1977). Despite her lack of communication with her mother, gradually, Bride manages to develop this relationship with Booker. Still, the burning sensation Bride feels is new to her, and Booker's empathic and understanding response to her experience overwhelms her. However, as she reveals one of the ghosts from her past, another one emerges and torments her. Bride asks herself if she in reality pointed her finger at Mr. Leigh and not Sofia

Huxley that day in the courtroom. She decides that she has to right her wrongs. When she receives the information about Huxley's release, she wants to contribute in making Huxley's life better.

'My name is Bride.' She squints. 'That supposed to mean something to me?' 'No,' I say and smile. 'Look what I brought you'. [...] I lay two envelopes- the slim one with the airline gift certificate then the fat one with five thousand dollars. About two hundred dollars for each year if she had served a full sentence (Morrison, 2015, p. 20).

Bride tries to make up for Huxley's years in prison by offering her money. Bride does this as an act of well-meaning, but Huxley perceives it as an act of mockery. Because of Bride's dysfunctional upbringing, she is not able to see the other side of the story. She cannot see how her testimony destroyed Huxley's life. For Bride, the money makes up for the lost years. In some sense, Bride does what her father did when he left Sweetness. He took responsibility for his actions by paying himself out of it. For Sweetness, his economic contribution made life a bit easier, and I believe Bride somehow draws the same conclusions when it comes to her responsibility towards Huxley. Again, Bride acts on impulse with no regard on the consequences her actions might cause. As mentioned earlier, Bowlby calls this affectionless psychopathy. However, Bride experiences rather quickly, what Huxley think of her: "She was one of the students who testified against me, one of the ones who helped kill me, take my life away. How could she think cash would erase fifteen years of life as death?" (Morrison, 2015, pp. 69-70). Bowlby says that a child's mental development will suffer from maternal deprivation. I believe that this episode between Bride and Huxley is a good example of how Bride's upbringing and maternal deprivation affect her in her adult life. Even though she has a highly respected and well-paid job, she is malfunctioning in social settings and she fails to see how her actions and behaviour could affect others. It appears that Bride believes that she can pay her way out of unpleasant situations, trouble and responsibility. She even pays her mother a monthly amount of money, instead of confronting her mother and maybe even try to

establish a relationship with her. Unfortunately, Bride's shortcomings in relationships also affect her love life: "I'm scared. Something bad is happening to me. I feel like I'm melting away. I can't explain it to you but I do know when it started. It began after he said, 'You not the woman I want.' 'Neither am I.'" (Morrison, 2015, p. 8). The day Booker decides to leave Bride she is confused and upset. The situation is new to her because it evokes feelings she does not know how to handle or even understand why they even emerge. Throughout her childhood, Sweetness has reacted inconsistently to actions and episodes, something which consequently have confused Bride and made her anxious, and left her without the tools she needs to cope with similar feelings and situations later on in life. She has never been taught how to react or respond to emotions. We see proof of this in her handling of the situation with Huxley. Sweetness did not develop Bride's internal working models (IWM), which I described in the theory chapter, and because of the lack of this tool she is deprived the ability of handling the situation she finds herself in. These IWM are supposed to help people in new situations in life. Such situations especially arise in adolescence, when people become increasingly independent. From this stage in life, one purpose is to establish meaningful relationships, for example, when we meet new colleagues, new friends or even romantic partners. Bride's breakup with Booker give rise to negative and self-loading feelings. Instead of considering herself valuable, she immediately questions her self-worth. If she had established positive IWM earlier in life, she would have benefitted from this and handled the breakup differently. When I say differently, I merely mean that the feelings the breakup evoke would most likely have been easier to put into words and work through if her caregiver had provided her with the emotional tools and IWM. Since Bride has not learned to establish IWM by her caregiver, she cannot benefit positively. Rather, she talks herself down and is anxious, worried, and self-loathing. Additionally, the relationships she establishes with colleagues and friends are of the turbulent kind. Consequently, she establishes relationships

filled with conflict and drama, and she automatically blames herself and seeks comfort in alcohol.

When Booker leaves, her one and only caregiver vanishes and the feeling of abandonment and the lack of an attachment figure becomes unbearable to Bride. As Bowlby claims, all human beings, children or adults, need people in close proximity in which we know will support and guide us when we need it. Attachment to another human being is a two-sided coin. On the one hand, we explore the world, on the other hand, the security in having a caretaker to return to is necessary in order for human beings to develop into secure and well-functioning beings. The two sides are supposed to complement each other. Bride has never experienced a caretaker who has been there for her when things are rough. Sweetness reacts with anger when she hears about what Lula Ann saw the landlord do. Instead of supporting her daughter and teaching her how to handle difficult situations, she makes Lula Ann responsible for other people's actions. She tells her daughter to keep quiet about what she saw, if not, they will be thrown out of the apartment. As an adult, Bride carries this guilt, and when Booker makes it clear to her that she is not to blame, relief overwhelms her. After years of endless agony, she finally understands that she is not to blame for all the bad things that happen around her.

For a short period in life, Bride actually experiences what it feels like to have a person in her life who she can trust and lean upon. Still, one day he is gone. Booker walks out on her and Bride is once more left all by herself. All over again, Bride has to manage on her own. The fact that Booker leaves, and the nature of why he is escaping, Bride, herself explain as a result of the lack of closeness between the two. Throughout the novel, the question whether Bride is actually capable in establishing a well-functioning relationship and able to know how to interact with a life partner, lingers. When Booker leaves, initially she expects him to return. When his absence is a fact, she realises that she has had a relationship with a man she does

not really know anything about. She has never paid any attention to her lover's emotional and physical life. Instead, she has been selfish and self-centred. Booker has not taken his belongings, and it confuses Bride why he has so many books. This fact makes her realise that she does not know anything about her ex-boyfriend. Their relationship has been a one-way relationship. Booker has been the one to take care of Bride and established the secure base for her, while he has not received the same in return. The sudden escape of Booker, with the words "You are not the woman [...]" (Morrison, 2015, p. 8) makes us wonder what could be the reason for his hasty exit in Bride's life. Booker's escape is a foreshadowing, telling the reader that there are more to his character. Numerous questions linger; why did he leave so abruptly? Why did he not take any belongings? Is Bride to blame for his elope?

In contrast to Bride's upbringing and childhood, Booker has grown up in a large family with a secure and caring environment. This is the truth, until the family one day is exposed to a tragedy. Adam, Booker's older brother disappears. For Booker, the world collapses. Adam has functioned as his caretaker and attachment figure. Booker was supposed to have a twin, but he was stillborn. Adam has filled the void of the twin brother. As stated by Lowenstein in her article "Attachment Theory and Parental Alienation", a caregiver or an attachment figure does not necessarily have to be a mother. For Booker, Adam is the one he seeks for comfort and security: "When he (Booker) started first grade and walked to school every day with Adam the replacement was complete. So, following Adam's murder, Booker had no companion. Both were dead" (Morrison, 2015, p. 115). This episode in Booker's past explains a lot concerning his relationship with Bride. Just as Bride seeks an attachment figure, he seeks a substitute to the attachment figure he was deprived in his childhood. For some reason not revealed at the time Booker escapes, he realises that Bride is not the one he needs. Initially, it is fair to assume that the reason why he leaves her is that she is not capable of providing him with the security and stability he seeks. Both of them, Bride and Booker, need to heal their

own past before they are able to move on with their lives. As we get to know the true nature of Booker's past in combination with Bride's, we understand that there is more to his escape than first seemed to be the case. In fact, Booker and Bride's past affect each other in a negative way and causes the conflict, which suddenly leads Booker escape without an explanation.

