CULTURAL TRAUMA'S INFLUENCE ON REPRESENTATIONS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN IDENTITY IN ALICE WALKER'S "EVERYDAY USE"

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ABSTRACT

CULTURAL TRAUMA'S INFLUENCE ON REPRESENTATIONS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN IDENTITY IN ALICE WALKER'S "EVERYDAY USE"

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This analysis employs Ron Eyerman's *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity* as a conceptual lens to analyze representations of African American identity in Alice Walker's "Everyday Use." In *Cultural Trauma,* Eyerman implements two narrative frames, the tragic/redemptive and progressive, to explore how cultural trauma has influenced the identity formation of generations of African Americans from Reconstruction to the present. This literary analysis uses those narrative frames to investigate why the characters in "Everyday Use" form conflicting cultural identities and interpretations of heritage despite sharing racial and ethnic ties. Moreover, this study reveals that the contrasting representations of African American identity presented by the characters in "Everyday Use" are a result of the variance within the tragic/redemptive and progressive, narrative frames that shaped their respective worldviews. The fundamental differences between the progressive and tragic/redemptive frames lies in how they regard the African and the American, and how they interpreted the meaning of slavery. By examining "Everyday Use's" characters in the context of cultural trauma, this piece presents a balanced interpretation of the opposing two energies in "Everyday Use." Particularly, instead of offering a one-sided interpretation of the

characters, as other critics have, this analysis focuses on the complexities within the diverse representations of African American identity presented in the story

Keywords: Cultural trauma, African American identity, collective memory, collective identity, representation, generation, "Everyday Use"

This piece is dedicated to, **Roberto Antonio Marshall**, my brother and best friend. Your untimely death rendered you unable to physically encounter this essay. Yet, the 20 years of love and support that you bestowed upon me fueled me with the necessary motivation to complete the piece, against all odds!

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INTRODUCTION

This study reassesses notions of heritage and identity in Alice Walker's "Everyday Use." Specifically, this analysis uses cultural trauma theory—an experiential, scientific concept, which explains how groups' collective memory of events impact their collective identity—to reposition representations of African American identity and heritage expressed by two of the story's characters, Hakim and Dee/Wangero.

Set in the south during the 70's, "Everyday Use" is narrated by sharecropper "Mama" Johnson who, along with her youngest daughter Maggie, awaits the arrival of her oldest daughter Dee, who is returning home for the first time in years since leaving for college. Accompanied by a Muslim named Hakim-A-Barber, Dee arrives changed: she looks different, uses a foreign greeting, and is now named Wangero Leewanika Kemanjo. After greetings, they go in for dinner, where Dee/Wangero eats elatedly. In fact, she's "delighted" by everything in the house, asking Mama to keep several items, including two quilts "pieced" (Walker 57) by Grandma Dee and quilted by Mama and Big Dee. Yet, Mama bares that she already promised the quilts to Maggie. Though Dee/Wangero protests, Mama elects to keep her promise, which upsets Dee/Wangero. She and Hakim leave abruptly. Then, Mama and Maggie relax outside until bedtime.

The characters in "Everyday Use" exemplify four different representations of African American identity and heritage. Mama's representation of identity and heritage is expressed through sharecropping and manual labor, Maggie's is articulated through quilting and domestic work, Dee/Wangero's is presented through Pan Africanism, and Hakim's is conveyed through a Muslim identity.

Critiques of “Everyday Use” tend to condemn Hakim and Dee/Wangero’s African American identity and heritage as false, while accepting Mama and Maggie’s as “traditional” or “true.” Many critiques exemplify this trend. For instance, Nancy Tuten’s analysis, “Alice Walker’s ‘Everyday Use,’” contends that most critics concur that “Everyday Use” is about “Mama's awakening to one daughter's superficiality and to the other's deep-seated understanding of heritage” (125). Joan Korenman’s article, “African American Women Writers, Black Nationalism, and the Matrilineal Heritage,” also demonstrates this trend. Her analysis praises Mama and Maggie’s representations of African American identity. In contrasts, she designates Dee/Wangero’s espousal of Black Nationalism as “self-righteous and misguided;” she posits Hakim as an extension of her “cultural myopia” (144, 146). Yet, these analyses, along with many others, harshly critique Hakim and Dee/Wangero’s representations of identity and heritage without deliberating their importance. David Cowart’s, “Heritage and Deracination in Walker's ‘Everyday Use,’” on the other hand, recognizes that “Everyday Use” treats “Islam” and “the Africanist vision” with “respect” (174). Yet, his analysis typifies Dee/Wangero and Hakim’s attempts at cultural reclamation as fruitless and misguided without considering how the characters profited from their expressions of identity. To omit this distinction undermines the significance of the story’s diverse representations of identity and heritage.

