

Tribhuvan University

**Body, Resistance and Rites of Transformation in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*
and *Beloved***

**A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Philosophy in English**

By

Arjun Nath

Symbol No: 2004

T.U. Regd. No: 6-2-404-17-2010

Central Department of English

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

April 2023

Tribhuvan University
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Central Department of English

Letter of Recommendation

Arjun Nath has completed his thesis entitled “Body, Resistance and Rites of Transformation in Toni Morrison’s *God Help the Child* and *Beloved*” under my supervision. He carried out his research from January 2021 to April 2023 and completed it successfully. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for the final Viva voce.

.....

Dr. Shiva Rijal

(Supervisor)

Date:

Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Body, Resistance and Rites of Transformation in Toni Morrison’s *God Help the Child* and *Beloved*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Arjun Nath has been approved by the following members of the research committee.

Members of the Research Committee:

.....

.....

Dr. Shiva Rijal

Internal Supervisor

.....

.....

Prof. Dr. Dhruva Karki

External Examiner

.....

.....

Prof. Dr. Jib Lal Sapkota

Head

Central Department of English

April 2023

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is my original work. It contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree in any institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published anywhere.

.....

Arjun Nath

April, 2023

Acknowledgements

It is a matter of immense pleasure and opportunity for me to express my sincere gratitude to my thesis supervisor Dr. Shiva Rijal, Central Department of English, T.U, Kirtipur, for his invaluable and regular assistance, supervision and guidance during the research. Without his cooperation and guidance, I would not have been able to present this thesis in this form.

I am very much grateful to Prof. Dr. Jib Lal Sapkota, Head, Central Department of English, and Prof. Dr. Dhruva Karki, my external examiner for their invaluable suggestion and encouragement to carry out this thesis.

Likewise, my gratitude goes to the members of my thesis viva committee. I am very much grateful to the faculty members of the Central Department of English for their valuable suggestion and encouragement during their lectures.

I record my appreciation to those authors whose works have been cited here. I am always indebted to my parents, and family members for their regular inspiration, encouragement and support.

April 2023

Arjun Nath

Abstract

*This research work explores representations of the African-American people's struggle and their ideological transformation manifested in their bodily experiences in a racist-claustrophobic American society. The bodily transformation of African-Americans liberates themselves through a bodily resistance to unravel their independent self. Morrison's protagonists become enlightened and experienced individuals in a similar way where they go through separation, liminality, and reintegration during rituals. Central characters in Morrison's *God Help the Child* (2015) and *Beloved* (1987) present the rites of transformation of black body. They preserve their dignity and identity in a new *communitas* creating their own agency and solidarity after going through liminality, a rite of political transformation of self into agency to resist against the social injustice. *Communitas* is a well defined social space in equilibrium, comparatively having no injustice, segregation and disorder where one's identity is restored through a bodily and psychic liberation passing through a liminal phase. Morrison's *God Help the Child* and *Beloved* depict the characters, *Bride* and *Sethe*, through rituals of bodily transformation as a site of resistance along with severe corporeal repression and being reintegrated into a new *communitas*.*

Keywords:

Body, Rites of transformation, Liminality, *Communitas*, Resistance, Agency, Identity

Table of Contents

Letter of Recommendation	ii
Letter of Approval	iii
Declaration	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Abstract	vi
Table of Contents	vii
Chapter I: Resisting through Body	1-27
Chapter II: <i>Bride and Sethe</i> as Embodiment of Transformed Self	28-62
Chapter III: Revisiting the Body through Morrison	63-68
Works Cited	

Chapter I

Resisting through Body

This study examines the depiction of the images of African-American people's struggle, and their ideological development as manifested in their bodily experiences in the racist-claustrophobic American society from the 1980s to the 2010s. In this research work, I observe how Morrison's characters Sethe and Bride in *Beloved* and *God Help the Child* respectively undergo a bodily transformation. Morrison's *God Help the Child* (2015) and *Beloved* (1987) present the rites of transformation of body of the black protagonists. In these novels, Morrison's black characters maintain their dignity and identity in a new *communitas*, creating their own agency and solidarity after going through liminality, a rite of political transformation of self into agency to resist against the social injustice. *Communitas* is a well defined social space in equilibrium, comparatively having no injustice, segregation and disorder where everyone's identity is respected. Besides, this study explores the way African-Americans free themselves from subordinations through a bodily resistance to achieve their independent self. This research work explores how the protagonists in the American novels become enlightened and experienced individuals in a similar spirit where a subject goes through separation, liminality, and reintegration during rituals. Morrison's *God Help the Child* and *Beloved* project the rites of transformation of body as a site of resistance along with immense corporeal suppression of the protagonists Bride and Sethe, and their reintegration into a new *communitas*.

This research work first investigates into the situation of people of color, their predicaments and the way they contrive with such situations in the modern American society. Secondly, this examines the rites of transformation of body and discovery of the self in a new *communitas* in the theoretical frame of traumatic memory of slavery,

sexual abuse, homosexuality, and human indifference in a claustrophobic- racist society. Thirdly, this study critiques the American society's subjugation of the black body unfolding how people in the margin suffer and cope up and contrive in such situation. In addition to this, it explores the way marginalized people's liminal experiences help them resist as well as overcome all the discriminations to develop their autonomous self.

Morrison uses the technique of rewriting African-Americans' body narratives in order to recreate a new reality that can alter African-Americans' subjectivities and identities and contribute to social change tackling the issues of racism, injustice, violence, trauma, and other challenges. In the case of racial inequalities, it is important to comprehend how identity, history, trauma, and narrative relate to the evolving process in search of justice and peace in modern America. The experiences of African-American people have gone through different historical junctures across different generations. The painful and hostile journey of such people can be retraced in a long span from over years to till date. Black people have become victims of racism, classism, and gender discrimination during different time periods in America. They are still at the margins of the society with little opportunities and social exclusion.

Morrison gives much space to the marginalized people in her texts. Her texts portray the marginalized people such as the poor, black, and women who are deprived of their place in the existing social order. She presents her narrative from the perspective of the marginalized, giving them space for freedom of expression. She attempts to dismantle the hierarchy between the center and margins, the black and the white by making the oppressed ones aware of their position, and by re-enforcing them to unite to fight against injustices.

Morrison often portrays the double marginalization of the characters in her novels. She picks up the issue of race, and its impacts on the psyche of individuals in *God Help the Child*, a novel that advocates for the solidarity of the entire black community. Morrison's position as a novelist has always been critical enough to critique the cross-cutting issues of subjugation of blacks; firstly in the name of race, and then sexual and gender violence. In *God Help the Child*, the protagonist Lula Ann Bridewel has faced prejudice since birth because of her race. Mother Sweetness's bond with her daughter's father is severed after her father accuses her of adultery. In fact, mother advises her to refer to her as Sweetness rather than mother and abandons her, leaving her to endure great torment in a culture where black people enjoy very little freedom. She struggles in a society where no one tends to her wounds while carrying the weight of such childhood sadness. Instead, her boyfriend Booker breaks up with her and says that he doesn't want her, a statement that stays with her ever since. This sort of rejection from everyone and its ramifications weaves a dark thread throughout the book, symbolizing her dark side.

She is a stunning, meek, helpless, and frail figure who is burdened by parental abandonment, homelessness, and a lack of any form of love or affection. She accuses an innocent school teacher Sofia Huxley for sexually molesting a child just to drag the attention of her own community towards her, and to get the tender touch and attraction from mother. As she does not succeed in her goal, she realizes her fault of accusing Sofia. She begs pardon for her deed later, but is badly beaten by enraged victim. Each and every part of her existence is abandoned. She is devastated by her battle and frequent flashbacks to the terrible past. She experiences significant bodily changes as she loses her womanhood, including the loss of her breasts, body weight, and pubic hair. The celestial voyage that Bride embarks on in order to discover her

true self and gain some peace of mind is the central theme of this book. She has amnesia in her instance, and a lovingly portrayed rural, retro-hippy family takes her in and helps instill some trust in human nature in her. She goes for self discovery, identity and independence leading a cosmetic business that leads her to ultimate victory. Still traumatic memory works to keep her detached from real social functioning. She experiences intense transition as she loses her body weight, her breasts vanish, still she reintegrates with new social norms formulating her new self after a huge resistance.

Likewise, in *Beloved*, Sethe, the protagonist, born in the South to an unknown African mother, is sold to the Sweet Home plantation owners, who practice a malevolent kind of slavery. Sethe lives there with the lustful male slaves, gets married with Halle and gives birth to Howard, Buglar, and an anonymous daughter whose name "Beloved" is engraved on her tombstone after her execution in an attempt to save her from slavery. Mrs. Garner's sadistic and racist brother-in-law, known as schoolteacher, becomes oppressive and unbearable to the slaves, an act that makes them escape away. After an attempt to escape, schoolteacher's nephews seize Sethe in the barn; whip her severely, despite the fact that she is pregnant. They violate her by sucking the milk her body stores for her infant daughter. Swollen and scarred, Sethe nevertheless runs away. Sethe gives birth to her child aboard a boat, and then stays in Cincinnati for 28 days. The schoolteacher, however, shows up so that Sethe can take her and her children back to Sweet Home. She flees with her children to the woodshed and tries to kill them rather than give them up to a life of cruel enslavement. Unfortunately, she kills her daughter and later arranges for the baby's headstone to be carved with the word "Beloved." The engraver takes advantage of her body, sexually exploits her to engrave the word 'Beloved' where Sethe cannot afford for two words-

'Dear Beloved'. Her bodily tortures and traumatic experiences have caused her to lock away her memories, emotions, and ability to love. It is not slavery that directly pushes the characters into liminality, rather it is the memory of slavery of the past that transforms them. Sethe, after passing through transition subverts the racist gaze and lives in a new social sphere with a hope of better social recognition. Both *Beloved* and *God Help the Child* present the corporeal liminal experiences of slavery and trauma as a site of resistance where there is an ideological shift among the characters representing their configuration of agency.

The focus of the study is the protagonists' quest of social justice where their bodies go through active experiences of bodily transformation in course of inventing new body and maintaining balance between new self and old self. All body performances, acts and gestures are due to social obligations, where such bodily experiences are inseparable from ideological experiences. These ideological changes construct a new self that questions the existing ideology that represses particular strata of the society. It is worth observing the bodily and ideological changes of the characters constituting a new ideological self which serves as a triggering force for an act of resistance.

Morrison portrays marginalized black people's bodily exposures, the wound of the body and the mind, bitter experiences, their struggle, self-discovery, politics of their consciousness, and their transformation as independent human beings in the racially biased American society. African- American literature provides a fertile ground to explore the treatment of body within the inherent struggle of blacks against white supremacy and racism. The black body sets a target for the dominant white culture on which it inscribes its values. Morrison presents the politico-social struggle of African-American people through her texts and her efforts to give justice to them.

The study lays much stress or emphasis on the awakening of agency among the marginalized people to resist oppressions faced by them. Morrison's novels critique the social life of her black American people and their collective consciousness to resist and formulate a new self to live and blossom. She presents her characters bold and enduring all sort of segregation, exploitation, and abuse in a subversive way to challenge society and its biased eyes. The context of her novels is the twentieth and early twenty- first century America and its people's clash in the periphery of race, and its everlasting effects on black community, shaping their memory in the backdrop of past day's slavery and its after-effects.

Drawing upon Victor Turner, Michael Garnett, Judith Butler, and Michel Foucault, this project interprets the texts through the lens of agency in relation of body politics in African- American literature. Analyzing the protagonist's suffering, traumatic stage, bodily transformation and liminality, resulting into a stage of resistance in the novels contributes to the intellectual debates in modern narratives with different theoretical perspectives. Garnett's agency has internal and external factors of awakening the self, which are applicable with Morrison's characters too. Turner's liminality has a distinct self formation which is constitutive of awakening of agency. Likewise, Butler regards body as a continuum that subverts other post-discourses of body. Further, it casts light on relationship between literature and resistance to show how liminal space can be a political space, and how a *communitas* best adopts it's liminal or marginal groups to awaken agency in the dominated people. Here, this awakening of agency takes place among the dominated ones due to both internal and external factors while going through transformations. Although this research makes significant use of concepts developed in body and resistance, it does not offer a comprehensive analysis of body and resistance theory, rather an analysis of

impact of race and slavery as a cultural denominator of bodily transformation and body's obligation to resist for self-discovery is a primary tool of analysis. The major objective of the study is to demonstrate the rites of transformation of body and resistance due to deep-rooted interracial conflicts and social injustices.

This research work studies Morrison's *God Help the Child* and *Beloved* in a conceptual frame of interracial conflict that gives rise to liminality, a rite of bodily transformation as a political space to awaken agency in the dominated people in a claustrophobic- racist society. Both protagonists' liminal bodies reconstruct themselves as dominant characters to produce a counter-narrative by deploying the black female body as the locus of resistance. To some extent, Morrison's characters have attained their autonomous self with the arousal of their agency. Morrison, through her characters' bodily experiences, presents how body can be an active medium to resist and bring a new state of equilibrium in the society. As a writer she restores the black racial differences through literature in which her characters subvert the existing discourses of racism where their bodies undergo ritualized rites of transformation experiencing liminality to come up with an arousal of agency to resist. These incidents affect the people bodily and psychologically from the roots of race serving as subjugation, dehumanization, and collective trauma among the characters.