As mentioned, Bride seeks comfort in alcohol, pills and casual sex. In the theory chapter, I mention Khantzian and his study on children who have been deprived an attachment figure. I believe that Bride's reaction and behaviour to Booker's departure corresponds quite well with Khantzian's findings in the area of how her childhood trauma leads her into addiction:

My life is falling down. I'm sleeping with men whose names I don't know and not remembering any of it. [...] Sweetness. Why am I so miserable? Because he left me? I have what I've worked for and am good at it. I'm proud of myself, I really am, but it's the Vicodin and the hangover that make me keep remembering some not-so-proud junk in the past (Morrison, 2015, p. 53).

Bride does not really understand why she is behaving the way she does. She is not aware of how her upbringing has influenced her adult life. Attachment theory conceptualizes that addictiveness is a way of affect regulation. Bride's addiction to sex and drugs is her way of coping with reality. She does not know how to tackle her feelings concerning the breakup with Booker; additionally she fails to realize that it is closely linked to the absence of a caregiver in her childhood. She is numbing her feelings with alcohol and sporadic relationships with men she does not know. For Bride, alcohol and men are easily assessable and more reliable than friends and family have ever proven to be. The only way out of her misery is not to heal herself, as Brooklyn tells her to. What is essential is for Bride to acknowledge her background and past and heal her story. Only when her healing process is fulfilled, she will be able to move forward. Her childhood has had an impact on her entire

person, mentally and physically. The way she acts is a direct result of the way she feels, and the way she feels is a direct result of her childhood trauma.

Even though Bride has learned to use her appearance to her benefit, she still hides. Her entire life, her identity and her feelings have been showed away. She has been told how to behave and what to do as long as she can remember. First, Sweetness hid her from the rest of the world in her apartment. She was afraid to bring along her when she applied for work or a new place to live. Then, when she grows older, Sweetness tells her to stay away and avoid big crowds of people. When Lula Ann matures and decides to become Bride. However, even as a strong and self-confident woman, she hides in her own way. She camouflages her insecurity and anxiety by tending to drugs, men and covering her true self in white clothes and a spotless appearance. Even though she believes that she has created a new identity for herself, she is in reality hiding her identity. Through *Bride*, Morrison "focuses on the politics of oppressed communal identity now seen as typical of trauma fiction" (Luckhurst, 2008, p. 97).

Bride's friend and colleague, Brooklyn, tries to get Bride to realise how she lives her life: "Do what Brooklyn keeps nagging me about: forget sunglasses and floppy hats, show myself, live life like it really is life" (Morrison, 2015, p. 38). Still, Bride does not take Brooklyn's advice seriously. Instead, she suspects that Brooklyn is jealous of her. In fact, Bride is right in her assumptions about Brooklyn. Even though Brooklyn is Bride's good friend and colleague, she also holds a grudge towards her. The nature for this bitterness is due to her own childhood experiences. Similar to Bride, she too grew up without an attachment figure. Brooklyn grew up with an absent father, and a present mother, physically, yet not mentally. Additionally, Brooklyn's mother did not take care of her, as a mother should. Again, the secure base Bowlby points out to be of great importance, is not established. Instead of growing up with a predictable grownup who she can both copy and scaffold in demanding situations, Brooklyn has to face everyday life filled with unpredictable reactions, insecurity,

and fear. In a way, Bride becomes Brooklyn's first and only attachment figure and vice versa. They learn to depend on each other and even fend for each other. However, when Booker enters Bride's life, Brooklyn feels that their friendship is threatened. Because of Booker, the mistrust Brooklyn developed in her childhood returns. She considers Booker to be a threat to her secure base. As an adult, she is still cautious towards new people, especially men: "I knew right away that the last one [boyfriend] – a conman if ever I saw one - would turn you into the scared little girl you used to be" (Morrison, 2015, p. 140). Brooklyn's fear of losing her close friend turns her into a cruel and jealous person, and she is not able to see that Booker's feelings for Bride might be genuine. When Bride disappears, Brooklyn knows it is to find Booker, but she cannot understand why. Her upbringing has made her unable to both sympathize and empathize due to always having to fend for herself.

When Bride meets Rain, she is shocked when she learns the true nature of her early childhood. Rain is still a child, and yet she has experienced the ultimate betrayal. At an age of approximately seven, her mother kicks her out because she fought back as a man sexually molested her. Even though Bride suffers from her own childhood experiences concerning an insufficient caretaker, she realises that not even Sweetness could have acted so maliciously: "Why would anybody do that to a child? Bride wondered. Even Sweetness, who for years could not bear to look or touch her, never threw her out" (Morrison, 2015, p. 101). Rain is still in her early childhood when Bride meet her. However, her caretakers, Steve and Evelyn, do not provide her with the love, security and comfort she needs. In Lowenstein's article, he claims that: "An infant seeks proximity to an attachment figure [...]. Failure to provide such attachment is likely to result in a dismal future for such young people, including their turning to juvenile delinquency [Bowlby, 1944]" (Lowenstein, 2010, p. 158). Unfortunately, Rain's future does not look good. Nonetheless, she loves her stay with Evelyn and Steve, Rain realises that even though they treat her well, they do not show any sign of affection for her or

even interest in her past. They are incapable of understanding the depth of her suffering caused by her mother. Because of her mother's neglect, Rain bears a hatred and devastating anger. We do not follow Rain further into her adolescence, but the lack of an attachment figure in combination with her childhood trauma, make her future prospects rather gloomy. Despite her young age, she has already been forced to turn to crime in order to survive in the streets: "If you saw your mother again what would you say to her? Rain grinned. 'Nothing, I'd chop her head off'" (Morrison, 2015, p. 102). Rain has been deprived a maternal figure, and her response to the abuse and neglect is hatred and anger. As Bowlby points out, a child who does not experience an attachment figure by the age of two, will develop long-term suffering from the deprivation. Rain is still in her childhood, past the age of two. When Bride shows up on Evelyn and Steve's doorstep, Rain finally encounters a caring adult. Finally, she receives love and support. Unfortunately, Bride's stay is temporary and even though Rain, for a short while, experiences the comfort in having a grownup caring for her, in the end she is left lonesome and emotionally on her own.

The three adult characters, Bride, Booker and Brooklyn are effected by the lack of an attachment figure during their childhood. As a consequence, their traumatizing experiences remain a blockage and complicate their adult lives. All of them have an urge to be accepted and understood by an attachment figure. To receive recognition and understanding from a grownup, leads the character towards recovery. When for example Bride expresses her trauma, Booker is her attachment figure, and has the role as witness to her story, in addition to acting as her caregiver. Unfortunately, Booker disrupts and breaks of all of the three characters' well-established relationship when he escapes.

As Rain brought into the narrative, Morrison adds a different story of attachment and trauma. Opposed to the other characters, Rain "resembled no one Bride had ever seen [...]." (Morrison, 2015, p. 86). Rain is young and innocent; characteristics that make her differ from

the other characters. Because of her young age, she does not know what consequences her deprived childhood will lead to in adulthood. Shortly, when Bride enters her life, Rain learns how it feels to be loved and cared for. However, Rain's brutal personal story has just begun, and Morrison leaves the reader without answers to what will happen to her.