It has become common to interpret Hakim and Dee/Wangero as representations that symbolize a condemnation of Black Nationalism. However, it is important to emphasize that this characterization of “Everyday Use is not an interpretation of the story that has been put forth by its author, Alice Walker. Instead, these interpretations of “Everyday Use” reflect its critics’ understandings of African American identity and

heritage which, in their narrowness, deny space for difference. I contend that Walker wrote “Everyday Use” to explore the complexities of African American identity and heritage, not necessarily to spotlight certain representations of African American identity and heritage over others.

To address this issue, some readers of “Everyday Use” have developed empathetic analyses of the story’s varied representations of African American identity. For example, Sam Whitsitt’s study, “In Spite of It All: A Reading of Alice Walker's Use” acknowledges the nuanced interpretations of difference at play in the story, especially with the character Dee, but he still concludes that Mama and Maggie’s representations of heritage are more valid. Comparatively, Joe Sarnowski’s criticism, "Destroying to Save: Idealism and Pragmatism in Alice Walker's ‘Everyday Use,’" conveys the interconnectedness of the story’s characters, articulating that they all use pragmatic and idealistic approaches to representing and preserving African American heritage. Susan Farrell’s article, "Fight Vs. Flight: A Re-Evaluation of Dee in Alice Walker's ‘Everyday Use,’" provides the only analysis of Everyday Use” that prioritizes Dee/Wangero’s representation of African American identity and heritage over Mama and Maggie’s. Farrell’s reassessment of the story highlights the benefits of Dee/Wangero’s perspective and cultural identity as a strategic move to emphasizes the validity of an argument in favor of Dee’s/Wangero’s representation of African American identity and heritage. She then utilizes this argument as leverage to ultimately accentuate the importance of all the story’s representation of African American identity. Perspective like Farrell’s and Sarnowski’s convey a balanced reading of the “Everyday Use.” I argue that

interpretations like these are most acute in dissecting how the story presents African American identity. Therefore, my study aligns with these approaches.

My thesis is unique in its utilization of cultural trauma theory as a conceptual framework to analyze depictions of African American heritage and identity in "Everyday Use." Through this literary criticism, I seek to not only understand how the characters in "Everyday Use" may have been influenced by cultural trauma, but I also seek to understand how Walker's short story can help inform our understanding of African American identity formation. I utilize two texts to help build my understanding of cultural trauma theory: *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity,* by Alexander et al. and Ron Eyerman's *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity.* These works are both foundational texts in cultivating cultural trauma theory and expanding the idea from theory to paradigm. Together, Alexander and Eyerman's conceptualization of cultural trauma helps to elucidate Walker's ideas of African American identity and heritage.

Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity outlines and develops the concept of cultural trauma, delineates its tenants, and applies them to explain the manifestation of cultural trauma within communities of people worldwide. The first chapter of the book, "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma," by sociologist and theorist Jeffrey C. Alexander, builds the foundation for the theory. Alexander explains that cultural trauma surfaces when members of a group feel "subjected" to an awful incident that permanently "marks...their group consciousness," endlessly impacting their "memories" and altering their "future identity" in foundational and binding ways (1). Observing trauma as an assumed experience, Alexander distinguishes cultural trauma from theories that view

trauma as inherent. In the chapters that follow Alexander's, various sociologists develop cultural trauma theory by applying it to explain phenomena. For instance, chapter four of the book, Bernhard Giesen's "The Trauma of Perpetrators: The Holocaust as a Traumatic Reference of German National Identity" conveys that the theory of cultural trauma is applicable to the Holocaust, which he views as a collective memory linked to German national identity. Similarly, the book's epilogue, "September 11, 2001 as cultural trauma," by Neil J. Smelser, observes 911 as an example of cultural trauma that altered Americans' collective memory and affected aspects of American culture and character.

However, chapter 3 of *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, entitled "Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity," by Ron Eyerman, is most germane to my analysis. Eyerman explores how the collective memory of slavery has been interpreted by African Americans since Reconstruction and how such interpretations impacted the formation of their collective identity through generations. Moreover, he posits that cultural trauma is "mediated through various forms of representation…linked to the reformation of collective identity and the reworking of collective memory (Eyerman 1). This contribution sets the grounds for explaining how cultural trauma is negotiated differently for factions within a collective, resulting in variations in their collective identities.