Morrison's dramatizations of the subjugation and dehumanization of her female characters are done with the purpose of giving them voice and agency, even if their empowerment is achieved through bodily transformation and sometimes through death. The factor that unites these characters belonging to disjunctive spaces and contexts is their decision to resist violence and pain by effacing the self, and speaking through new agency. The self-erasing of the female body, on which cultural and gendered violence has been inscribed, becomes a subversive act of resistance against

the oppressive order.

Morrison with her novels has received numerous critical appreciations in different lights. Mecca Jamilah Sullivan reviews Morrison's novel in the backdrop of deep rooted psychological impact of racism as a terror among the people of black community and their attempt to escape from such evil practice through a bodily adventure of resistance act. In order to uplift their status, Morrison gives voices to the voiceless through her novel. He further asserts:

God Help the Child takes up classic Morrisonian themes: beauty, violence, racism, American blackness and its ghosts of personal and communal trauma, the consumption of bodies—and black women's bodies in particular—the lasting injury of rejection, the exquisite glory of desire. The novel tells the story of Bride, born Lula Ann Bridewell, a young, dark-skinned black woman whose life has been shaped by her body's failure to meet the norms of consumable womanhood. As a "blue-black" child, she is rejected by her "high- yellow" mother, Sweetness, who refuses to touch her for most of her girlhood.. .Bride's father, too, vanishes without touching her. (13- 14)

God Help the Child carries different classic themes of Morrison such as beauty, violence, and racism. The black body is taken as a rejection or social exclusion in the contemporary American society. Black bodies carry the scars of communal trauma, and repressed desires. Such bodies suffer from identity crisis, and in an attempt to preserve the self dignity, go through active transitional phases to subvert or resist the domination. Bride's stereotypical father, Louis having been guided by the racial prejudice abandons both mother and daughter. Both parents of Bride feel humiliation of her skin color. Incidence of such racial segregation, even at the home yard, urges Bride to look into herself for an arousal of self pride.

Likewise, Linda L. Kick further critiques Morrison and her artistic creation with respect to memory, sufferings, anxieties, and racial trauma. He further explicates:

The beauty of Toni Morrison is that it points a reader just becoming acquainted with Morrison's works in numerous directions, insuring a recognition of the complexity and diversity of Morrison scholarship. For those already steeped in Morrison's works, especially those who like Matus herself are teaching the novels, the dimension of racial trauma will unquestionably engage them more profoundly in Morrison's vision. (284)

Morrison's novels are known as quest tales as the characters have a pursuit of the hidden sign, capable of giving them strength and identity among the racial traumatic encounters. She explores blackness through her novels. She intends the readers to collaborate with her to interpret her novels. She presents characters who have been marginalized by society because to their identity as either male or female. In most of her works, she also examines the core of African-American reality, notably that of an African female and female estrangement, which leads to racial suffering on a large scale. Her books examine how black people fight to find their identities and how they fail to do so. Morrison has distinguished herself as an author, editor and critic who has transformed the American literary landscape with her presence in the African-American literary tradition.

In her "Post What? Disarticulating Post- Discourse in Morrison's *God Help the Child*", Delphine Grass casts doubt on the idea of post-raciality in the United States. She claims that the book emphasizes how slavery has affected black people and is still a problem today (1). According to her, Morrison challenges her readers to face the pervasive emotional and physical harms that racism and sexism continue to produce,

especially for black girls and women (3). In addition to post-raciality, Gras discusses post-feminism to highlight how the black female body is analyzed under “commodity feminism” to reflect on the male gaze (7). Morrison addresses a general problem which poses a threat to the subjectivity of African-American people ensuring the commodification of their bodies regardless of gender.

Morrison underscores the way black bodies become a target of white ideologies through her novels. Linden Peach, in *Toni Morrison* (2000), asserts that Morrison’s use of white American primer “unfurls the history of Euro-American Standards of beauty and in white America’s idealization of the family from an African-American perspective” reflecting how “they come into conflict with the history that is situated, metaphorically and literally, in the black body” (32-33). Hence, the black body transforms into a site of struggle that transforms the circumstances into a motive to be able to move on in life. Such bodies host conflicting ideals of blackness and whiteness, and strive the arms and manage to survive in a racist sphere.

Morrison directly challenges the authority or the centre, and this challenge is a kind of resistance. She completely rejects the patriarchal masculine order and presents her characters as wanderers leaving everything behind in a racist society in search of new self-formation. She tries to defy all social dogmas while society silences her quite often. She has choices of inner freedom to cope up with social injustice. Her characters' sense of self is diminished in a patriarchal society. Morrison confesses how racism entails the docile black body is reduced into a commodity through characterization of Bride in *God Help the Child*. Bride assumes that her success requires wearing only white clothes to exhibit her beauty. Accordingly, she inhabits in a space where her blackness is treated like commercial products. Eventually, she

breaks the chains of commodification and regains her subjectivity with a reconfiguration of her body to be able to assert the right of living in a space that celebrates difference.

Critics view the historical frame of the novels of Morrison as a therapy for African-Americans who are unaware of their traumatic history. According to McKay, rewriting African-Americans' terrible past is "a purposeful move toward mending a grievous scar... and to remind us never to allow this atrocity happen again" (3). For McKay, one may argue that rewriting the traumatic history in the novel is needed for self-discovery and recovery. Morrison rewrites the life of the historical figure Margaret Garner or Sethe in *Beloved* and Bride in *God Help the Child*. Both *Beloved* and *God Help the Child* portray the deep pain left behind in African-American bodies, minds and memories by the whites.

Morrison genuinely reveals the actual voice of African – American slave life. She ties her people with a thread of African myths enabling them to act out their potential regain, and depict their inner spiritual imaginative lives hidden beneath historical facts. Morrison asserts the essence of identity, resisting against racism, sexism and silencing. She explores the multiple layers of everyday life of strong, imaginative, energetic victims, women and men. She redraws historical reality presenting the vigor, predicaments and experiences of such victimized black people. Her famous novel *Beloved* gave her the fame to be the first African- American woman to win the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993.

Morrison picks up the very issue of race and its impact on the psyche of the individuals to advocate for the solidarity of the entire black community. She often portrays the wound of the body and the wound of the mind and double marginalization of the characters in her novels however they re-integrate with new

social norms formulating their new self after a huge resistance. Protagonists suffer bodily and emotionally going through an immense transformational journey in quest of new self to resist against the tormenting factors. Morrison raises the voice of the voiceless as she presents the horrendous life experiences of her characters, not because of physical but because of racial traumatic events. In such instance, black body is only tortured physically and psychologically.

In *Race, Trauma, and Home in the Novels of Toni Morrison* (2010), Evelyn Jaffe Schreiber states that “one of Toni Morrison’s great achievements is her ability to depict what it means to be black” (11). Even in the age of democracy, the black body is still under a captivity of the white instruments of torture. In a neo-slave era, a set of racist ideologies keeps the black body under constant captivity. Morrison underscores how the ideology of white supremacy and its idealized norms of body are instilled in the psyche of blacks. Morrison investigates how African-American bodies fall under the oppressive ideology of white supremacy which restricts their potential to produce their own identity, space and autonomous self breaking the shackles of subjugation. Morrison presents black bodies with a potential to conceive space and agency through mental idealization of white standards.

Reviewed, in *The Atlantic* under the title of “Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child* Finds Beauty in Human Weakness”, Walton Muyumba recaptures Morrison’s emotional dimensions. Further Muyumba explicates Morrison’s response to sentiments of characters- by injecting narration of the dominated people. Her main goal is to establish herself as a humanist author. Morrison unravels the agenda of how American Children are being mistreated by their parents. Through *God Help the Child*, Morrison makes us clear that there is great impact of our histories on our emotional faculties. He critiques that voices are used in *God Help the Child* to give

Bride's narration and Morrison's motifs a discordant tone. All three of the supporting characters, for example, have tense relationships with their mothers and onerous childhood baggage, just like the Bride. . . . Morrison's fiction about human devilishness and frailty, crippled bodies in crisis, and the influence of our past on our emotional faculties is the foundation of her greatness—the beauty of her prose, her formal and imaginative risk-taking, and her intellectual prowess. Her abilities are proudly on display in *God Help the Child*, albeit not at full strength. (para.14)

God Help the Child reveals that history is directly connected to the lifestyle of the people. It has a huge impact on the psyche of people living in a contemporary society. Bride copes up with the harsh reality of mothering and childhood in a contaminated world of racism and violence. She grows up without tender love and care however she achieves success leading a cosmetic company having a quest for her true self emerging from a contaminated racist environment. Racism creates trauma for the people, and it is always a troublesome journey for African-Americans. As having multiple voices in the novel, Morrison portrays multiple suffering and trauma of the characters. Mainly, characters go through bodily transformations experiencing trauma, and eventually finds themselves in a new social sphere having no differential values.

Racism is the factor for bodily transformation and liminality in both *God Help the Child* and *Beloved* though it is implicit but has crucial part for the characters' indulgence in different activities. Protagonists in both novels suffer bodily and emotionally going through a transformational journey in quest of new self resisting against the tormenting factors. Sima Farshid, in "Reclamation of the Exploited Body in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*" examines the slave holder's consideration of the slave body as a means of production. He further critiques:

The appalling handling of slaves as subhuman properties, in addition to the degrading notion of inferiority implanted in their mind damagingly impeded the formation and development of any sense of human selfhood in the long-exploited slaves. . . . The wise old woman of Morrison's novel accurately comprehends this predicament, and thus attempts to help other ex-slaves eliminate their internalized sense of inferiority and discover the necessary, proper means to gain the mastery of their body and hence "claim" their freed self and thereby regain their sense of human dignity. (497)

The commodified slave bodies as a means of production can be a medium to revisit the past and rewrite the history. Body can be a domain to study the various instances of slavery's hideous treatment as narrated in *Beloved*, the most ruthless of which seems to be Schoolteacher's maltreatment of Sweet Home slaves whom he considers subhuman creatures detecting slaves' corporal traits due to regarding them as commodities. There is a need to reunite and deploy the body in order to regain a transformed self-giving up the inferiority complex and arousing a new agency.

This research work explores the downtrodden people's corporeal experience in the vein of body's political rites of transformation, and resistance. While subverting the existing biased ideology, marginal characters of Morrison come up with an arousal of the autonomous self and agency with an enormous bodily and ideological transition. Here, body comes at the centre of resistance, experiencing the rites of transformation, where such bodily changes cannot be separated from ideological changes. The transformation of the body from empty state of powerlessness to empowered quest of agency, emerging as a site of resistance embodies the body's powerful mechanism. Self is the result of social processes, constructed and reconstructed through ongoing social interactions producing a counter-narrative by

deploying the body as the locus of resistance.

The subject of body has become a much concerned topic among the scholars in the modern context. It has been a subject of discussion in Greek art, Egyptian sky-cult and earth-cult, and medieval literature to the modern literature. Such bodies have been studied under different categories like the subtle and the gross body, social body, transformational body, sacrificial body, ethno body and techno body. For Axel Michaels and Christoph Wulf, "body is a culturally defined and constructed, fluid social entity where fluidity of body can be taken as a medium of achieving higher form of consciousness"(2). We cannot take body outside socially. Body has been an ambiguous domain of human self as body itself is a text for us to read and understand. As per the cultural construction, body acts and performs in a certain way assimilating some sort of transitions and achieving a new cognition that we call a formation of distinct ideological self. This ideological shift is brought upon the body with an urge to bring forth radical transformation in the social landscape.

Different theorists have viewed body and corporeality as a site of resistance. Victor Turner explicates liminality as a bridge between old self and the new self, where he terms this 'self' as an ideological part which is constitutive of identity and dignity. Turner borrows three terms- separation, liminality and re-integration, from anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep's 'Rites de Passage' to elucidate body's rites of transformation. Turner explicates 'liminal phase' with respect to Van Gennep's definition of rites de passage as "rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age" (89). Turner's liminality has a distinct self formation which is constitutive of awakening of agency through bodily transition as a political rite having anthropological orientation of liminality and *communitas*.

Morrison's protagonists undergo three stages of ritual transformation:

separation, transition or liminality, and incorporation. They detach themselves from their previous social status. In the phase of transition or "threshold", the ritual subjects pass through an area of ambiguity, uncertainty, and they experience utmost complexities of life in a new social order. Liminality experiences splitting of the original self, and undergoes a transformation, resisting the social construction in quest of a new enlightenment and agency. Incorporation represents equilibrium and the return of the subjects to their new, relatively stable, well-defined position in the society.

The century's long oppression comes onto the surface following a headlong resistance stimulated by liminality of bodies. Beloved's liminal appearance violates the eventualities of time to challenge the murderous history and a disabling present. In this matter, Karla F.C. Holloway critiques:

For Morrison's novel, what complicates the physical and psychic anguish is the reality that slavery itself defies traditional historiography. The victim's own chronicles of these events were systematically submerged, ignored, mistrusted, or superseded by "historians" of the era. . . The structures within African and African-American novels consistently defy the collected eventualities of time "past, present, and future". . . Beloved's existence is liminal. Between worlds, being neither "in," nor "of" a past or a present, she is a confrontation of a killing history and a disabling present. (49-51)

The ghost of Beloved, stands for the forgotten past history of slavery that haunts the 124-Bluestone house. This existence is a liminal one, neither of past, nor of present and future rather this confronts the murderous history and a disabling present that cannot assimilate either this liminality or a new communitas.