An adult's job is to endeavour to keep a child from cruelty and abuse, or at least not be the one who harms a child. The adults in Bride, Booker, Brooklyn and Rain's lives have failed in all possible ways. In the following section, I will give an interpretation of the characters' experience of trauma.

3.4 Trauma in *God Help the Child*

There is a quote on the cover of my edition of *God Help the Child* saying, "the past has a hold like no other" (Morrison, 2015). The past influences a person's life, something we might consider both positive and negative. Unfortunately, in the lives of Lula Ann/Bride, Booker, Brooklyn, and Rain the past is like a clamp or a jaw that tightens its grip more each day that goes by. As they mature, their traumatized childhood haunts them. They are incapable of acting like well-functioning individuals in a demanding society. All of the main characters in the novel, struggle with their existence in the present, due to their disturbing childhood experiences. Bride, Booker, Brooklyn and Rain are all affected by traumatizing episodes in their past inflicted upon them by inadequate and abusive adults. They bring their past into the present and allow it to control their lives. What follows is an interpretation of the novel with a focus on how trauma has shaped the lives of the four main characters. Additionally, I will shed a light on how their trauma is expressed and whether it differs or if it takes on a similar character in the present lives of Bride, Booker, Brooklyn and Rain.

3.4.1 Lula Ann's/ Bride's Trauma:

In the following chapter, I am going to use the name Lula Ann when I am referring to her before the age of sixteen. After the age of sixteen, I will use the name Bride.

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, Lula Ann changes her name to Bride when she turns sixteen years old. This act symbolises a great deal. Lula Ann is the naïve, insecure and unloved child who is dependent on a person whose only concern is whether her daughter behaves well and does not attract unwanted attention. As long as Lula Ann behaves well and does not attract any attention to herself and her mother, Sweetness is satisfied. Lula Ann is the invisible child who is not supposed to be visible to others in any way. The shift in her life happens when she is sixteen, and decides to change her name to Bride. Bride is an abbreviation of her surname, Bridewell. Morrison creates a defining scene in Lula Ann's life the moment she becomes Bride: "I was Ann Bride for two years until I interviewed for a sales job at Sylvia, Inc., and, on a hunch, shortened my name to Bride [...]" (Morrison, 2015, p. 11). As Bride changes her name, she also leaves some of her past behind her. She separates herself from what she calls her "countrified" name, and to some degree leaves the dark and gloomy past behind her. At least she tries to convince herself and her surroundings that to gain a new name also provides her a new identity. She encounters the world as Bride, and dresses in white only. Her identity changes, from being the neglected and scared little girl named Lula Ann; she becomes Bride, a confident black beauty. She does not hid in the shadow of her mother anymore, instead she draws attention to her person by dressing in white. The white colour of her clothes make her skin appear even darker. Her skin that was her mother's biggest shame has become Bride's pride, and she fortifies it by dressing in white, a contrasting colour. However, is Bride actually confident and proud of her skin colour?

Alternatively, is she just putting on an act to show the world that there is no stopping her? Is it all a show for the public to manifest that her upbringing and her deprived childhood has not harmed her? What is really the origin of Bride's trauma? Is it the deprivation of an attachment figure, or are there any other episodes in her life that have done greater harm to her?

Lula Ann goes through a transformation, as she becomes Bride. However, this is not the only alteration she experiences. Even though the narrative in *God Help the Child* is realistic and plausible, Morrison has added a supernatural element to Bride's story: "Christ. Now what? My earrings. They won't 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" (Morrison, 2015, p. 50). Bride's inexplicably changing body worries her and she wonders if "this is what insanity is" (Morrison, 2015, p. 52). As the narrative continues, Morrison keeps returning to Bride's constantly changing body. What is interesting is that Bride does not mature, on the contrary, her body changes into the body of a little girl: "Only she knew about the unshaved but absent armpit and pubic hair" (Morrison, 2015, p. 97). Again, in a magnificent way, Morrison illuminates Bride's trauma by creating a supernatural element to the narrative. Does Bride actually experience these changes to her body, or has her traumatic childhood made her hallucinate and turn insane? Either way, Morrison manages to make a point; Bride is still affected by her upbringing and the sins she made in the courtroom. Her body changes into the innocent little girl she was before the trial. These changes symbolise that Bride has a longing to go back; she wishes that she were able to undo the wrongs she did when she was a girl, in which she pays the price as an adult.

As mentioned in the trauma theory chapter, "Trauma is a piercing or breach of border that puts inside and outside into a strange communication. Trauma violently opens passageways between systems that were once discrete, making unforeseen connections that

distress or confound" (Luckhurst, 2008, p. 3). When we regard Bride's life in connection to this definition, it is apparent that her trauma is related to her experience of neglect. She is neglected emotionally; however, there are a couple of episodes of significance in her life, in addition to the deprivation of an attachment figure, which contributes to a *piercing*, or *breach of border* in her life. The two episodes are the responsibility Lula Ann is given in the trial towards Sofia Huxley and the episode when the landlord rapes the boy in the backyard of Lula Ann's home. These two disturbing and traumatizing events deserve a closer analysis.

In the chapter regarding trauma theory, I made a dichotomy between individual trauma and collective trauma. Bride's trauma is an individual trauma. In other words, she has experienced and lived through something personally harmful. In addition, her trauma is of the interpersonal sort. During Lula Ann's childhood *someone* does something harmful towards her, which consequently leaves her in pain.. People that Lula Ann should be able to trust, cause emotional and mental damage, which follow her through her adolescence and adulthood.

As mentioned previously, Sweetness does her best to hide Lula Ann from public attention. In Sweetness' own way, it is an act of affection and a way to shield her daughter from unpleasant attention and hurtful events. At the same time, it is an act of selfishness because she does not want people to judge her and blame her of being unfaithful. However, when Lula Ann witnesses the landlord rape the little boy in their backyard, both the landlord and Sweetness inflict trauma upon Bride. Bride experiences an interpersonal trauma, because of what she witnesses and how Sweetness reacts when Lula Ann tells her. Lula Ann is not directly involved in the misdeed that takes place. The landlord does not rape her, still by witnessing the pain the boy experiences she somehow lives through the rape: "The boy's little hands were fists, opening and closing. His crying was soft, squeaky and loaded with pain. The man's trousers were down around his ankles" (Morrison, 2015, p. 54). Claudia Weltz makes a

dichotomy, in her article 'Trauma, memory and testimony', between 'mortal eye witnessing' which involves that the traumatized views something with his own eyes as opposed to "media-witnessing" (Weltz, 2016) which involves witnessing something reported through the media screen. When Lula Ann tells her mother what she has witnessed, with her own eyes, Sweetness replies with anger and tells Lula Ann never to speak of the episode ever again. As Lula Ann matures and becomes Bride, the rape of the boy still haunts her. As a child, she did not get the opportunity to talk to someone. If Sweetness had acted as a responsible attachment figure, she would have provided Lula Ann with comfort and helped her cope with the situation. Instead of suffering a long-term trauma as Bride actually does, she most likely would have suffered a short-term stress situation. Yet, Sweetness is not adequate to providing her daughter with the emotional support she needs. She is more concerned with what will happen if Lula Ann spreads rumours, no matter the veracity, about the landlord. Hence, this episode will be a part of Bride's life and it will affect her emotional life and her ability to trust people. In the trauma chapter, I mentioned Laub's work in the field of trauma in relation to the Holocaust atrocities. Present in his work on trauma theory, includes the witnessing role in traumatic events. His three-leafed notion of the witnessing process could also be seen in relation to Bride's status as a witness. Her recollections of the rape of the boy are the memories of a little girl who was not able to fathom the gravity on her own. The fact that Sweetness does not help her in this traumatizing situation makes Bride's trauma even worse. The second level of the three-leafed witnessing process is the role of an interviewer or a bystander who listens and "is present as someone who actually participates in the reliving and re-experiencing of the event" (Dori Laub, 1992, p. 76). Booker is the one who participates in Bride's reliving of the rape. He becomes Bride's rescuer and helps her on her way to recovery. However, as Bride is 'set free' from her agony and haunting memory of her past, Booker

submerges into his own trauma *because of* Bride's testimony. I return to Booker's trauma later in this section.

Another interpersonal traumatizing episode happens when Lula Ann has to give her testimony in the case against Sofia Huxley. To the little girl; Lula Ann, this episode does not really appear traumatic or disturbing. Quite the contrary, she feels happy and satisfied, because she finally gets her mother's attention and for a short while, she feels loved. However, at an age of 23, Bride still cannot let go of the fact that *she* contributed to the imprisonment of Sofia.

These two events in Bride's life causes her to both experience failure on the emotional level, but also success in her career. On the one hand, Bride struggles in her adult life. She has difficulties establishing friendships and she fails in creating a love life with Booker. Once more, Sweetness' ability as a caretaker is the main reason why Bride develops her trauma. Freud stated that a strong and caring mother figure is important in order to establish and develop mentally strong children and to teach them how to maintain a mental equilibrium. If Sweetness had shown affection and understanding towards Lula Ann in both the courtroom and after she witnessed the rape, Lula Ann would most likely cope with the demanding situation very differently. At the time of the incident, Lula Ann did not get the chance to talk through her disturbing experience. The two episodes are continually haunting Bride, and "A haunting does not initiate a story; it is the sign of a *blockage* of story, a hurt that has not been by a memorizing narrative" (Luckhurst, 2008, p. 93). Bride's struggle will not end if she is unable to tell her story. Her experiences function as blockages because she is incapable of expressing her feelings attached to the traumatizing events. Additionally, the demanding situations would appear less challenging and she would have been able to tackle the trauma better if her mother had provided her the tools of how to manage this. Eventually, as an adult, Bride tells Booker about the rape. She finds herself in the second stage of the three-leaved

witnessing process and Booker is there to help her. It is as if a Bride's reservoir of memories and feelings eventually breaks as she dares to trust Booker: "'You never told anybody?' 'he asked me. 'Never', I said. 'Only you.' 'Now five people know [...]. Five is better than two but it should be five thousand' (Morrison, 2015, p. 55). Finally, Bride is able to tell someone about her traumatized experience and the blockage ceases. Booker functions as the caregiver she never had, and she finally understands that what the landlord did was wrong, and that she was not to blame for the episode.

As Lula Ann matures and becomes Bride, she also develops a conscience. Her misdeeds from the past, troubles her and she decides to visit Sofia Huxley on the day of her release. Bride knows that her testimony in the witness stand contributed to sending Huxley to prison for years. As a grownup, she wants to take responsibility for her actions. At least, she feels the urge to make amends for Huxley's years behind bars. Still, Bride has not taken into consideration Huxley's reactions: "I just lay there as she beat the shit out of me" (Morrison, 2015, p. 32). One might ask why Bride does not fight back. Bride believes that she deserves Huxley's treatment. She has ruined her life, and it is only fair that she pays for her error by not returning the blows. In a way, Bride experiences satisfaction and reconciliation in being beaten up. It appears as if when Huxley finally gets the chance to fight back (both literally and symbolically); Bride finally experiences a mental equilibrium. Finally, in Bride's point of view, they are even. She has repaid her misdeeds. However, for Huxley; the price for Bride's wrongs has been high. It has ruined her entire life.

Bride never gets the opportunity to confront the landlord, she does not even get the chance to go to the police. Still, as mentioned previously, Bride asks herself if, in reality, it was the landlord and not Huxley she pointed the finger at in the courtroom. Therefore, through receiving Huxley's brutal treatment, the wounds from both of the two episodes heal to some degree.

Bride's trauma could be classified as a post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In the novel, we get to know how Bride's life has turned out, and at an age of 23, she has not managed to establish mental equilibrium. Her past is constantly causing troubles for her mentally. Even though she appears to be a successful and beautiful woman on the outside, on the inside she is still the insecure and scared little girl no one has taken care of or even cared for. Nevertheless, Bride has used her traumatized childhood to her own benefit. In one area, we might say that she is a good example of post-traumatic growth. Despite her mother's neglect and constant reminder of her inadequacy, Bride manages to climb the social ladder and make a life for herself, professionally. In many cases where the child is exposed to abuse and neglect, it affects both his social and mental life. Often, a child with a troublesome past ends up struggling his entire life, both mentally, socially and economically. Bride struggles in her interaction with other people. As a result, she does not have many close friends. Additionally, she seems to lack the ability to establish a relationship with a life partner. Still when she realises that Sweetness' opinion considering her skin colour is not a public view, she manages to see beyond the hurtful words of her mother and instead develop into a prosperous businesswoman despite of her harsh upbringing.

In the end, Bride's journey towards establishing a mental equilibrium finally is fulfilled. Her process towards recovery has been a long and painful journey, nevertheless she fights her way through the obstacles caused by her mother. Instead of accepting the fact that Booker has neglected her, she decides to hunt him down. For once, in her life, she demands an explanation in order to be able to move on. All her life she has accepted that people mistreat her and disrespect her. Even though Bride's childhood has caused her pain in many areas of life, finally the negative experiences contribute positively in her way of managing a challenging situation. Because, instead of accepting the injustice Booker inflicts on her when he escapes, she takes action. As opposed to what she did as a child when her mother

mistreated her, she finally has the courage and strength to demand to be treated just: "You don't have to love me but you damn well have to respect me" (Morrison, 2015, p. 154). Even though Bride really loves Booker, at the end of the day, what she wants is to be treated with respect. I believe that the disrespectful treatment she received by her mother and the feeling of embarrassing her return. Finally, she is able stand up for herself.

In many ways, Booker is the key to Bride's freedom from her trauma. He helps her realizing the nature of her inadequate mother, but he also gains Bride's trust and thus makes her open up. At an age of 23, her darkest and most painful burden, which she has carried all her life, finally sees the day: "I lied! I lied! I Lied! She was innocent. I helped convict her but she didn't do anything" (Morrison, 2015, p. 153). As Bride articulates these words, it is as if she accepts that her past is behind her, and that she has to leave her childhood trauma in the past in order to be able to lead a normal life in the presence and in the future. We might say that she has mourned her past and now she enters a new stage in life. As mentioned in the trauma theory chapter, J. Herman writes in her book *Trauma and Recovery* of how a child who has experienced childhood abuse: "must build a new life within a radically different culture from the one they have left behind. [...] perhaps for the first time she can discover her own ambitions" (Herman, 1992, pp. 196-197). Bride's ambition is to create what she never had. She is pregnant and the love of her life is there to share the joy and responsibility: "'You heard me. I'm pregnant and it's yours.' [...] 'No,' he said. 'It's ours.' " (Morrison, 2015, p. 174). Together they have an understanding of what a childhood should not be like. Joined they take on the task to create a good life, a childhood for their child, maybe even re-live the childhood they did not have, through their son or daughter.