Classical societies delivered identities through ritual practices that tied up

people and their bodies to the regeneration of long established social positions. Self or identity is no longer homogenous and stable within the individual. Instead, identities are formed reflexively through the asking of questions and the continual reordering of self-narratives which have at their centre a concern with the body (qtd. in Shilling's 157). Body in the social landscape can be a site to question and reorder the existing social values. It goes through active transformation and challenges the homogenous and stable notion identity. Shilling contends that "Self-identity and the body become 'reflexively ordered projects' that must be moulded from the complex variety of possibilities afforded by high modernity" (157). The modern social values undermine the traditional meaning making systems and heighten the reflexivity about life, meaning and identity. In a spectrum of plurality, self identity seeks for a denial and subversion of the existing values. In an act of resistance, body goes through performative subversion with an arousal of agency.

After examining the traumatizing effects of slavery in *Beloved* and its legacy in the twentieth century, *God Help the Child* situates the hurting black body in the twenty- first century, a supposed post-racial era investigating how Morrison's depictions of the Black female body, its victimization as well as its commodification shatter the myth of a post-racial America. Regarding this, Delphine Gras critiques in "Post What? Disarticulating Post-Discourses in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*":

Morrison's *God Help the Child* reminds the legacy of slavery still affects African American bodies. With its focus on physical and emotional pain, Morrison's latest novel is reminiscent of canonical neo-slave narratives like Octavia Butler's *Kindred* or Morrison's *Beloved*. Both of these earlier texts transport the readers back in time to witness the cruelty of the slave economy and its impact on the Black female body. . . *God Help the Child* is anchored in

the present, yet it is connected to this past in its exploration of how and why the black body of its female protagonist, Lula Ann, is still hurting, even after she undergoes a supposedly liberating makeover. (1)

The heritage of slavery still controls how black female bodies are perceived and handled in twenty-first-century America, according to Morrison's *God Help the Child*. The comparison between *Beloved* and *God Help the Child* compels readers to acknowledge the ongoing use of physical and psychological violence in racial relations in the United States.

Body asserts its self-worth and identity through bodily transition and acquisition of agency to resist. Awakening of agency takes place among the people when they become free from internal and external factors. Some people have certain phobias, some have very irrational compulsions, motivations, some are blinded by prejudice and superstitions, some have ideological traits that make people unfree. To be independent or autonomous is not an easy task; it requires inner freedom. "The idea that interior states can impair freedom in basically the same way as outward obstacles might, namely by prohibiting the agent from doing what one would otherwise be able to accomplish," claims Garnett (4). Due to lack of inner freedom, independence and self-governance, agency is not possible. When someone is not autonomous, agency is not possible.

The person isolates themselves from socialization as a result of internal limitations. In this regard, Garnett quotes Wertheimer, "The structure of freedom speech always assumes that the constraining actor and the constraint itself are separate. While restrictions function internally within an individual, there is a fundamental sense in which they are always theoretically external" (4). Internal constraints are associated with external constraints. Issue of inner constraint requires a

theory of deep agency of the agent that can be thought of as distinct from some of its desires. External constraints include color, caste, class, ethnicity, and other biased attitudes of society. Autonomy and inner freedom is difficult to find out. Everyone is confined internally and externally but degree varies. Garnett hypothesizes two directions for an active agent to go: develop opportunities of self-governance and freedom i.e. theory of freedom, and theory of agency with an emphasis on developing identification and authorship among vast obstacles (3-4). Agents are always controlled by outside forces along with inner constraints; and deep agency model resists against both internal and external factors.

Morrison exposes issues of race and how this society has denied African Americans' racial identity by criticizing the patriarchal racism, misogyny, and classism that today governs America. Her writing aims to create a fresh literary aesthetic that challenges racist notions. In this regard, Manuela López Ramírez in "Racialized Beauty: The Ugly Duckling in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*" explicates an almost fairy-tale ending in Lula Ann's cathartic journey, her love story and pregnancy. He admits that Morrison demonstrates the harm that commercial values and hegemonic standards of female beauty can do to black women. Even when the idea that "black is beautiful" is commodified, Lula Ann and Pecola, their heroines, serve as illustrations of racialized beauty and how African Americans have been colonized by white cultural standards of beauty (173). He further explicates, "Morrison discredits the myths of racialized beauty and consumerism in *God Help the Child*, emphasizing the need of developing your own ideas of beauty and self-worth. Morrison's most recent book, "The Ugly Duckling," is a potent and uplifting allegory about change and self-discovery"(173).

Morrison demonstrates the value of beauty in the world in *God Help the Child*.

She returns to the idea that "black is beautiful" and the persistence of internalized and institutionalized racism in society. Through a lady who attempts to use surface beauty to numb herself from her horrific childhood, Morrison exposes the danger of the myth of beauty. Because Lula Ann's black physique is unfit for a shallow culture, she goes through a makeover in search of her true identity.

Likewise, Michael Hatt in "Race, Ritual, and Responsibility" sheds light on the segregationist behavior towards the black body in America and the need of such black body to revert such paradigm to get beyond slavery and establish a self worth. He further explicates:

The surface was believed to conceal the truth, and this idea was how the dark was defined. The retrogressionist paradigm, for instance, asserted that black people will revert to their real selves absent the institutions of slavery and white dominance. Hence, the black is given a fixed identity and placed outside the performative. In the reification of the body, which makes a single black body stand in for all blacks while also rejecting internal variations in the category of blackness, he is also denied agency. This is unmistakably a strategy for establishing, consolidating, and upholding a rigid racial hierarchy as well as neutralizing opposition to white supremacy. (78)

The subordination cannot exist forever when the black body realizes the need to arouse an agency through a performative subversion. Such subversion on behalf of black leads to an ultimate victory in the form of a new identity. This newly generated black identity stands for entire black community with a denial of categorical differences and challenges to white supremacy.

Foucault places body at the centre of the interplay of power structures in the society. For Foucault, power is conceptualized as a system of relations spread in the

society rather than simply as a set of relations between the oppressor and the oppressed. It is governing force having both domination and resistance. Power is always a component of resistance, according to Foucault. Foucault states:

The body is also directly involved in political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs. This political investment of the body is bound up, in accordance with complex reciprocal relations, with its economic use; it is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination. (30)

For Foucault, the body is a mere site for the play of the dominant structures of power and knowledge. Toni Morrison shifts her protagonists in *Beloved* and *God Help the Child*, respectively, from victimhood and disempowerment to the subjective realm of resistance and agency in light of this dual idea of the subject as simultaneously formed by power and gifted with the ability to reject it. As a result, the body serves as a location of resistance as well as a stage for the interaction of the dominant structures of power and knowledge, according to Foucault. This resistance can occasionally be as extreme as effacing the self, a move that could undermine or cause fissures in the hegemonic system. More specifically, according to Foucault, "One would be concerned with the 'body politic' as a set of material elements and techniques that serve as weapons, relays, communication channels, and supports for the power and knowledge relationships that invest human bodies and subjugate them by turning them into objects of knowledge" (34). Body politic, as a set of material elements, exposes power and knowledge relationships invested in body with an intention to subjugate them.

Likewise, Butler views body as performative and subversive, and opposes the

inscribed notion of body in totalitarian society. Body, with the change in time and context suffices with new discourses about it. She takes body as a cultural sign having different historical discourses of different social constructs. Butler postulates gender is "a physical or corporeal style, an 'act,' if you will, that is both purposeful and performative, where performative denotes dramatic and contingent creation of meaning" (177). Laws that society produces are man-made, arbitrary and subject to counter-argue and change. Women can use gender performance to subvert patriarchal society. With respect to body and its performative subversion, Butler states:

The displacement of political and discursive origin of gender identity onto a psychological core precludes an analysis of the political constitution of the gendered subject and its fabricated notions about the ineffable inferiority of its sex or of its true identity. If the inner truth of gender is a fabrication and if a true gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies then it seems that genders can be neither true nor false but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity. (174)

Gendered body has an unseen script. Body, soul and all values are performative.

There is no original body and discourse. All bodies and discourses are fabricated. It is just a parody of discourse that Butler calls pasties. It is not something pre-given rather it is acquired.

In a racist society, docility and objectification are the apt signs that can be attributed to the black body's identifications. Morrison analyses the way racial ideologies work to commodify the black body. Such ideologies are hegemonic forces under which African-Americans are still stigmatized because of their skin color. For this reason, Morrison orients the body as a subversive force capable of introducing a social change. She suggests that embracing blackness as a sign of difference is the

only way to defy white hegemonic tendencies to control space, and the only means of self-assertion and dignity through transcendence.

Sarah Ladipo Manyika in "On Meeting Toni Morrison" unpacks wisdom and intellect of Morrison. Her question to Morrison intends to dig out the hidden history of African- Americans under the pathos of racial segregation. Indeed, her stories present such historical narratives of pain and trauma very bravely and wisely directing the new generation to cope up with such hardships. In that regard, she admits:

The history of slavery and its legacy is so horrific that I wonder how Toni manages to write about slavery and persistent racism without the heavy weight of this history collapsing her stories. How does she remain sane when writing about horrors that have not ended? Toni's response to my question, Language can never 'pin down' slavery, genocide, war. Nor should it yearn for the arrogance to be able to do so. Its force, its felicity, is in its reach toward the ineffable. (147)

Morrison's answer to Manyika is what matters much in life and in stories, is wisdom not language. Ineffable or unspeakable can be best expressed through wisdom, shrewdness and courage to resist.

Beloved is pictured as a physical presence that was never lost and doesn't need to be lamented. Given that Sethe trades sexual favors for the "seven letters" inscribed on her daughter's gravestone, it would seem that the disappearance and eventual reappearance of Beloved's body are connected to the sense of bodily loss that Sethe feels when she sells her body to the engraver. In this regard, Peterson argues:

Beloved's body is imagined not only as having returned to Sethe, but as having never left, never having needed a headstone, suggests a certain revision of Sethe's scene of prostitution . . . the act of prostitution that secured her

daughter's epitaph would never have taken place . . . While Sethe's corporeal loss is narrated through a scene of sexual violence, the mourning of her body as hers also describes the condition of Sethe's relation to others more generally. From the sexual violence that slavery wreaks on her body, to the sacrifice of her body for the lives of her children, to the violent, possessive relation that she affirms with her kin, Sethe's body is always and irreducibly marked as a site of mourning. (557)

According to the notion of liminality Morrison advances in *Beloved*, black power need not be rooted primarily in the past; the future can also act as a readily accessible location of authority and resistance. According to the argument for the liberation of slaves, the material project of slavery was the commodification and sexualization of the black body. The claim made by the schoolteacher in the book that he had complete "rights" over his slaves depicts black slaves as his "property" and is consistent with Cincinnati's Fugitive Slave Statute, which was in effect in the 1790s.

Morrison urges us to recollect the horror of past in a digestive and non-violent way so as to pass on the story to different generations in pursuit of their identity, self worth, and their space in a communal living. This is a subversive act employing the body at the centre going through ideological transformations to revisit the black history. In that regard, Taylor views Morrison as a force that resurrects the diminishing slave history of America. He observes that according to Toni Morrison, it's important to recall the horror, but it's also important to do it in a way that allows you to process it and prevents your memory from being harmful. In a way, the act of writing the book is a means of coming face to face with it and allowing one to remember (248). Morrison asserts that overcoming the trauma of slavery entails recollecting the past rather than forgetting. In contemporary American society the

institutional slavery has been largely forgotten. But Morrison tries to show that the past never ends. She wants the readers to re-visit and comprehend African-American history by re-telling it through the lives and bodies of former African slaves.

Likewise, Susan Elkin writes in “The Independent Daily” regarding Morrison and her characters entitled “The Tyranny of Memory can make a Destructive Adversary”.

Morrison in *God help the Child* brings the issue of how color impacts the body psychologically. Colored people are always tortured and victimized in the society where they are forced to live under domination and humiliation. He analyzes:

Prejudice and twisted values are not the exclusive province of white people . . . Centuries of oppression have conditioned them into some black people too. Sweetness’s nicely observed; sometimes guilty, sometimes self-justificatory thoughts open the novel and continue as a presence, both in Bride’s thinking and personality and in the reader’s consciousness of what has formed the main character. . . Having a mother unable to give unconditional love to her own child – and being treated throughout childhood with shame and contempt – leads Bride to some appalling, approval-seeking behavior of her own. (para. 6)

Black people have been victimized from the centuries till date. *God Help the Child* advocates for the collective consciousness of the entire black community. Morrison’s position as novelist has always been to critique the issues of subjugation of black bodies under the political acts of torture making. From the centuries to modern period, black bodies have been objectified and underestimated. Their identity is always in crisis and they overcome many obstacles for survival of their lives. *God Help the Child* depicts the hardships of a young Bride who struggles hard in her lifetime to get love and affection from her mother and the contemporary society. Morrison presents the fractured memory, plight and double consciousness of a young, blue-black

skinned girl Bride, who eventually succeeds in discovery of her identity after a huge resistance against racist and gender biased society.

This study explores black people's bitter experiences, their struggles, politics of their consciousness, self-discovery and their transformation from subordinated groups to self-dignified people in Morrison's *God Help the Child* and *Beloved*. The research work also investigates the awakening of agency among the marginalized to resist oppression with an emphasis on body, resistance, agency and inner freedom. This study critically evaluates the representation of marginalized people's struggle in these texts, the way they overcome various injustices, confront the social predicaments, establish themselves as autonomous beings under body's political rites of transformation, and connect them to the mainstream with an arousal of agency to resist.