3.4.2 Booker's Trauma:

"You're not the woman I want" (Morrison, 2015, p. 8)- with these words, Booker breaks off the relationship he has with Bride, and she is left alone, without a reason or explanation. This episode happens quite early in the novel, when we have not yet been able to establish any relationship to the characters. However, as the novel shifts between the past and the present, in addition to constantly changing point of views from the first person point of view according to whom the chapter is about, we gradually get to know more about Booker.

Booker Starbarn is a rather mysterious person. He loves to read; in fact, this seems to be his single preoccupation. Initially, he comes forward as a simple and rather lazy man. However, the reason for this is the nature of his relationship with Bride. They do not seem to communicate with each other. They appear to be two islands drifting next to each other, functioning as some sort of support and comfort, yet not actually being there for each other on the emotional level. Even though they have a connection, they never really move over to the other side. Physically, Bride and Booker are together, still mentally and emotionally they are alone with their trauma.

Bit by bit, we are introduced to Booker's dark past. He too, has experienced an excruciating event in his childhood, which still haunts him. Contrary to Bride, Booker is raised in a loving and tight family, where TV and technology must yield for communication and social company: "Booker loved those Saturday morning conferences rewarded by the highlight of the weekend- his mother's huge breakfast feasts" (Morrison, 2015, p. 113). However, the harmonious ambiance is abruptly disturbed when Booker's older brother, Adam, disappears. Adam was the brother who Booker cherished and idolized. He was Booker's attachment figure and role model. Suddenly, the Starbarn's family is falling apart. During the period Adam is missing the family quarrels and argues. Then one day, the police finds Adam

in a culvert, and Booker accompanies his father to identify his elder brother. "The maggots, overfed and bursting with glee, had gone home leaving fastidiously clean bones under the strips of his mud-caked yellow t-shirt. The corps wore no pants or no shoes" (Morrison, 2015, p. 114). This episode is the reason why Booker is traumatized. He has a close proximity to the event due to the relationship he has to the victim. Booker's emotional connection to Adam fortifies the experience of trauma. Booker has to face the corpse of his dead brother. The absence of his clothes and shoes give rise to traumatizing images in Booker's imagination and he understands that Adam's death was not an accident, but murder.

As I pointed out in the trauma theory chapter, a child takes it personal when he experiences that a parent or a sibling is victimized. In Booker's case, his individual trauma stems from the loss of his brother. Still, unlike Bride, Booker gains support from his aunt, Queen. She is there for him and guides him in his mourning. All though she is not the person of closest proximity in geography, during this stage in Booker's life they develop a close relationship, and she takes the role as a secure and comforting attachment figure. Although, she is not entirely able to work through Booker's trauma. An unsolved question dwell in his mind; -who killed Adam?:

Six years later when Booker was fourteen and a faintly accomplished trumpet player, the nicest man in the world was caught, tried and convicted of SSS, the sexually stimulated slaughter of six boys, each of whose names, including Adam's, was tattooed across the shoulders of the nicest man in the world (Morrison, 2015, p. 115).

Repeatedly, in the chapters about Booker, he refers to *the nicest man in the world* when he retell the story about Adam's murderer. Booker refers to abusive men in this manner, because, he believes, when people learn the true nature of an offender, they tend to reply 'But he was so nice. He was the nicest man in the world. How could this be true?'. Morrison creates a contrast in the text. She is constantly referring to 'the nicest man in the world'. Simultaneously, she presents a terrible event in Booker's childhood. As the truth about

Booker's past is revealed, the reader becomes increasingly engaged in his life-story, and because of the way Morrison uses positive and negative charged words in the same setting, she makes the event even more powerful.

Gradually, Booker continues his life and goes to college. However, in terms of post-traumatic growth (PTG), I do not believe that Booker's traumatizing event enables him to use it to his benefit and grow from the experience the way Bride does. Quite the contrary, it seems to me that Booker spends time at college, yet he does not fully commit to his responsibilities there. Instead, the death of Adam constantly returns to him and destroys his everyday life. Adam's death is the blockage that causes Booker's life to stagnate. His way of coping with the loss of his brother has made him sensitive towards people who do not act in the best interest of children. One might even say that Booker's behaviour and his need to right the wrongs done to children are his way of taking revenge in the name of Adam. He never got the opportunity to defend Adam or even say good-bye: "He'd left the beaten man's jeans open and his penis exposed just the way it was when he first saw him at the edge of the campus playground [...]. Booker's fist was in the man's mouth before thinking about it" (Morrison, 2015, p. 109). As this excerpt shows, he takes the law in his own hands and beats up the exhibitionist at the playground. He justifies his actions by thinking of how Adam was an innocent victim, a little boy who had not done any harm towards anyone. No one got the chance to stand up for and defend Adam, but as a grownup, Booker can. He has made it his mission and duty in life to protect any child against sexual abusers. Still, it does not appear to be the right way to tackle his trauma. Even after the attack of the man in the playground, Booker still feels anger and pain. Adam's death is Booker's blockage. Even though he, literally, fights a battle in the present, he is not able to overcome his trauma. Morrison is known for her feminist writing, and for shedding light on the difficulties experienced by

African American women. Through Booker, she also manages to create a narrative that focuses on a serious and difficult topic concerning sexual abuse of boys.

Eventually, when Booker leaves Bride, it is a result of his traumatic past, which might be categorized post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). When Bride tells Booker about what she witnessed as a child, he relives his own trauma. Booker acts supporting and comforts her; but memories from his past return rather vividly- for an act of panic, Booker escapes. Early in the novel, Morrison introduces the reader to this episode in Bride and Booker's life. The sentence: "You are not the woman I want" (Morrison, 2015, p. 8). Is left there hanging. Bride's response "Neither am I" (Morrison, 2015, p. 8) causes wonder and confusion. Morrison creates a tension between the reader and the text, at the same time the two lovers experience tension between them. When reading the passage, it is almost as if the reader and Bride have the same reaction to Booker's behaviour. Bride is confused and bewildered because of Booker's words. This excerpt confuses, but also evokes curiosity as Morrison continually returns to Booker's statement. As the narrative develops, we gradually learn to know the meaning behind his words. Booker knows that he cannot lean on Bride for support, because he knows that she will not be able to provide it for him. When he first saw her, he thought she was the one: "Each time he imagined her eyes glittering toward him or her lips open in an inviting, reckless smile, he felt not just a swell of desire but also the disintegration of the haunt and gloom in which for years Adam's death had clouded him" (Morrison, 2015, p. 132). He thought she was the one who would free him from his nightmare and help him on his way to recovery, but realises that she is not. When Bride tells him that she has bought gifts to Huxley, the female version of 'the nicest woman in the world', he realises that Bride is not the woman he wants. He is disgusted and shocked by Bride's action. In contrast to what Booker does, beating up and destroying child molesters, Bride has tried to comfort and make life better for a person Booker regards as trash. His childhood trauma returns to him and is

maybe even fortified by the knowledge of Bride's actions. He cannot stay with a woman who will constantly remind him of Adam's death. He has to leave. He has to find Queen, his aunt, who he developed a close relation to when Adam died.

Booker believes that the right way to face his childhood trauma is to escape. If he flees from a challenging and uncomfortable situation, then the hurt and pain will leave him for a while, yet not disappear. Booker finds it difficult to face the fear and hurt caused by the loss of Adam. According to J. Herman, we know that the best way and maybe even the only way to be able to overcome or to handle trauma is to face it: "Taking power in real- life situations often involves a conscious choice to face danger. [...] survivors understand that their post-traumatic symptoms represent pathological exaggeration of the normal responses to danger" (Herman, 1992, p. 197). Booker's perception of danger is men. In general, he considers all males to be molesters. He is not ready to let go of his trauma, but through writing a diary, playing the trumpet, and establishing a family with Bride, Morrison makes the reader believe in Booker's recovery.

3.4.3 Brooklyn's Trauma

Brooklyn is Bride's closest friend. More precisely, Brooklyn is Bride's colleague and only friend we ever hear of in the novel. Even though they are friends and spend time together, their relationship appears unhealthy. The reason for this is the nature of Bride and Brooklyn's past. Both have been deprived a secure and caring childhood. As a result, they both struggle in social settings, and do not really know how to act or even seek support from and comfort with, one another. In difficult situations, they do not have the social competence to take advantage of an attachment figure. They need to be strong and independent, as they have been their entire life.

Brooklyn is a girl who her entire life has struggled to cope. What defined her childhood was a drug addict mother who did not pay attention to Brooklyn's abusive uncle. Because of her childhood trauma, Brooklyn claims to have developed an ability to foresee what happens next. Because of her childhood experience, she believes she has an inner instinct that tells her when danger is near. She mentions numerous episodes when she was right: " Like when the landlady stole the money lying on or dining room table [...] or when my uncle started thinking of putting his fingers between my legs again, even before he knew it himself what he was planning to do" (Morrison, 2015, p. 139). Whether she is foresighted or not, Brooklyn has definitely developed into a sceptical and doubtful woman. Due to the neglect and insecure environment she has grown up in, all grown-ups are a threat to her. As a child, she has to fend for herself and protect herself from predators. For Brooklyn, men are nothing but the enemy. Again, Morrison has created a different character to whom she usually writes about. Brooklyn is a white girl, but her situation is equally disturbing as to the one of Bride and Booker.

Brooklyn's interpersonal trauma is related to sexual abuse. During her childhood, she constantly lived with the fear of how the adults in her life would treat her and expect from her. Her mother's upbringing was inconsistent and she did not know which rules to follow or how to respond to her mother's demands. Additionally, she constantly feared that her uncle.

Brooklyn's trauma differs from Booker and Bride's trauma in its temporality. Time is quite important in considering the effect and the impact a traumatic event have on the victimized. For Bride and Booker, the traumatizing event is limited in duration, because it is a single episode. For Brooklyn, the traumatizing event lasts throughout her entire childhood. Until the moment she finds herself able to flee: "I ran too, Bride, but I was fourteen and there was nobody to take care of me so I invented myself, toughened myself" (Morrison, 2015, p. 140). As mentioned in the trauma theory chapter, Catherall points out that a person's ability to

derive comfort and support with an attachment figure is of great importance when it comes to limiting the trauma's impact on the victimized. Between Bride, Booker and Brooklyn, Booker seems to be the only one who manages to seek support from an attachment figure (Queen) in order to limit the long-term effect of the trauma. Catherall states that as a person matures he uses the skills learned in childhood to be able to both seek comfort *and* comfort others. However, Brooklyn lacks both of these skills, because she has no experience of an attachment figure in her childhood who she can scaffold in similar situations. She has never established inner working models (IWM). Therefore, when Huxley attacks Bride, both Brooklyn and Bride are unable of handling the situation. Brooklyn does not really know how to be an attachment figure to Bride, and Bride has never learned how to receive love and support and therefore fails in understanding that Brooklyn is there for here.

Brooklyn appears to be the one of the three who is the loneliest and shows the least social competence. Her behaviour, and the way she treats Bride, bears witness of a person who does not have the ability to put herself in other people's shoes. When Bride falls in love with Booker, Brooklyn cannot find it in her to be happy for Bride. On the contrary, because of the nature of her trauma, she is suspicious towards Booker. In her eyes, all men are a threat and she believes that Booker's only interest in Bride is sexually related, and to take advantage of her economically. Brooklyn's trauma also differ from Bride's and Booker's in the sense of how the trauma is lived through. Both Bride and Booker suffer from secondary trauma. Brooklyn, on the other hand, has personally experienced sexual abuse.

Similar to Bride, I believe that Brooklyn uses her traumatizing childhood to her own benefit. Even though she is incapable of developing a healthy friendship or love relationship, she, too, has managed to climb the social ladder and made a successful career. In Norway, a child who manages to develop into well-functioning human being despite of a traumatizing childhood is called "løvetannsbarn" (resilient children). The same term could be used to

describe both Brooklyn, as well as Bride, in some areas of their lives. Despite a harsh and unimaginably rough childhood, Brooklyn builds herself a good life. She does not even have the benefit of a beautiful appearance, as Bride does. Brooklyn has climbed from the bottom towards the top: "I started out sweeping a hairdresser's shop then waitressing until I got the drugstore job. Long before Sylvia, Inc., (the make-up corporation where Bride is her colleague) I fought like the devil for each job I ever got and let nothing, nothing stop me" (Morrison, 2015, p. 140). This excerpt tells us a lot about Brooklyn and her personality. She is determined not to let her mother and uncle's treatment ruin her presence and her future, and the only one who can make that happen is herself. Morrison has created a strong, independent, white woman in Brooklyn. Even though she, too, has had a traumatizing childhood, her story does more than just evoke empathy. Her story contributes in seeing both Bride and Booker's past differently. Despite of Brooklyn's rough past, she does not allow herself to be limited or blocked by it.

3.4.4 Rain's Trauma

Rain is a severely traumatized child when Steve and Evelyn discover her. She is scared and jumpy, even for the smallest of touches. She is particularly sceptical towards men, and as we learn the nature of Rain's childhood, we understand her reaction pattern. Rain carries an enormous hatred towards her mother who sold her as a sex-slave to men from a very young age. When Steve and Evelyn find her, they assume from the absence of her deciduous teeth that she is around six-seven years old. Despite her young age, she seems to have lived on the streets for a while. All alone, she has to fend for herself, and through her experiences, she learns that the only person she can trust is herself.

Rain suffers from an individual and interpersonal trauma. Similarly to Brooklyn, she has experienced sexual abuse in early childhood and been raised in an environment with

abusive and deceitful adults. However, Rain does not escape the difficult and challenging existence at her mother's place; rather her mother kicks her out:

She threw me out. Said 'Get the fuck out'. So I did. [...] 'Because I bit him.' [...] 'Some guy. A regular. One of the ones she let do it to me. [...] 'He stuck his pee thing in my mouth and I bit it. So she apologized to him, gave him back his twenty-dollar bill and made me stand outside (Morrison, 2015, p. 101).

Rain tells her story to Bride during a walk, and Bride is left both shocked and sad by Rain's merciless experiences at her mother's place.