Morrison transposes her protagonists in *Beloved* and *God Help the Child* respectively from victimization and disempowerment to the subjective space of resistance and agency. She locates the body not a mere site for the play of the dominant structures of power and knowledge, but something that functions also as a site of resistance. Such radical and self-effacing gesture may subvert or bring about fissions in the hegemonic order. Black identity, collective consciousness and reconstruction of the past have always been the dominant themes of Morrison's novels that reveal the most oppressive period in the black history that has affected the identity of African- Americans. The transformation of the protagonist from empty state of powerlessness to empowered quest of agency, emerging as a site of resistance embodies the body's powerful mechanism. Both protagonists reconstruct themselves as dominant characters to produce a counter-narrative by deploying the black female

body as the locus of resistance. The construction and reconstruction of the self through constant social contact are social processes.

Chapter II

Bride and Sethe as Embodiment of Transformed Self

This section of the study explores how racism as a denominator of deep rooted pain makes the African- Americans suffer in the racist American society. In this process, they become tormented, and haunted with the traumatic past. In the meantime, they show a subversive act of resistance putting forth their vulnerable bodies as a site of resistance to cope up with such domination. Morrison's *God Help the Child* and *Beloved* project the rites of transformation of body as a site of resistance along with immense corporeal suppression of the protagonists. In these narratives *God Help the Child* and *Beloved*, Bride and Sethe finally reintegrate into a new communitas. Morrison presents the protagonists' quest of the 'self' with the bodily voyage in the vein of the rites of passage – separation, liminality and reintegration. Due to repulsive forces of race and slavery that live just under the colored skin, as a part of author's and her characters' immense suppression of their desires, they switch to memory of painful past. Through such liminal bodily experience, they reconstruct themselves. They become dominant 'selves' producing a counter- hegemonic narrative by putting the body as a locus of resistance. Morrison redraws the history of slavery, and puts an effort to bodily resistance through agency. This research further unfolds the consciousness of individual protagonist from aforementioned novels. It makes a close observation of protagonists' traumatized mind and bodily experiences in relationship to the society.

Further, it explores the way these protagonists suffer to endure the racial and gender segregations. They are doubly marginalized first as African- American, and second as female. Their suffering is social, economic and political. These painful experiences of the characters frequently haunt them. It pushes them into a cultural rite

of transformation of body. They do not accept defeat. Rather, they dare to reconstruct themselves as enlightened, and self-conscious bodies. Despite their agonies, they try to rupture the hierarchy on the basis of social conventions that make them suffer through traumatic experiences in liminal phase, a rite of political transformation of self into agency to resist against social injustice. They eventually succeed in doing so. The characters under domination transform their bodies into spaces of resistance through acts of transformation and redefinition of their existence in a new *communitas*. Racial prejudice and hierarchical supremacist power system privileges whites. Morrison's portrayal of the marginalized suggests that the liminal position of blacks empowers her characters' actions to eliminate or abolish the racialized social strata.

Beloved is a story about the horrific effects of slavery on black people and how those effects demean African Americans and have an impact on their physical and mental health. In *Beloved*, Sethe attempts to murder her entire family before turning the gun on herself, but she only manages to murder her two-year-old daughter before Stamp Paid intervenes. Instead of letting them go through the horrors of slavery like she did, she would rather murder them. She is unable to live blissfully because of the horrific memory of her time spent in slavery. She continues to fight the urge to develop her new "self," nevertheless.

Likewise, in *God Help the Child*, Morrison depicts the pathetic condition of a young black skinned girl Bride, neglected and abused by the light skinned parents in the name of her color. The memory of slavery traumatizes the people of color of new generation with the cultural embodiment of race. This cultural embodiment of race shapes the trauma of the child in her early age from the roots of race which functions as the cultural trauma among the people. Every individual lives with a sense of love,

affection, connection and security. When this is broken body undergoes a transformation in quest of new self formation. Similarly, Morrison's protagonists never get those things and show a strong resentment passing through a liminal stage, and challenge society and its biased attitudes.

Laura Doyle in “Of Race and Woman: Eugenics, Motherhood, and Racial Patriarchy” explicates the mother figure as a racially and sexually specific body in modernist African –American fiction. He further admits:

The racialized mother figure harbors knowledge and a history rooted in the senses of a racially and sexually specific body. This figure carries out the dominant culture's subordination and use of that knowledge and history. In other words, the race or group mother is the point of access to a group history and bodily grounded identity, but she is also the cultural vehicle for fixing, ranking, and subduing groups and bodies. Twentieth-century narrative tells its way around, through, and past her in its determination to reconfigure the phenomenal self. (4)

As per Doyle’s notion of racially and sexually specific body Sethe and Bride embody the cultural domination of the racist American society. Sethe’s body in *Beloved* and Bride’s body in *God Help the Child* are a cultural vehicle for fixing, ranking and subduing groups and identity. Such a mother figure reconfigures the phenomenal self after a bodily voyage of transformation through liminality and communitas.

As body is always in flux, both protagonists' bodies undergo various transitional stages in the margin of white socio-political space under the political ritual of torture. This bodily experience makes them understand their bodily transition as a political rite having anthropological orientation of liminality and communitas. The meaning of body changes over the course of transformation and discovers a new

empowered self that displays enlightenment, a form of resistance by subverting the racist gaze and discourses. Protagonists' bodies go through active experiences in course of inventing new body, and maintaining balance between old self and new empowered self. The transformation of the protagonists from empty state of powerlessness to empowered quest of agency, emerging as a site of resistance embodies the body's powerful function. This bodily transformation cannot be separated from ideological transformation. It is significant to know how such transformation of the characters help build up a social sphere for them, resisting and revolting against all sorts of injustices. This is a political space to awaken agency and inner freedom.

Through *Beloved*, Morrison gives voices to her characters, and lays stress on the emotions of the black people, their lives, and experiences to make them visible. Black were invisible, silenced and forgotten in the past. Camelia Sadehi asserts that *Beloved* “displays the tension between forgetting and remembering past experiences through unspoken memory; Morrison demonstrates the multiple feelings suppressed by dominant discourse of American slavery’s history” (136). In *Beloved*, after slavery had been abolished for many years, the unrecorded experiences of tortured slaves are depicted, as well as how they deal with their harsh history. To repair and humanize broken, lost identities comprised of unthinkable past traumatic memories 'held at bay', the wounded ex-slaves have to confront and reconcile with these repressed recollections.

To Morrison, *Beloved* is the embodiment of the past, the most important memory that links the past to the present. Sethe also confides to Paul that “Schoolteacher made me open up my back, and when it closed it made a tree. It grows there still” (*Beloved* 9). ‘It grows there still’ implies that Sethe is still psychologically

suffering from the brutality she has endured. Jason Campbell stresses on the idea of the interference of the past into the present by suggesting in "Scarification and Collective Sympathy: An Analysis of Re-memory in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*" that the tree scar is not only a continual reminder of her abuse at Sweet Home, but it is also an intrusion of the past into the present (4). Sethe sometimes willfully suppresses or muffles her memories; other times, she tries to forget but is unable to.

In *Beloved*, the slaves' tragic past is physically imprinted. The fact that the slaves' bodies are interpreted differently aids in the development and recognition of oneself. For example, Sethe, though, "able to read herself through the gaze of the others" does not blindly adopt others' readings of her body. Her challenge is "to learn to read herself that is, to configure the history of her body's text" (Henderson 87-95). Sixo's body is burned and shot, Paul A is dismembered, and Paul D is maimed, chained with 45 other slaves, and nearly drowns in muddy water after having his lips perforated with an iron bit to prevent him from speaking (*Beloved* 10). A scar is left by the bite. He promises Sethe that he will never again be Paul D, whether he is alive or dead. My teacher had an impact on me. I had another identity (*Beloved* 39). All these bodily inscriptions work to tell us that the wound of the body is a great part of African American traumas. Still, it should not be ignored that the body of the black woman was even more abused not only at the work level, but also at the sexual one. Black women were continuously harassed and raped by the white masters. The wound of the body shows that the past, traumatic, painful and dehumanizing as it was, is written by the white patriarchy, racial order etc.

Similarly, Jihan Zayed and Shaista Maseeh, in "Polyphony of Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*", analyze the novel using Bakhtinian notion of dialogism. They emphasize Morrison's polyphonic construction of the narrative which participates in

weaving the story. Zayed and Maseeh argue that the different accounts provided in the novel reinforce the belief that truth is relative, and enable characters to “speak their own version of reality without stamping it into the ultimate one” (40). The narrative revolves round the traumatic life of Bride who suffers because of her blue-black skin. With the course of time, she transforms her exotic body into a means by which she gains acceptance in mainstream society discovering her true self.

Black identity, collective consciousness and reconstruction of the past have always been the dominant themes of Morrison’s novels that reveal the most oppressive period in the black history that has affected the identity of African-Americans. In *Beloved*, the ghost of Beloved represents the dreadful past of Sethe that frequently torments her present. This shows that the memory of the past frequently haunts the present, and stands as an obstacle in making future. Denver possesses a new identity in the social structure, leaves 124 looking for help, and then she works to support her mother, sister and herself, and is able to escape alienation. The whole community shares her story and pain help Sethe in driving Beloved, the representation of the pain of slavery, by performing a collective exorcism:

The voices of women searched for the right combination, the key, the ends, the sound that broke the back of words. Building voice upon voice until they found it, and when they did it was a wave of sound wide enough to sound deep water and knock the pods off chestnut trees. It broke over Sethe and she trembled like the baptized its wash. (261)

Morrison here admits that Sethe struggles to search her identity where all her bodily experiences let her realize an ideological shift in construction of her new identity. Here the word ‘baptised’ reveals Sethe’s rebirth into her new life. She, now, has a chance to redefine her identity on the basis of her cultural heritage and a

transformation from alienation into communal re-entry. Sethe discovers her identity, just as the tree in the Sweet Home and the sapling Paul D planted. This identity is an 'ideological self' that the body restores in a phase of transition, representing the whole communal voice of the marginal in an act of resistance to enter a new *communitas*. The collective effort of the community people to exorcise the ghost of Beloved signifies their collective consciousness to resist against, and formulate their new identity. All effort for this act is spent through their bodies.

The arrival of Paul D to '124' is like the return of the repressed memory that helps Sethe release her memories. She allows herself to remember certain occurrences in her life. This re-memory works as a collective way for a community to liberate themselves. In *Beloved*, Sethe explains re-memory by saying:

If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place – the picture of it – stays, and not just in my re-memory, but out there, in the world...Someday you be walking down the road and you hear something or see something going on...And you think it's you thinking it up...But no. It's when you bump into a re-memory that belongs to somebody else. (20)

The arrival of Paul D brings back the reminiscences of the past slavery era at Sweet Home, whereas the arrival of the embodiment of the murdered daughter serves as a catalyst, giving Sethe an opportunity to forgive and redeem herself from the guilt. As she reaches the conclusion that the daughter that she killed is now alive and grown, her thoughts flow freely, redeeming her soul and mind because she understands Beloved's return as forgiveness and reconciliation. Perceiving the world in a new light, Sethe faces her repressed thoughts and fears allowing her to remember.

Morrison sets *God Help the Child* in the light of race as a shaping force of memory. Switching to such memory triggers the traumatic past of the characters

pushing them into a ditch of agonies. She depicts the plight of a young girl and her development in the confined social background which makes her realize that her body can be an active means to resist. The novel presents the difficulties of a neglected and despised girl just because of her skin color. It also presents the moral dilemma of mother Sweetness who switches to the memories of her mother who was given a separate Bible to swear at the time of her marriage. This shapes the fractured memory and in the mean time she has the double consciousness which is an internal conflict and situation of ambiguity within the people in an oppressive society regarding their true identity. *God Help the Child* as a coming-of-age story signifies a quest tale depicting female character's struggle to come of an age of slavery and racism establishing her in a new social sphere.

Morrison presents the existing racism, gender discrimination and critical condition of underprivileged black Americans or subalterns in the twenty-first century America. She depicts the socio-political life of black Americans, their involvement, struggle and achievements in social, political, intellectual and other spheres of life. The traumatized or tortured body not only remains passive, but also works through and goes through an active experience of subversion to make a broader sphere for the newly discovered self. Morrison's proposed novels *God Help the Child* and *Beloved* portray the predicaments of marginal or subaltern characters Bride and Sethe and their arousal of agency to resist against the domination of the white supremacy. With the course of the time, both the characters deploy their bodies as a locus of resistance.

Protagonists' bodies undergo different transitional phases, ultimately discovering their new identity and dignity in a racist sphere. In this regard, Jill Matus's admits the characterization of Morrison's novels as literary witnesses to the racial trauma African Americans have suffered. As Matus notes, trauma theory has rarely

examined racism as trauma to date. Matus points out that there is no doubt that racial trauma has not ended with slavery, supporting Morrison's claim that the shock of realizing one is "Other" is trauma. Hence, most of Morrison's novels—not just *Beloved*, which is set during the slave trade—reflect racial suffering (202). It is clear that Morrison raises the voice of the voiceless as she presents dreadful life experiences of her characters not because of individual but because of racial traumatic events. Racial traumatic encounters are both bodily and ideological in nature. The shock of comprehending oneself as other is a form of internalized racism and that is intrapersonal in nature which constitutes a collective trauma as it's a fissure in the identity of a group. Such painful experiences urge the inner freedom and agency to wake up in order to resist against the opposing forces.