It is important to note that Rain's trauma is different from the others because of her age. Rain is still in her early age of adolescence and her traumatic experiences took place up until the age of approximately seven. During this time, as with Bride, Booker and Brooklyn, she did not have anyone to lean upon for protection. However, when Steve and Evelyn "steal" her as she says, they do not really help her through her emotional distress: "Evelyn is real good to me and so is Steve but they frown or look away if I say stuff about how it was when I was thrown out" (Morrison, 2015, p. 104). In order for Rain to be able to recover or at least heal some of her wounds, she has to get the chance to tell her story to someone who can understand and help her understand. Steve and Evelyn provide Rain a roof over her head, but love is still absent in her life. The only one Rain receives some kind of love and tenderness from is her cat, Silky. However, this changes when they take in Bride after she is hurt in a car accident on her way to find Booker.

Finally, someone understands Rain and her troubled soul. Bride's past enables her to grasp Rain's pain and fear and dares to confront her. When Bride asks Rain to tell her about her childhood, Rain does:

'Tell me, said Bride.' [...] 'Come on, Rain.' Bride put her hand on Rain's knee. 'Tell me'. And she did, her emerald eyes sometimes sparkling wide other times narrowed to

dark olive slits as she described the savvy, the perfect memory, the courage needed for street life" (Morrison, 2015, p. 102).

In this quote, Morrison creates a trust and a closeness between Rain and Bride. The touch of the knee and Rain's acceptance of the intimacy given her by Bride proves that the two characters have established a trust and a secure base.

As Bride leaves Rain, we do too. Unfortunately, Rain's future depends on how the grown-ups in her life manage to guide and support her in order for her to be able to process and heal from her traumatizing years at her mother's place. The character of Rain is different from the other three. Through Rain, Morrison has created a character who has not moved on from her childhood trauma and brought it with her into adolescence and adulthood. Rain does not reflect or even characterize her childhood experiences as traumatic until she is removed from the situation. Then, in retrospect, she understands and learns how a 'normal', or a close to normal, childhood should be like. As a result of the abuse, Rain suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder(PTSD). Episodes haunt her and have a direct impact on her present existence: "Men scared her, Rain confessed, and mad her sick" (Morrison, 2015, p. 103). In Rain's point of view, all men are evil because that is what she has learned through her harsh encounter with them. Until she meets Steve, the only knowledge she has when it comes to men, is that they are scary and dangerous. Rain lives through her trauma every time she meets men, even though they are strangers walking by and not necessarily in direct contact with her, she is reminded of how the men treated her as a younger girl, and her mental wound causes a physical reaction.

Will Rain ever recover from her trauma? As Garland claims: "You remember, you talk to others, you take a walk, you write, you cry, you laugh. [...] Along with the emotional processing, we have organized the elements of the experience into a coherent story, including

a perspective that allows us to move on" (Garland, 1998, p. 12). Because of Rain's upbringing at Steve and Evelyn's place, her future does not look bright. Steve and Evelyn expect Rain to recover on her own. However, "kids don't just "get over" their traumatization. Their memory (and associated symptoms) doesn't just fade away with time. [...] It stays fresh as until it is digested" (Greenwald, 2005). When Bride leaves, Rain is left with two adults in her life who do not really recognize her problems. She has lost the one person she could talk to, cry to and take a walk with in order to organize and understand her history. By talking to Bride, Rain's blockage could have ceased, but sadly, when Bride leaves, Morrison creates a feeling of hopelessness. It feels as if all hope is out for Rain, and the reader is left with a feeling that she will never recover from her trauma.

Chapter 4- Conclusion:

In this MA thesis, my focus has been to provide a thorough and structured framework of attachment and trauma theory in order to understand trauma fiction. I have interpreted Toni Morrison's novel *God Help the Child* in light of the two theories. My goal has been to find out whether we can understand the literary character's reaction pattern in the light of attachment and trauma theory.

According to the work of attachment theorists, such as John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth, a mother figure or an attachment figure is of vital importance. However, this person does have to be biologically related to the child, in order to develop a close attachment to him. Bowlby claims that the effect of a lack of attachment will be a long-term suffering. A child needs an attachment figure in order to develop sufficient internal working models (IWM), which are supposed to help the child in developing a secure base and provide the child with a tool that will help him establish independency. The attachment figure and the

child have to work together. The caregiver's goal is to teach the child how to both act in different situations, but also how to react to given behaviour. When the child matures, he is ready to face the world alone. He has established IWM and is able to develop new and well-functioning relationships with friends, colleagues and life partners.

In this MA thesis, my focus has been to present the framework of attachment and trauma theory; additionally I have studied how Toni Morrison enlightens these issues in her novel. How does maternal deprivation or the lack of an attachment figure directly affect a child? Through the life of the literary characters in *God Help the Child*, we see that when a child grows up in an environment that does not provide security and predictability, the consequences are numerous. Attachment theory mentions deviations as for example clingy behaviour, emotionally self-sufficient children, narcissistic diagnosis, and anxious and avoidant behaviour. When an attachment figure cooperates and interacts with the child, the child establishes reaction patterns to different situations, and this contributes increasing the chance of unwanted behaviour. Anger and anxiety may occur if the caretaker reacts unpredictably. The child is confused because of the lack of consistency, lives in constant fear of consequences, and is insecure because he does not know how to act in order to satisfy his caretaker. As Bowlby claims, human beings are pre-programmed to develop into social beings, however, the nature of the relationship the child establishes with his caretaker is essential to the outcome of the social development.

A child is not merely pre-programmed with social competence. According to Bowlby, all human beings has an innate need for monotropy, in other words; closeness to one person. Lowenstein argues against Bowlby's criterion that the closeness needs to be limited to one person only. He, on the other hand, believes that the closeness might be provided by one or several figures of proximity to the child. Whether this is provided by the mother, father, or aunt is of less importance, Lowenstein believes. Still, if monotropy is not fulfilled in early

childhood, he might develop into a malfunctioning member of society. Criminal actions, violent behaviour, and affectionless psychopathy are some behavioural reactions. Bowlby's labels the concept of an absent attachment figure, maternal deprivation. It includes both situations where the parent is physically absent but also situations where the parent does not emotionally care for the child.

Khantzian's studies show that there is a clear connection between children who have been deprived an attachment figure and addictive behaviour. This addiction might be expressed through excessive eating and drug or alcohol abuse. Even though the deprivation of an attachment figure is not defined as a traumatic experience, often, in a home where the parent is incapable of providing, both mentally and physically, for the child, other traumatic experiences arise. Catherall claims that when a child experiences something traumatizing, the most important factor in order to help the child through this situation, is the capability of the attachment figure. If the attachment figure is able to provide support and comfort, there is hope for the child. If, on the contrary, the attachment figure fails to do so, the child might face years of long-term suffering instead of short-term stress. Still, even though the attachment figure is of great importance, the child, as well, must be willing to receive help. To heal the wound of the trauma must therefore be fulfilled in collaboration between child and caretaker.

My focus in this MA thesis has been a child who experience individual trauma. Children might experience individual traumas of numerous kinds, for example from physical abuse, neglect or mental abuse. Additionally, the characteristics of individual trauma could be of either interpersonal nature, meaning that other people cause the trauma, or of non-interpersonal nature, which means that the trauma is due to a disturbing and shocking event as for example a car crash. It is the subjective experience of the event, which determines the graveness of the trauma, and what might appear insignificant to some children, might be extremely disturbing for others. Either way, when a child suffers from a traumatic event, the

challenges are numerous. The child has to handle a wounded soul that is not as apparent to others as for example a broken leg. The child has to live with the fact that people might act in inconsiderate and thoughtless ways, not necessarily out of evil, but because they are not aware of the child's wounded soul. Additionally, episodes in the child's everyday-life might evoke memories, which fortifies his trauma. At the same time as the trauma is not visible to the naked eye, symptoms like deviant behaviour, anger and fear might contribute to its discovery. Children might experience an episode as traumatic due to the proximity of both the event but also the person(s) involved. It does not necessarily mean that the child himself has been exposed to something horrible. A child is extremely loyal, and if a sibling or a parent are hurt, the event could be just as disturbing to the child witnessing it all.