Body is a dynamic entity as incidents keep on changing, and these incidents affect the body. "Body as a process, goes through sufferings which are linked with dynamic, active, evolutionary and causal process of eternal cycle of ages and rebirth" (Woolf and Michaels 05). Body is a medium and goal itself which goes through active experiences for inventing new body and maintaining balance between new self and old self. So, the wisest thing is to listen to the body and maintain balance between body and self. Both body and self are different but inseparable and inherent where self is an ideological part. We experience the unpredictability of body under different circumstances. Gender, race, class, age, profession, cultural context and other social denominators determine the body. Affected by such forces body goes through either downward or upward changes. Body's such mechanism of transformation serves as a site of resistance against the social evils. Such fluidity of body narrates the political counter - culture in the society. However the body is fragile, flawed and unstable, it can be seen as a vessel of soul that reflects and cultivates the soul's beauty.

As body is a fluid entity it undergoes a rite of political transformation which has an anthropological orientation of liminality and communitas. Victor Turner further explicates 'liminal phase' with respect to Van Gennep's definition of rites de passage as "rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age" (89). Turner's liminality has a distinct self formation which is constitutive of awakening of agency through bodily transition. The body undergoes a ritualized transformation and discovers a new empowered self that subverts the existing socio-political discourses. Regarding the distinct self formation, Morrison presents her characters' experiences of undergoing such liminal phases. Morrison portrays the impact of embedding such values in the black body, keeping at centre how whites attempt to control space, fostering the African-Americans' sense of inferiority and tormenting their psyche. Additionally, she deals with the strategy to break the chains of subordination and regain the agency of African-Americans.

The meaning of body changes over the course of ritualized transformation and discovers a new empowered self that displays enlightenment, a form of resistance by subverting the existing social discourses. The one who goes through ritual transformation, detach themselves from their previous social status. In the phase of transition or "threshold", the ritual subjects pass through an area of ambiguity, uncertainty and, they experience utmost complexities of life in a new social order. Turner claims that liminal entities exist between and between the positions that are designated and arranged by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. They are neither here nor there. As a result, in the numerous societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions, their vague and indeterminate characteristics are expressed through a broad diversity of symbols (90). Liminality experiences splitting of the original self, and undergoes a transformation, resisting the social construction in quest

of a new enlightenment and agency. Incorporation represents the return of the subjects to their new, relatively stable, well-defined position in the society which Turner calls *communitas*. This is a journey of a quite mysterious or symbolic order and experience.

For Turner, there are two models for human interrelatedness, juxtaposed and alternated, according to Turner. We are presented in such rites in and out of secular social structure of multiple ties organized in terms of caste, class, or rank hierarchies or of segmentary oppositions in the stateless societies of political anthropologists. The first is the idea that society is an organized, differentiated, and frequently hierarchical system of politico-legal-economic positions with many various ways to evaluate people and divide them into more or less categories. The second idea that becomes clearly apparent during this transitional time is that of society as an unstructured or minimally structured, broadly undifferentiated *comitatus*. (90)

Communitas is more secular that addresses every ritual, context and geography. This is a part of liminal experiences, and a structure that allows it to be reshuffled as balance is required to run the society. The person who goes through liminal experiences has control upon desires, thoughts, anger, and has humility to form a better self. Liminal phase or 'threshold' empowers the body and new self in a new *communitas*.

Every individual's life goes through experiences with alternating exposures to structure and *communitas*, and to states and transitions in quest of true self. Turner expostulates that "this is not simply a matter of giving a general stamp of legitimacy to a society's structural positions. It is rather a matter of giving recognition to an essential and generic human bond without which there could be no society. Liminality suggests that the high could not have existed without the low and that the high must

know what it is like to be low (90). For all conscious beings and groups, social life is a type of dialectical process having successive experiences of high and low, *communitas* and structure, homogeneity and differentiation equality and inequality.

Racial prejudice and hierarchical supremacist power system privileges a dominant white culture in America. Morrison's depiction of marginalized suggests that the liminal position of blacks empowers her characters' actions to retaliate the racially biased social hierarchy. The marginalized characters transform their bodies into spaces of resistance through acts of transformation, and redefinition of their existence in a new *communitas*. Morrison's protagonists Lula Ann Bridewel in *God Help the Child* and Sethe in *Beloved*, through liminality, suggest that the collective consciousness, unity, and strength of blacks ought not be rooted merely in the past, the present can serve as a site of authority and resistance as well. Both of them face tremendous torture in a society where there is little freedom for blacks carrying the burden of physical and psychological effects of slavery, leading them into a political stage of self-awakening for resistance.

God Help the Child as a narrative quest, questions Bride and her self-constructed adult identity, and addresses her past memories. Bride's body is textually highlighted throughout the narrative as the location for the creation of her identity, which connects the seemingly unrelated changes to Bride's body into a world of secrecy and trauma. Sweetness is aware of the struggles a black girl like Lula Ann would face. She is fully intelligent. She even admits:

Some of you probably think it's bad thing to group ourselves according to color . . . But how else can you avoid being spit on in a drugstore, shoving elbows at the bus stop, walking in the gutter to have the whites have the whole side walk, charged a nickel at the grocer's for a paper bag that's free to white shoppers?

Let alone all the name calling. (4)

Lula was less experienced in terms of recognition of the world around her comparing to Mother Sweetness. Sweetness finds people around her looking at Lula Ann with cold stare. But Sweetness is worried not for the lack of fairness in her daughter but the presence of blackness. And this color is something that makes the body of Lula Ann Bride vulnerable. This vulnerable body finds its worth going through a traumatic journey which brings an ideological transformation along with the bodily adventures.

African- American literature, basically that of Morrison, deals with the body politics. It is centered on the vulnerable bodies, experiencing transformations of the characters in quest of their true self and recognition. She presents her characters bold and enduring all sort of segregation, exploitation, and abuse in a subversive way to challenge society and its biased eyes. She depicts America and its people's clash in the periphery of race, and its everlasting effects on black community, shaping their memory in the backdrop of past day's slavery and its after-effects. Mostly marginal communities are exposed to the incidents of sexual abuse, child molestation and gender violence as these communities are the target groups. Resembling to that notion, *God Help the Child* also presents some traits of sexual abuse, child molestation and violent imagery to show the individual trauma of the characters too. In this regard, Kara Walker in *New York Times* reviews:

Child abuse cuts a jagged scar through Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*, a brisk modern day fairy tale with shades of the Brothers Grimm: imaginative cruelties visited on children; a journey into the woods; a handsome, vanished lover; witchy older women and a blunt moral — "What you do to children matters. And they might never forget". . .Morrison herself handles child abuse *Bluest Eye* (1970), in which an 11-year-old girl is raped by her father. The

world of *God Help the Child* is crawling with child molesters and child killers — on playgrounds, in back alleys — but they remain oddly blurry, like dot-matrix snapshots culled from current headlines. (para.3)

God Help the Child unearths painful bodily interactions brought on by rape, violence, and sexual abuse during childhood. Child murders and child molesters abound in the universe of the book. This novel resembles with Morrison's earlier one *The Bluest Eye* in which an 11 years girl is raped by her father. Such sexual abuse and child molestations cause trauma for the characters. Booker becomes traumatized switching to the memory of his brother's sexual molestation. Bodies are vulnerable and exposed to the threats by whites, but such bodies at times get enlightened through liminal experiences and strongly resist against such domination.

American society is such an amalgamation of people where people of color have to sustain their lives accepting the double consciousness. For this, it makes us difficult to judge mother Sweetness as how she perceives the world and raises her child, saying: "Some of you probably think it is a bad thing to group ourselves according to skin color- the lighter, the better- in social clubs, neighborhoods, churches, sororities, even colored schools. But how else can we hold on to a little dignity?" (4) It's challenging to pinpoint her decisions. She is more knowledgeable about this. But it is obvious that the realities of being black in a white world—a world where the lighter one's skin, the higher one can rise—have influenced her decisions. Racial prejudice ought to be eliminated. If not, it results in a group of people experiencing a collective trauma.

In the course of traumatic journey, Bride goes for self discovery, identity and independence, leading a cosmetic business that leads her to ultimate victory whereas Sethe still remains haunted with the memory of Beloved's murder with a hope of

future. Still traumatic memory works to keep them both detached from real social functioning. Both protagonists' bodies follow a rite of transformation and undergo liminal experiences by presenting their bodies a site of resistance. The protagonist's life is sought pathetic having the guilt consciousness and feelings of nothingness in every step under the pathos of race or skin color.

Bride's life is difficult in the prejudiced culture, and her terrible memories from the past are a constant source of anxiety for her. She has no other suitable ways of expressing her inner suffering, and no one is available to hear about the miserable life she was forced to lead as a result of her banishment from the family. Consequently, such sickness within her results into physical change as she loses her biological appearance with the astonishing extinction of her breasts. Bride is haunted by the words of Booker which she narrates, "I am scared. Something bad is happening to me. I feel like I am melting away. I cannot explain it to you but I do know when it started. It began after he said, 'You are not the woman I want. 'Neither am I.' I still don't know why I said this" (8). Her banishment from her family and boyfriend is a sad memory that keeps coming back to haunt her. She makes efforts to move past this painful experience, but it is never simple. After tremendous sufferings also, she works through her trauma and takes insights for building up of her better future, and she finally succeeds in doing so as she turns her grief into her ultimate power and victory. Bride's body follows a rite of transformation and undergoes liminal experiences by presenting her body as a site of resistance, eventually adapting her new self - identity in a new communitas.

Black slave female body has been a valuable commodity for the white. Such body has been misused and exploited by slave owners. In *Beloved*, Morrison depicts the miserable condition of black slave women. In the novel, one of the characters

defines black woman as a “property that reproduces itself without any cost” (228).

Like an animal, a young slave woman, Sethe cannot own her body; her body is controlled by the slave masters. All the slave women in the novel bear the scars of slavery upon their memories. Morrison explores the ghost of the dead, who had lost their lives in the middle passage in an act of transaction of slave bodies. In this novel, she shows the devastating impact of slavery upon the African- American culture and tradition. Through the characterization of Beloved, she admits that slave women's bodies are excluded from literature and their voices are invisible in history. Pondering upon the very issue, Qasim asserts in “Black Women’s Quest for Subjectivity:

Identity Politics in Morrison’s novels- *Songs of Solomon & Beloved*”:

Morrison’s novels describe the secret stories of violence and aggression and capture the lives of abuse survivors and ex-slaves who are trying their best to render their lives normal. In her novels, Morrison presents her female characters as subjects not as marginalized others. Morrison’s women emerge as powerful characters, brave abuse-survivors who try to live under the shadow of oppression but do not lose their identity as human beings. (215)

Beloved looks into the lives of the marginalized bodies left unrecorded by the dominant discourses. It signifies those who died in the belly of the slave ship. All the female characters in the novel fight against post-traumatic stress, and learn new ways to cultivate an independent identity. They know how to cope up with ghosts of the past, and eventually learn to heal their emotional scars. As a result, *Beloved's* female characters all challenge the traditional portrayal of black women in literature.

Beloved as a well-known neo-slave story explores the lives of the numerous slave women whose stories are missing from the canonical literature. Morrison presents slavery not merely as a fact but a memory. She re-addresses the lost stories of

violence and pain, and depicts black women's heroic struggle to live under the institution of slavery which is a dark chapter in human history. In *Beloved*, Morrison explores the experiences of black slave women in a special and original way. It illustrates how slavery ruined women's capacity for love. The novel's characters exist in the post-slavery era, yet they are plagued by memories of the past. Their past has a huge impact on their present. Their traumatic past follows them like a shadow. Morrison discloses the hidden truth and stories of violence and victimization of black women in her fiction. Joy et.al argue that Morrison, with her poetic style recaptures and reconstructs "the lost stories of slavery, imprisonments, displacement and women's loss, the secret stories of abuse, degradation and the theft of identity"(9). Through their narratives, black slaves usually had fought against these stereotypes and revitalized their image as subjects. They challenge the white myths and stereotypes about black womanhood. These narratives depict the great effort of slave women, and also question the belief that slave's life was meaningless and worthless.

The protagonists of the aforementioned novels resist against social injustice and seek for their identity deploying their bodies at the forefront. Resistance is an act of subversion against every sort of subjugation, prejudice, discrimination, and exploitation. It is a process having both domination from above and rejection from below. Resistance is not possible without agency. Michael Garnett relates agency and inner freedom to enlightenment where there is overcoming of constraints. Agency is a capacity of doer or agent to act in a given environment where there occurs a tension while creating it. Moreover, agency is a collective and historical dynamics rather than individual effort. Garnett explicates, "Losses of inner freedom are not explicable in terms of failures of deep agency that is, in terms of motivation by alien desires" (3). Inner freedom and agency are interrelated. Search for inner freedom is a search for

deep or genuine agency. Creating agency involves overcoming fear and inner and external constraints leading to an autonomous self. People are unfree due to both internal and external factors where inner freedom leads to enlightenment.

Bride's current existence is complicated and confusing as a result of the sorrow of losing both one's individual and one's collective identity or sense of belonging. This issue of identity has some grounds and some differences to share with. Identity crisis also leads a person towards trauma, resulting into transformation of body in quest of new identity. Bride experiences rejection because of her skin tone and loneliness. She finds herself in a quicksand where she neither has her individual identity nor she accepts the double consciousness in white supremacist culture. Here, bodily experiences are shaped due to an interplay of dominant white elite and residual or marginal black culture.

Bride's documentation of her past by working through her bodily changes reveals the problems and sufferings of entire black community, and how they have been under pain and trauma, and have been deprived of their true self just because of their skin color. Individual character's suffering is just the representative of the suffering of entire black community. How they have been victimized is revealed by the liminal experiences of the body of Bride. As liminality is a political space to awaken agency among the marginalized, Bride comes to prove herself successful coping up all the obstacles with an arousal of her true and deep agency to resist.

Michel Foucault stresses the existence of power structures, and the possibility of marginal resistance. "Whenever there is power, there is resistance, but this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in regard to power," writes Michel Foucault (4). What he seems to mean is "power is not coercive in the sense of direct threat of violence" (5). It has to be understood as a contrasting set of relations in

which the existence of these relations necessarily embraces the possibility of resistance. Foucault's notion of power in "The Subject and Power", explicitly specifies the intrinsic points of resistance within power itself. Power functions through the configuration of potential actions and capabilities of free agents, and this configuration is implemented through government, which designates "the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed... to govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others" (15). Foucault presents a portrait of power in which power functions by structuring a field of possible action in which a subject must act in a creative way.

Foucault's thought discovers the body in a trajectory of language and ideas although this discovery is not stamped with the problematic of origin. He further explicates that the body is a volume in disintegration, the location of a dissociated Self (adopting the illusion of substantial unity), and the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissipated by ideas). Hence, genealogy is positioned within the articulation of the body and history as a study of descent. Its job is to reveal a body that has been completely altered by history and the way that history is destroying the body (qtd. in Ostrander, 120). For Foucault, history has destroyed the body. Certainly Foucault's notion of body makes us pose a question about our bodies and how they have been formed; we discover how very little we know of them. We learn from Foucault that the soul is the body's prison, a historical fact, and a result of power dynamics. Foucault examines the evolution of the body, not in terms of biology but rather in terms of politics.

Foucault consciously condemns the traditional theory of power which sees it focused exclusively on the concept of the state. Under Foucault's new theory, power can no longer be viewed as a possession but rather as a tactic. According to Foucault's

definition of power, it is a different set of interactions that must unavoidably accept the possibility of resistance because power itself contains inherent points of resistance. According to Foucault's microphysics, the state is a component of the power strategy, albeit not the most crucial one. Because there is no such organ, it is not the organ of power.

As power functions through the configuration of potential actions and capabilities of free agents, Morrison's characters resist against any sort of injustice in a chain of power relations. Sweetness' memory of the day when her mother was getting married with a white lad where the couple were given separate Bibles to sway which shows her trauma and double consciousness. This demonstrates Sweetness' painful experience as well. *God Help the Child* acknowledges the sophisticated, stressful lives that Americans of color lead. Morrison depicts the heartbreaking, dramatic scenario of the era through third-person omniscient narration. She utters:

Complaining about her mother, she told him that Sweetness hated her for her black skin. "It's just a color," Booker had said. "A genetic trait- not a flaw, not a curse, not a blessing nor a sin." But," she countered, "other people think racial-" Booker cut her off. . . . Nevertheless, she flat out refused to be derailed from her mission simply because she was outside the comfort zone of paved streets, tight lawns surrounded by racially diverse people who might not help but would not harm her. (143)

Through a polyphonic and third person omniscient point of view Morrison presents the plight of black people simply in the name of color. This color issue having its roots in slavery makes the present generation traumatized. Bride's expulsion from family and from boyfriend and her predicament all are due to her genealogy and color. She overcomes her painful history and transforms her sorrow into strength. The

bride's horrific experience resulted from her empathy for the victimization and her observation of her own suffering. Bride's expulsion, simply because of her color makes her traumatized. She is haunted frequently by her past, her sufferings, and Booker's words "You are not the woman I want"(8). She is haunted by flashback scenes of unimaginable fear for her. She ignores all sorrows and tries to recover of it. Bride puts her full efforts to cope up with the pathos, and sufferings and works through her trauma, and has become successful to recover her trauma as she successfully leads a cosmetic company Sylvia Inc. making both well renowned among the blacks and whites.

Likewise, Butler comes up with the notion that body is inscribed with liberal principles or values. She shows a point of departure from the medieval notion of body as a prison house of soul. Body is no longer the prison house of soul rather it goes through a transition. Body is not covered by discourse rather discourse is covered by body. Body has longer magnitude than discourse. There are different discourses about woman's body, and these discourses change with time and space having reflections of cultural values and signs. According to Butler, "Gender must not to be viewed as a locus of agency or a stable identity from which different acts follow; rather, gender is an identity flimsily constructed in time, introduced in an external place through stylized repetition of acts" (179). Body as a corporeal sign has dimensions like time, space and performative values. Body itself has long history but discourses of different times are social construct about body. Women can use gender performance to subvert patriarchal society.

For Butler, body cannot be a passive medium; it actively flows and subverts the inscribed discourses of body. Butler appropriates Foucault's essay on the theme of genealogy to assert that the body is figured as a surface and the scene of a cultural

inscription. In this regard, Butler further quotes Foucault:

The body is always under seize, suffering destruction by the very terms of history. And history is the creation of values and meanings by a signifying practice that requires the subjection of body. This corporeal destruction is necessary to produce the speaking subject and its significations. This is a body, described through the language of surface and force, weakened through a single drama of domination, inscription, and creation. (165)

Butler admits that body inscriptions are no longer as they were in the past. It's a matter of who wants to liberate it- private effort or collective effort. There is no original body and discourse about it. All bodies and discourses are fabricated; and there is no harm in subverting the existing notion of body and discourse. Butler realizes the need of subversion not to create chaos, rather to flourish good relations in the society. Body is a continuum and is supposed to maintain cultural coherence. Body has been taken as a fictional art having dimensions like time, space, and performative values. Body is performative and can subvert against the forces to establish egalitarian body.

Through her novels, Morrison underscores how the black body becomes a target of white ideologies. Roumaïssa Silini and Ahmad Majdoubeh quote Henry Lefebvre in "Space and the Commodification of Difference in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*" to underscore how body and power remain at the centre of socio-political phenomenon. According to Lefebvre, "[t]he body is irreducible and subversive, in the center of space of the discourse of power. It is the body which is the point of return" (89). Morrison is aware that any act of power is always directed towards the body, which Foucault views as the "object and target of power" in a similar vein (136). Moreover, she is convinced that the body is the nucleus of change

with its potential to overthrow the shackles of oppression. Perhaps, this consciousness resonates throughout Baby Suggs's words in her masterpiece *Beloved*. In further illustration, Baby Suggs utters:

In this here place, we flesh; flesh that weeps, laughs; flesh that dances on bare feet grass. Love it. Love it hard. Yonder they do not love your flesh. They despise it... What you scream from it they do not hear. What you put into it to nourish your body they will snatch away and give you leavins instead... Flesh that needs to be loved...love your heart. For this is the prize. (103-104)

This reflects the importance of self-love through accepting and respecting the blackness of African- Americans' bodies. Sethe's whipped back, which resembles a chokecherry, stands as a visual and tactile narrative of her personal suffering and strength to embody the history of her entire race. Likewise, *God Help the Child* emphasizes the enchainment of the black body which is ideologically whipped in a discriminated lived space.

In both *Beloved* and *God Help the Child*, the black bodies are the victims of racist gaze. Black bodies have been inscribed by whipping, torture and violent death, and become an identity marker. Both novels reveal how bodies have been inscribed, literally and metaphorically, by the oppressor to enforce their identity print on the people of color. The oppressed internalize these inscriptions, which regrettably become into a part of their essential identities. These landmarks serve as witnesses to previous suffering and aid in the process of self-discovery. Their inscribed bodies continue to narrate their traumas in the present and future. They are manipulated by the white society which impedes an autonomous construction of an African-American identity. Identity is not a fixed idea or a straightforward issue. It changes in line with history and moves in line with ideologies. Moreover, it combines other subjectivities

to form something new. Through *Bride*, Morrison comments on the whole phenomenon where the black body, especially those of a darker skin regardless of gender, is commodified. In the novel, Sweetness states that “blue blacks are all over TV, in fashion magazines, commercials, even starring in movies” (176). Behind these words, we deduce that Morrison addresses a more general problem which threatens the subjectivity of African-Americans. In both slavery era and post- slavery era, black bodies have been subject to commodification and domination. Morrison uses the black body as evidence to depict African-American trauma and proves that the past dwells in the present.

The liminal bodies of the victims of slavery and rape infer the act of infanticide as a way of resistance. For instance, Sethe's self-justificatory act of killing *Beloved* and Sweetness's abandon of *Bride* are instances of resistance. *Beloved* dramatizes that the slave woman's "resistance methods" to "forced miscegenation" included infanticide, as contemporary historians have pointed out, Morton explains, "In focusing on the doubly oppressed slave woman and slavery's destruction of the mother-child relationship" (qtd. in Bloom 94). Infanticide is cited by certain historians as a kind of rebellion and atonement. This enlightenment to redeem oneself comes only after the bodily rite of transformation. Similarly, the white crew members on the slave ship to America rape Sethe's mother frequently. She rejects the child from the crew and the other kids whose fathers are other white people, keeping only Sethe, who was conceived by the black man, as a result of her sexual exploitation.

The act of denial of one's own child is equivalent to infanticide, which is also an act of resistance. Mother Sweetness makes her daughter *Bride* deprived of love and affection. She does not want to reveal that the Negro blood is running in her vein. She claims that she has not been a bad mother. The reason behind doing such hurtful

things is to protect her child. The pain of sacrificing a child is not only a bodily experience; it urges the person for psychological and ideological redemption. It shows mother Sweetness's desire for black marginal community's self-discovery, and reconfiguration of their identity in a new *communitas*, going through a liminality of historical junctures. She justifies her wrong doings with different remarks. She further asserts:

I wasn't a bad mother, you have to know that, but I may have done some hurtful things to my only child because I had to protect her. Had to. All because of skin privileges. At first I couldn't see past all that black to know who she was and just plain love her. But I do. I really do. I think she understands now. I think so. (43)

Sweetness asserts that she treated her child badly to protect her. She thinks that due to skin privileges in the society she treated her child in a wrong manner. She says that in the past those who passed as black do not want to reveal their past in order to protect them from racially engulfed society. In that sense, passing too can be taken as an act of resistance.

Likewise, Butler in "Acting in Concert" relates every scripted performative act with tradition, memory and past, having the features of improvisation in both temporal and spatial aspects in order to create liveliness. Talking about doing gender and undoing gender, she takes gender as something given, structured, and scripted normative behavior. She realizes a need for women to have a sense of realization of the self where self is earned by interacting with the existing system using the space given by patriarchy to invent a greater space and articulate a new voice in it. By creating livability, one can explore new space and new self "I" (Butler 3). "I" as given, should be taken as fluid entity to invent a new self. Self is earned by

interaction, an act of resistance, not by seclusion. In the name of undoing gender one should not take this fluid self to reject tradition and patriarchy, rather it should be considered as a double reed flute to give society a new voice and to make life livable. Protagonists of *Beloved* and *God Help the Child* have a sense of realization of the self where they earn this self by interacting with the existing system, using the space given by patriarchy to invent a greater space and articulate a new voice in it. Both protagonists use the space given to them by the society to make even greater space where their subversive act of resistance remains at the centre of political transformation of body.

Bride, a neglected child by her parents, proves herself independent being involved in a cosmetic company named Sylvia Inc. Through hard work and struggles she succeeds to be a manager in a cosmetic company. "I dubbed it YOU GIRL: Cosmetics for Your Own Millenium," Bride mentions. It is for women and girls of all skin tones, including milk, lemonade, and ebony. The concept, the company, and the advertising campaign are all mine (10). Women of all complexions from ebony to lemonade to milk, reflects that in the name of color one should not discriminate. She creates a world where there is peace and harmony among people. To maintain herself in the society she has frequently changed her name to create her identity. She tells:

But Lula Ann Bridewell is no longer available and she was never a woman.

Lula Ann was a sixteen –year-old-me who dropped that dumb countrified name as soon as I left high school. 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, with nothing anybody needs to say before or after that one memorable syllable. (11)

A victimized and vengeful Bride, in quest of justice and identity, goes through liminal

phases of her bodily experiences to establish herself in the white politico-social sphere where she does a lot of hard work. After her high school, Lula Ann Bridewell drops her “countrified” name, first becoming Ann Bride, then finally, to sound mysterious and interesting in her career, settling on Bride, no last name. During her lifetime Lula Ann Bridewell, drops “Lula”, “Ann” and “Well” from her name and identifies herself as “Bride.” By casting off countrified name and adopting other name she wants to detach herself from the bitter past. She is victim of passing tendency of parents. At a conscious level, she also wants to pass as self made person. Time and again she keeps changing her name to feel secure and confident in that community. Again she wants to assimilate to the metropolitan life. Bride creates livability to explore her new self where she continuously interacts and resists with the notion of undoing gender.

While considering the issues of resistance, we shed light on the struggles of marginalized black people and their collective efforts to resistance. They are marginalized in terms of class, race, gender, religion and culture. Broadly, they are the subordinated groups at the bottom of the social hierarchy who are always directly or indirectly dominated by the ideologies of the white elite class. They are such a group who do not have autonomous self. They are always agents of hegemonic forces, and cannot free themselves from such ideologies. Most of the time, they remain aware about where and how they have been placed in a certain social structure. Marginal black people's awareness about their position in a certain social, political and economic strata and their efforts to connect them to the center is taken as their transformed ideological consciousness. Thus, they are marked by heterogeneity and they are not a proper class as such. African- Americans suffer under the hegemonic domination of a white dominating ruling class. The elite's hegemonic dominance denies them the fundamental right to take part in creating their community's history

and culture. They are not seen as contributing citizens.