It is important to keep in mind the temporality of a disturbing event. During and after WWI, soldiers who had fought the battlefield returned home with, suffering from what they called shell-shock. Today, we label this illness post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The American Psychiatric Association defines the illness as " a psychiatric disorder that can occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event such as a natural disaster, a serious accident, a terrorist act, war/combat, rape or other violent personal assault" (American Psychiatric Association). Roger Luckhurst explains PTSD as following "At first PTSD was only attributable to those directly involved, but 'secondary' victim status now includes witnesses, bystanders, rescue workers, relatives caught up in the immediate aftermath, a proximity now extended to include receiving news of death or injuries of relatives" (Luckhurst, 2008, p. 1). In addition, the temporality of the suffering is important, because of the constant returning and reliving of the traumatizing event. Such reliving might occur as flashbacks and nightmares. As the episode has occurred, we consider it something which belongs to the past. However, it is important to give the aftermath of an event the focus it deserves. For a child, family gatherings or events of amusing nature might be a constant

reminder of a lost sibling and cause the trauma to return of blaze up. In such cases, it is important to keep in mind that what might appear as a positive and happy situation could actually be experienced as a great challenge for some children.

John Bowlby talks about the importance of creating a secure base through establishing a good relationship between mother and child during a child's first years. If a child suffer from a traumatic experience, he will gain positively from growing up in a comforting and supporting environment. However, trauma might actually threaten the secure base, and turn the secure haven into an insecure base. If the child experiences threatening attachment figures, or if he experiences something traumatic and does not receive any understanding from his caregiver, the safety and trust disappear. As a traumatic event takes place, the child might ask; why did not my parent(s) protect me? He feels betrayed and in addition to being a victim of trauma, he experiences the loss of his secure base.

Nevertheless, some children, as they mature, manage to use their childhood challenges to their benefit. This phenomenon is called post-traumatic growth (PTG). PTG is in short when a person, despite his horrid experiences manages to establish a good life for himself. He will use the negative and gain from it positively. Instead of using his trauma as an excuse to feel bad and to reason his misfortunes, he turns it to his benefit and manages to reflect on the personal growth the trauma has resulted in. In *God Help the Child*, we meet several characters that one way or another have had a challenging childhood. Bride, Brooklyn, Booker and Rain have in some way or another experienced an inadequate attachment figure. In addition to this misery, they are all victims of trauma.

Initially in my thesis, I posed the question whether the lack of an attachment figure and the experience of trauma are in fact two sides of the same story. Could it be, that because of an absent parent or caregiver, the traumatizing events in the life of the characters in *God Help the Child* are experienced as even more dramatic and devastating *due to* the caretaker's

inability to provide love, support and comfort? Furthermore, could the caregiver have prevented the trauma if he had established a secure base for the child during childhood? Toni Morrison manages to attract the reader's attention from the first page. She introduces us to Sweetness, a dislikeable person. Through her trauma narrative, the reader is engaged in the lives of Bride, Booker, Brooklyn and Rain. Their childhood trauma has a traumatizing effect on the reader.

It is fair to assert that the caretaker in all of the characters' lives is incapable of establishing a secure base. Bride, Brooklyn and Rain's childhood have numerous similarities. First, their only caregiver present in their lives is their mother but she merely provides them with a roof over their heads. The secure base the mother is supposed to establish is absent. Bride's mother does not show any affection or love for her child, Brooklyn's mother ignores the sexual abuse she is exposed to by her uncle; Rain's mother's cruelty is beyond understanding as she lets men have sex with her daughter for money.

Booker's story is of a different nature. His family has been a warm and loving family until Adam dies. However, as this tragic event occurs, Booker's parents cease to function as adequate attachment figures. Naturally, the mourning of the loss of their child takes the joy out of their entire existence; and as they mourn Adam, they forget to fend for Booker. Instead, his aunt, Queen, gives him the support and guidance he needs in order to be able to move on with his life. As an adult, Booker keeps the loss of Adam close to him, and continually Adam's death haunts him and controls his actions. Queen tells him to keep Adam close and not to let him go until he is ready. For Booker, a lot of his trauma is linked to Queen's recommendations of not to forget Adam and to keep him close. As a little boy, Booker is worried that he will forget his older brother. He feels a responsibility towards Adam and his memory. When everybody else has forgotten about Adam, Booker is the only one left to honour his memory and to take revenge. Even though Booker has an attachment figure,

Queen does not provide him the support and tools to work through his trauma. Instead, she is the reason why Booker fails to move on. His is constantly agonized by the loss of Adam and the desire for vengeance.

Even though Bride, Booker, Brooklyn and Rain have all experienced an inadequate attachment figure, their childhood trauma has a different nature. But, they all carry a traumatic experience from the past, and this leaves them in similar condition. For a long time, they have carried the disturbing memories alone, incapable of communicating their story. Bride witnesses the landlord raping a small boy, and when she tells her mother she does not receive any help or support. Instead of providing her daughter with adequate inner working models (IWM), Sweetness dismisses her. Bride is left without any explanation incapable to deal with the traumatizing pictures from the rape. She carries the feelings and agony from this episode until she is twenty-three years old, and eventually Booker tells her that she was not to blame.

Booker's trauma is not directly a cause of his family relations. Booker's trauma is due to a horrible tragedy inflicted upon him, as his older brother is raped and murdered. Still, Booker's trauma is a long-term trauma. The reason for his long-term trauma might be due to the way his parents handled the situation. Instead of providing Booker with support and help he needed in the gruesome situation the entire family experienced, they all ignore how serious Booker's trauma really is. As a result, Booker both loses his brother, Adam, in addition to the rest of his family. Even though Queen tries to take responsibility and helps Booker, she is not the person of closest proximity to Booker, either emotionally or psychically. Therefore, Booker too is left alone to deal with difficulties he cannot possibly manage without guidance.

Rain is a young girl in the middle of her childhood. As opposed to the other three, Bride, Brooklyn and Booker, she is in the process of maturing. The lack of an attachment figure and the experience of trauma has made an enormous impact on the lives of the three, and whether it will have a similar negative impact on Rain is not revealed in the novel. In

order for her to be able to move on, she needs to recognize her trauma. Her wounded soul cannot heal unless she receives and accepts help. The moment she opens up to Bride is a moment of great importance in Rain's life. She finally realises how it feels to be loved. Sadly, Bride is not there to stay. Unfortunately, she has to leave Rain in the benefit for Booker.

Both the lack of an attachment figure and the experience of trauma go hand in hand in the novel. The one character's childhood is more deprived and depressing than the others', and even though its fiction it is hard not to get emotionally involved. Although dark in outlook, *God Help the Child* is compelling. In this novel, Toni Morrison has succeeded in putting abuse and neglect in the limelight. Once more, in her own remarkable manner, the reader is pulled into the lives of literary characters who not only entertain us, but who also touch the reader's heart.

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