Marginalized people can overcome all the discriminations and injustices through the act of resistance. They can develop their autonomous self by awakening of agency. Agency understands the problem itself. It is a kind of self-consciousness which may be right or wrong. Developing self-consciousness is an act of resistance itself. Hence, consciousness among the downtrodden people can be a source of resistance for them. In his text "Agency and Inner Freedom", Michael Garnett concentrates on the premise that "waking of agency is not possible without self-sacrifice. An awakened agency is one that attacks the frail social systems (6).

Morrison presents the relation between society and the self in her novels. She shows that marginal blacks' self has been ignored by dominant whites. Garnett further focuses on the 'private self' and 'public self' of an individual.

Garnett examines "marginal or subaltern people's public self is controlled by the people at the center" (8). In America, black people are limited to certain rights. They lack their public sphere, and are neglected from mainstream social values, behavior, and recognition. Thus, subaltern struggle has to broaden their public self. Garnett argues, "Marginalized people have their private and public self. But, their public self is controlled by the people at the center which leads them to think about their autonomous self. To achieve their autonomous self, marginalized people try to gain internal and external freedom" (9). Morrison believes that black people's self is not aloof but connected with other beings within the shared history. They should be free from both internal and external constraints to go against the discriminations they have been facing.

Morrison presents her characters overcoming internal constraints to resist external constraints with an arousal of agency. Bride contrasts the black history of

oppression with her conscience, which is doubly ostracized. With their memories of the historical slave tradition, the characters' trauma is shaped by this and exhibits similar types of suffering and difficulties. Trauma is produced when the terrible past or slavery for Black people is reconfigured. In *God Help the Child*, mother Sweetness' narration of her past days to her daughter that she had to choose the Bible for blacks in the church to marry Louis, transmits a series of cultural trauma within her daughter. Sweetness' words "It's not my fault. She was born with black skin" gives the impression that every generation has a guilt complex of color or race which is sufficient to put an indelible mark on the memory to create trauma among the people of color. The following lines of the novel narrated by Sweetness best describe the cultural trauma among the emergent groups:

Can you imagine how many white folks have Negro blood running and hiding in their veins? . . . My own mother, Lula Mae, could have passed easy, but she chose not to. She told me the price she paid for that decision. When she and my father went to the courthouse to get married there were two Bibles and they had to put their hands on the one reserved for Negroes. Other one was for white people's hands. The Bible! Can you beat it?. . . God knows what other intimate things they made her do, but no touching of the same Bible. (4)

Racial passing is a situation in which a person is categorized as a member of one racial group but he/she is taken as a member of a racial group other than their own. The decision not to accommodate in passing culture made Sweetness's mother pay a big price. Separate Bibles for Blacks and Whites signify the extent of black subjugation where the roots of these traumatizing conditions are outdated, past tradition of slavery. Racism and slavery of the past still haunts and traumatizes the black people. Passing can be an act of resistance against social oppressions. Those

who were able to pass as white often engaged in passing as white in order to get job, to go school and to engage in different activities like white. Bride's decision to pass amidst the double consciousness leads her to victory on social stigmatization. Passing is needed to mitigate the effect of stigmatization by others. It is generally interconnected with blacks and other minorities who seek to present themselves as part of the white masses.

Passing as an ideological trait cannot be separated from body which acts as a continuum to liberal principles and social discourses. Passing theory narrates a unique process by which individuals are not who they claim to be and communicate false identity badge to achieve social group membership without entitlement. In Morrison's *God Help the Child*, white couple's child was born Sudanese black. Her parents were also the part of mix blood. Explicitly it is surprising that white couple had child but when we look beneath the surface, it is because their generation also passed with the black and white blood. In the novel Sweetness describes:

It's not my fault. So you can't blame me. I didn't do it and have no idea how it happened. It didn't take more than an hour after they pulled her out from between my legs to realize something was wrong. Really, wrong. She was so black she scared me. Midnight black, Sudanese black. I'm light-skinned, with good hair, what we call high yellow, and so is Lula Ann's father. Ain't nobody in my family anywhere near that color. (03)

The first section of the novel opens with a monologue from the Sweetness, who claims that Lula Ann, her dark-skinned daughter, received inadequate treatment since prejudice required her to prepare the child for a difficult life. Sweetness describes that giving birth to the dark skinned daughter is not her fault. She says that her daughter's skin color scared her. She believes that she is oppressed by the existing racism

because it was the notion of racism which takes her emotionally away from her daughter. She says that her color is beyond the imagination, Midnight black, Sudanese black. From this we come to know that in white community black skin is taken as a curse. Even blacks internalized that view to a great extent.

Morrison asserts that every ritual, culture, pedagogy, knowledge and history has been contaminated, and it has to be redefined. She started to intervene to rewrite the history of the oppressed through her novels. For this, there must be a consciousness or a sense of resistance among the black people. They need to develop this consciousness to speak. They do not have autonomy and agency. While speaking through literature, characters of Morrison come up with an arousal of the autonomous self and agency with an enormous bodily and ideological transition to restore their true self, identity, and dignity. Here, body comes at the centre of resistance, experiencing the rites of transformation.

Morrison presents the resistance against slavery as a narrative that remains haunted by abolitionist ideology in *Beloved*. The horrors of slavery are revealed via these folks' experiences as Sethe fights to keep Beloved out of her present and escape the dark legacy of her past. Regarding this, Peterson, in "*Beloved's Claim*" argues:

Morrison imagines a victory over the Fugitive Slave Law in her considerable modification of Margaret Garner's narrative. Morrison may have had post-slavery racial relations in mind when she decided not to bring Sethe back into slavery, but the most of the book takes place in Ohio during the Reconstruction era. Only by inventing a different past is Morrison able to place the narrative's current in a post-slavery world. So, a supposed abolitionist "success narrative" that firmly links the present to the same past that it would seem to have superseded determines Sethe's freedom. The

narrative present is nevertheless plagued by abolitionist ideology since this past is controlled by an idealized construction of parental love. (553)

Morrison focuses on the brutal and dehumanizing aspects of slavery in order to affect the reader and the community in such a way that slave history should not be forgotten. *Beloved* represents a working out of subjectivity through the representation of brutal and dehumanizing history which is often torn apart by the circumstances of slavery, and a construction of identity. Sethe and other slaves are marginalized from the Eurocentric sphere and thus were devoid of each and every human right as they were treated as animals, not humans.

The black, in America, have questioned and resisted discriminations prevalent in society for ages. They have been continuously resisting various discriminations to overcome them. Miguel Tamen believes that resistance is not possible without agency. Both resistance and interpretation are political acts. Resistance is not complete denial; it is to find reasonable distance. For him every resistance is an interpretation, and every interpretation is an act of resistance. Resistance is not possible without agency, so is interpretation. He further states that interpretation may cover whatever we do to deal with motive, intention and purposes, linguistic noises, actions, meanings, and so forth, relative to stuff like people paintings, events, actions, nonexistent people, buildings, beasts of all sorts, and so on (218). Interpretation tries to understand motive, intention and purposes, linguistic noises, actions, meanings, and so forth, through which we need to find out whether and what the writer is resisting.

The body as central to identity is necessarily associated with trauma, pain, and resistance. Sethe's punishment at the hand of Schoolteacher leaves many traces on her body. Whipped body and the scars on her back are shaped like a tree—a tree that is interpreted differently by different circles. According to Mae G. Henderson, Sethe's

body is transformed into a text that encourages gendered reading. Amy, a white woman who assists Sethe in giving birth, compares it to a chokecherry tree since it has roots and branches. The tree is "converted.... into an image of fulfillment instead of oppression" according to this view (Torres 188). According to Baby Suggs, it was "stencilled onto the bed sheet and blanket in the motif of 'roses of blood'" (87). Upon his arrival, Paul D makes the following observation on the sculpture: "The sculpture...[as if] it is]... the decorative work of an ironsmith too passionate for show" (87). The actions the individuals in the novel do to assert their own uniqueness and identity are significantly influenced by historical causes. Self-discovery in *Beloved* therefore entails battling with one's own history and present.

The history of the African- Americans is fragmented. So, they always remain subject to the domination or hegemony by the elite groups. Even if subalterns rise against elite groups, they cannot make themselves completely autonomous because they lack history, agency and the identity. Their history is fragmented to pieces in such a way that they cannot recollect it. They cannot be autonomous. Having no history means having no agency. At utmost bodily experiences of pain, torture and trauma, their liminal experiences generate an autonomy and agency to resist against any kind of bodily or psychological threat.

Furthermore, Vaishali Anand in her article "Human Rights Exploitation: Unending Circle of Beloved in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*" explicates:

Beloved holistically puts emphasis on the fragmented but interconnected issues of race and gender along with the contextual tone of slavery which becomes the frame in which human rights exploitation functions. . . Morrison views writing as a means of emancipation from many human rights abuses, such as racism, slavery, and gender-based oppression. In Free Speech

Leadership program she states that a writer's life and work are not the gift to mankind, they are its necessity. (291)

For Morrison, African American history of slavery is always concealed and obscured in "comfortable state of national amnesia". She reflects that American literary canon has always neglected justice against African-Americans. *Beloved* acknowledges these interrelated exploitative themes of gender, race and slavery and the power to devour human rights. Additionally, it looks at the current significance of these themes of exploitation in the twenty-first century. The corrosive repercussions of slavery's institutionalization had an impact on not just the identities of its black victims but also those of the white perpetrators and the national identity of Americans. Hence, where slavery exists, humanity and compassion are lost for all.

What begins as a heroic stance for Sethe, claiming her body, her breasts, her milk, her children, her motherhood- later evolves into internalization of oppression- motherhood laying a claim upon her psyche, her body and her identity? Children are Sethe's "greatest thing," according to her. In an unhealthy way, she feeds Beloved, the physical manifestation of her past, which eventually consumes her. She becomes smaller as Beloved expands because she is unable to reconcile her idealistic beliefs with reality. Sethe surrenders her sense of self to her children, allowing it to solely be defined by her relationship with them. Sethe, thus, becomes enslaved by her aspirations to motherhood. The ideal of the perfect mother- one who ensures no less than the very best for her children makes her commit the act of infanticide, as well slowly erodes her mind and body after Beloved comes back to confront her.

Women who are raising children other than their own are given a lot of space by Morrison. These women are strong forces who refuse to submit to oppression. This power, the group of moms led by Ella, is what ultimately drives Beloved from his

body. The author gives immense agency to these women, asserting that only a mother knows the cost of mothering. After *Beloved*'s exorcism, Paul D urges Sethe not to dwell on the past any longer, and share a future with him. He tells her, "You, Sethe, you are your best thing. Sethe comes to the realization that she is now truly free—unchained from both servitude and motherhood—and may restore her sense of herself. "Me? She finally musters the fortitude to say, "Me?" before setting it down.

Morrison in *Beloved* and *God Help the Child* has given to the sixty million and more an identity and to her characters voices to break the state of national amnesia and tell the African-American's story which has never been told. The author describes the horrors and cruelty of slavery and how it affected the psyches of those who were once slaves. Three phases of the novel can be identified by the readers. The characters go through three stages: the first is repression of the horrific memories; the second is learning to reconcile with their recollection; and the third is being freed from all the traumatic experiences and experiencing a rebirth or a new identity distinct from the previous one. In the entire voyage of their life, the marginalized people deploy their bodies as a site of resistance against the hegemonic forces where such bodies undergo a political rite of transformation having anthropological orientation of liminality and *communitas*. Passing through a liminal phase, body reintegrates into a new social sphere defining its own identity, where it dissolves itself into an egalitarian world.

Chapter III

Revisiting the Body through Morrison

This study has examined the way black bodies work as a site of resistance to dismantle various subordinations imposed upon them by the dominant white culture in Morrison's *God Help the Child* and *Beloved*. The study has focused on the position of marginal black communities and the way they employ their bodies to challenge discriminatory social, political and economic issues through self-governance, interpretation and resistance to establish their independent self. In both of the novels, black bodies have reconstructed their identity with the help of their awakened agency in which the bodies pass through a political rite of transformation experiencing separation, liminality, and reintegration into a new *communitas*. This study argues that liminality of body can be an active site of resistance to overcome injustices prevalent in the society as it works as the source of agency. To back up this argument, the study has employed the insights of Victor Turner, Michael Garnett, Michel Foucault, and Judith Butler which further analyzes the life of the people at the bottom of social, economic and political strata in the claustrophobic racist society of America.

Morrison adopts a technique of bodily narratives of African-Americans to redraw their history in order to reconstruct a new reality that can affect subjective experiences and identities of African-Americans. Such act contributes to a social change undertaking the issues of racism, injustice, violence, trauma, and so forth. In case of racial differences one has to understand the relation between components of changing process such as identity, history, trauma and narrative in quest of justice and peace in contemporary America. The experiences of African-American people of color have gone through different historical junctures across different generations.

The miserable and hostile journey of such people can be traced in a timeline of historical narrative from over years to till date. Black people have become victims of racism, classism, and gender discrimination during different time periods in America. Though their status has improved in the society in the early twenty- first century than that of the late twentieth century America, they are still at the margins of the society with little opportunities, and social exclusion. Morrison gives much space to the marginalized people in her texts. She portrays the marginalized people such as the poor, black, and women who are deprived of their place in the existing social order. She presents her narrative from the perspective of the marginalized. She gives the freedom of expression to the marginalized characters in her texts. She attempts to dismantle the hierarchy between the center and margins, blacks and whites by making the oppressed ones aware of their position, and by re-enforcing them to unite to fight against injustices.

Racism is an implicit force that switches to traumatic memory of the characters in the novel, but has crucial part for the characters' indulgence in different activities. Twenty first century is the era of post- modernism where all are free to live their lives without any oppression. Morrison's most recent book, *God Help the Child*, makes clear that racist, sexist, and imperialist policies have affected Americans in this day and age as well. In a way, Morrison's polyphonic tale symbolizes the affluent way of life of the people who live in the so-called largest democracy in the world. Typical American mindset has not come out of slave tradition. *God Help the Child* and *Beloved* critique the anti-racist sentiments and collective trauma due to race and gender. Morrison, with anti-race sentiments shows her empathy towards the victims who deploy their bodies to resist against every sort of exploitation. With the course of bodily traumatic journey, characters identify with victimhood and their sufferings

which ultimately lead them to the new self formation passing through rites of transformation of body.

This research work studies Morrison's *God Help the Child* and *Beloved* with a common concept of interracial conflict that gives rise to liminality and enlightenment. Liminality, as a rite of bodily transformation, can be taken as a political space to awaken agency in the dominated people in a claustrophobic- racist society. Both protagonists' liminal bodies reconstruct themselves as dominant characters to produce a counter-narrative by deploying the black female body as the locus of resistance. To some extent, Morrison's characters have attained their autonomous self with the arousal of their agency.

Morrison, through her characters' bodily experiences, presents how body can be an active medium to resist and bring a new state of equilibrium in the society. As a writer, she restores the black racial differences through literature in which her characters subvert the existing discourses of racism where their bodies undergo ritualized rites of transformation experiencing liminality to come up with an arousal of agency to resist. Morrison's dramatizations of the subjugation and dehumanization of her female characters are done with the purpose of giving them voice and agency, even if their empowerment is achieved through bodily transformation and sometimes through death. The factor that unites these characters belonging to disjunctive spaces and contexts is their decision to resist violence and pain by effacing the self, and speaking through new agency. A subversive act of resistance against the repressive system is the female body's self-erasing, which removes the cultural and gendered violence that has been engraved on it.

Morrison portrays marginalized black people's bodily exposures, the wound of the body and the mind, bitter experiences, their struggle, self-discovery, politics of

their consciousness, and their transformation as independent human beings in the racially biased American society. African- American literature provides a fertile ground to explore the treatment of body within the inherent struggle of blacks against white supremacy and racism. The black body sets a target for the dominant white culture on which it inscribes its values. Morrison presents the politico-social struggle of African-American people through her texts and her efforts to give justice to them. The study lays much stress or emphasis on the awakening of agency among the marginalized people to resist oppressions faced by them. Morrison's novels critique the social life of her black American people and their collective consciousness to resist and formulate a new self to live and blossom.

The focus of the study is the protagonists' quest of 'self' where their bodies go through active experiences of bodily transformation in course of inventing new body and maintaining balance between new self and old self. All body performances, acts and gestures are due to social obligations, where such bodily experiences are inseparable from ideological experiences. These ideological changes construct a new self that question the existing ideology that represses a particular strata of the society. It is worth observing the bodily and ideological changes of the characters constituting a new ideological self which serves as a triggering force for an act of resistance.

This study critically evaluates the representation of marginalized people's struggle in these texts. It also analyzes the way they overcome various injustices, confront the social predicaments, establish themselves as autonomous beings under body's political rites of transformation, and connect them to the mainstream with an arousal of agency to resist. Toni Morrison transposes her protagonists in *Beloved* and *God Help the Child* respectively from victimized and disempowered stage to the subjective space of resistance and agency. She locates the body not a mere site for the

play of the dominant structures of power and knowledge, but something that functions also as a site of resistance as radical as effacing the self, a gesture which may subvert or rupture the hegemonic order. Black identity, collective consciousness and reconstruction of the past have always been the dominant themes of Morrison's novels that reveal the most oppressive period in the black history that has affected the identity of African-Americans. The transformation of the protagonist from empty state of powerlessness to empowered quest of agency, emerging as a site of resistance embodies the body's powerful function. Both protagonists reconstruct themselves as dominant characters to produce a counter-narrative by deploying their bodies as the locus of resistance. They suffer for being what they are socially, economically and politically. Self is the result of social processes, constructed and reconstructed through ongoing social interaction.

To sum up, Morrison revisits the history of African-Americans through *Beloved* and *God Help the Child* and gives an identity to the sixty million and more black folks. She gives voices to her characters to break the state of national amnesia, and disseminates the African-American's story which has never come onto the surface. Through her narrative, the author reveals the atrocities and brutality of slavery and its aftermath on the psyche of the ex-slaves. In the novels, the readers can trace out three stages of traumatic racial encounters and body's function to pass through rites of transformation. The first stage is the repressing of the traumatic memory by the characters, the second stage is learning how to reconcile with their memory, and finally, being cleared from all the painful experiences and having a rebirth or a new identity separate from the former one. In the entire voyage of their life, the marginalized people deploy their bodies as a site of resistance against the hegemonic forces where such bodies undergo a political rite of transformation having

anthropological orientation of liminality and communitas. Passing through a liminal phase, body reintegrates into a new social sphere defining its own identity, where it dissolves itself into an egalitarian world.

Works Cited

- Anand, Vaishali. "Human Rights Exploitation: Unending Circle of Beloved in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*". *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences (IJELS)*, vol. 4, Issue. 2, Mar - Apr, 2019. pp.291-94.<https://dx.doi.org/10.22161/ijels.4.2.17>.
- Bouson, J. Brooks " Sethe's Best Thing". *Bloom's Guides: Toni Morrison's Beloved*. edited by Harold Bloom. Chelsea House Publishers. 2004. pp.1-131. print.
- Butler, Judith. "Acting in Concert". *Undoing Gender*. Routledge, 2004.
- Butler, Judith. "Bodily Inscriptions and Performative Subversion". *Gender Trouble*. Routledge, 2002. 163-180.
- Campbell, Jason. "Scarification and Collective Sympathy: An Analysis of Rememory in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*." Academia.edu. Retrieved January 5, 2019, from [academia.edu/510213/scarification_and_collectionsympathy](https://www.academia.edu/510213/scarification_and_collectionsympathy).
- Doyle, Laura. "Of Race and Woman: Eugenics, Motherhood, and Racial Patriarchy". *Bordering on the Body: The Racial Matrix of Modern Fiction and Culture*. edited by Arnold Rampersad and Shelley Fisher Fishkin. Oxford University Press. 1994. p.p. 1-35. Print.
- Elkin, Susan. "The Tyranny of Memory can Make a Destructive Adversary." *The Independent Daily*, 18 April 2015. <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/god-help-the-child-by-toni-morrison-book-review-the-tyranny-of-memory-can-make-a-destructive-10182633.html>.
- Farshid, Sima. "Reclamation of the Exploited Body in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*". *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, vol. 2, no. 6, Nov, 2012. pp. 497-500. doi: 10.7763/IJSSH.2012.V2.15
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. trans. Alan

- Sheridan. 2nd ed. Vintage Books. 1977.
- - - "The Body of Condemned". *The Spectacles of the Scaffold*. Penguin, 2008. 1-38.
- - - "The Confession of the Flesh" in Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977*, edited by Colin Gordon. Pantheon Books, 1980, 194-228.
- - - *The History of Sexuality*. 1 edited by Robert Hurley. Editions Gallimard, 1976 vol.1
- - - "The Subject and Power," *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. edited by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow. U Chicago Press, 1983. 221.
- Garnett, Michael. "Agency and Inner Freedom." *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, vol.16, no. 1, 2011, pp. 4-33.
- Gay, Roxane. "Incredibly Powerful." *The Guardian*, 29 April 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/apr/29/god-help-the-child-tonimorrison-review-novel>
- Gras, Delphine. "Post What? Disarticulating Post-Discourses in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*". *Post What? Disarticulating Post-Discourses in Toni Morrison's God Help the Child*. *Humanities*, vol. 5, no. 80, 2016. pp.1-18. doi:10.3390/h5040080
- Hatt, Michael. "Race Ritual and Responsibility: Performativity and the Southern Lynching". *Performing the Body/ Performing the Text*. edited by Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson. Routledge. 1999. pp. 71-83. Print.
- Henderson, Mae. "Toni Morrison's *Beloved*: Re-membering the Body as a Historical Text." In: McKay, N. Y. and Andrews, W. (Eds.), *Toni Morrison's Beloved: a Case Study*. Oxford, (1999): 79-106. Print.

- Holloway, Karla F.C. "On Spirituality". *Bloom's Guides: Toni Morrison's Beloved*.
 edited by Harold Bloom. Chelsea House Publishers. 2004. pp.1-131. print.
- Jones, C. M. Review of *Conversations with Toni Morrison.*, by D. Taylor-Guthrie.
African American Review, vol.31, no.1, 1997. pp.161–164.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/3042202>
- Joy, L., Reynold, Margaret., & Noakes, J. *Introduction. Cambridge companion to African American Women's Literature*. Cambridge University Press. 2002 print.
- Kick, Linda L. "Toni Morrison by Jill Matus". *Utopian Studies*, vol.10, no.2, 1999. pp.202-284. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/20718135.
- LópezRamírez, Manuela. "Racialized Beauty: The Ugly Duckling in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*". *Complutense Journal of English Studies*, vol.25, 2017. pp.173-89. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5209/CJES.55255>
- Lefebvre, Henry. *The Survival of Capitalism: Reproduction of Relations of Production*. trans. Bryant Frank. St. Martin's Press, 1976.
 *The Production of Space*. trans. Nicholson-Smith D.. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991.
- Massaad, Madoline. "Reconciliation with the Past for a New Self- Identification in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*". *International Journal of English, Literature and Social Sciences (IJELS)*, vol-4, Issue-6, Nov – Dec 2019. <https://dx.doi.org/10.22161/ijels.46.51>. pp. 1955-1959.
- Manyika, Sarah Ladipo. "On Toni Morrison". *Transition*, No. 124, Writing Black Canadas Indiana University Press, (2017), pp. 138-147 JSTOR,
- McKay, Nellie and Andrews, William. (Eds). *Toni Morrison's Beloved: a Case Study*. Oxford, (1999). Print. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/transition.124.1.27>.

Michaels Axel and Christoph Wulf. "Rethinking the Body: an Introduction". *Images of the Body in India*. edited by Axel Michaels and Christoph Wulf. Routledge, 2011. pp.1-18.

Morrison, Toni. *God Help the Child*. Vintage, 2015.

---. *Beloved*. Chatto and Windus Ltd, 1997. Print

Muyumba, Walton "Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child* Finds Beauty in Human Weakness". *The Atlantic Daily*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2015/04/morrison-review-god-help-the-child/391197> pp.13-14
JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/20718135.

Ostrander, Greg. "Foucault's Disappearing Body". *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory/Revue canadienne de theorie politique et sociale*, McGill University, vol. XI, no. 1-2. 1987.

Peach, Linden. *Toni Morrison*. St. Martin's Press, 2000.

Peterson, Christopher. "Beloved's Claim". *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol.52, no.3, Fall 2006, pp. 548-69. Project Muse. doi: 10.1353/mfs.2006.0072.

Qasim, K. "Black Women's Quest for subjectivity: Identity Politics in Toni Morrison's Novels: *Song of Solomon* and *Beloved*". *International Journal of Applied Linguistic and English Literature*. vol.1, no. 2. 2012. pp.211-222.

Sadehi, Camelia. "Beloved and Kristevn Melancholic Subject." *The Journal of International Social Research* vol.5.no. 20. 2012. p.p 133-142.

Schreiber, Evelyn. J. *Race, Trauma, and Home in the Novels of Toni Morrison*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2010.

Silini, Roumaïssa and Majdoubah, Ahmad. "Space and the Commodification of Difference in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*". *Jordan Journal of*

Modern Languages and LiteratureJJML, vol.10, no. 1, 2018, pp 77-93.

Shilling, Chris. "The Body, Self-Identity and Death". *The Body and Social Theory*.

edited by Chris Shilling. SAGE Publications Ltd. 2003. pp. 152-172. Print.

Sullivan, Mecca Jamilah. "Color Politics Remix Reviewed Work(s) :*God Help the*

Child by Morrison." *The Women's w of Review Books*, vol. 32, no. 6, 2015

Spivak, GayatriChakravorty. "The Subaltern: A Silent Interview." *Mapping Subaltern*

Studies and the Postcolonial, edited by VinayakChaturvedi, vol.4, no.2. 2000,

pp. 234-327.

- - -. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *In Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. edited

by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grasberg, University of Illinois Press,1988.

- - -. "Interview with GayatriChakravortySpivak: New Nation Writers Conference in

South Africa." *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature*, 1992.

Tamen, Miguel. "Interpretation and Resistance." *Common Knowledge*, vol. 18, no. 2.

2012, pp. 208-219.

Torres, Rafael. "Between Presence and Absence: *Beloved*, Postmodernism and

Blackness." In: McKay, N. Y. and Andrews, W. (Eds.). *Toni Morrison's*

Beloved: a Case Study. Oxford, (1999): 179-202. Print.

Walker, Kara. "Toni Morrison's God Help the Child." *New York Times*.

[http://www.nytimes.com/2015/4/19./review/toni-morrison's God Help the](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/4/19./review/toni-morrison's-God-Help-the-Child/html)

[Child/html](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/4/19./review/toni-morrison's-God-Help-the-Child/html).

Zayed, Jihan and Maseeh, Shaista.. "Polyphony of Toni Morrison's *God Help the*

Child." *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences* vol. 4, no. 4,

2016. pp.34-41.