Eyerman further cultivates his interpretation of cultural trauma theory by expanding on his ideals in *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity.* My study utilizes this particular adaptation of cultural trauma theory as a framework to analyze "Everyday Use" because of its value in explaining why many African Americans represent identity and heritage in very different ways. Eyerman also

offers historical context and narrative frames to discuss how various representations of African identity and heritage formed over time. “Everyday Use’s” characters present representations of African identity and heritage that appear to fit the framework set forth in *Cultural Trauma.* Hence, *Cultural Trauma* provides an appropriate context for explaining why “Everyday Use’s” characters’ cultural identities and interpretations of heritage are different despite sharing racial and ethnic ties.

Other scholars have engaged in and expanded the discussion of how African Americans have responded to cultural trauma. For instance, Angela Onwuachi-Willig’s “The Trauma of the Routine: Lessons on Cultural Trauma from the Emmett Till Verdict” is a case study that utilizes the African Americans community’s response to the Emmet Till murder trial as a catalyst to discuss how public and institutional sustainment of harmful routines can incite cultural trauma. Additionally, Pearl Kimya Barden’s dissertation, "Remembering the Cultural Trauma Legacies of Slavery: African American Young Adult Perceptions on Racism, Ethnic Identity, and Racial Socialization," explores how cultural trauma impacts the development of African American youth contemporarily. Jointly, these works explain how certain practices can stimulate cultural trauma and how cultural trauma can impact human development and behavior.

Pertinent to my argument, some scholars have specifically discussed how cultural trauma has been mediated though literature. Patricia San José Rico’s *Creating Memory and Cultural Identity in African American Trauma Fiction* examines how African American writers observe the relationship between the process of African American identity formation and notions of memory, trauma, and reclamation of the past. Comparably, Dr. Pekka Kilpeläinen’s “At the Meetin' Tree: Reading, Storytelling, and

Transculturation in Daniel Black's They Tell Me of a Home" is a transcultural analysis, which examines the concepts of mobility and cultural trauma in Daniel Black's "They Tell Me of a Home." Kilpeläinen piece articulate how contemporary African Americans authors mediate cultural trauma through literature. These works particularly assist in fostering my ability to theorize how to explore cultural trauma in the context of literature.

This study explains how cultural trauma influenced the characters depicted in "Everyday Use." This analysis argues that though the characters in the story illustrate dissimilar representations of African American identity and heritage, they all present representations of African American identity and heritage that are important and distinctive due to the characters respective approaches to mediating cultural trauma. Specifically, "Everyday Use's" characters' differing representations of African American identity and heritage are a reflection of the variance in the narrative frames that shape their worldviews and perspectives on achieving emancipation.

While this piece does not exhaustively convey how cultural trauma influenced the construction of the contents in, "Everyday Use," this study reveals that the contrasting representations of African American identity presented by the characters in "Everyday Use" are a result of the variance within the tragic/redemptive and progressive, narrative frames that shaped their respective worldviews. The differences within the progressive and tragic/redemptive frames are due to dissimilarities in how they observe the African and the American and interpret the meaning of slavery. I argue that the characters in "Everyday Use" reflect these differences within their representations of African American identity. Additionally, similar to Sarnowski, throughout my analysis I allude to Dee/Wangero by both her given and adopted names. Whereas some articles refer to

Dee/Wangero by a single name to avoid "confusion and awkwardness" (Cowart 171), Sarnowski identifies Dee/Wangero by both, contending that, "both names and their implications are vital to the story's dynamics …one may think of 'Dee/Wangero as the binary opposition with which the character struggles" (272). My analysis follows the convention of referring to Dee/Wangero by both names because I consider them germane to discussing African American cultural identity and formation in "Everyday Use."

First, this essay outlines Eyerman's *Cultural Trauma Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity* to clarify how cultural trauma influenced African American identity formation. Next, the piece applies cultural trauma as a conceptual frame to analyze representations of African American identity and heritage in "Everyday Use." Understanding the identities and doctrines of "Everyday Use's" characters, in the context of cultural trauma, helps cognize the complexities embodied within the story's diverse representations of African American heritage and identity. The study concludes with a discussion of implications for further research.

CULTURAL TRAUMAS INFLUENCE ON THE FORMATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN IDENTITY

This study first outlines the components of cultural trauma theory as presented in *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity.* This specific adaptation of cultural trauma theory is unique because of its emphasis on explaining the process of African American identity formation. This section highlights the relationship between cultural trauma and African American identity formation to clarify why cultural trauma is an appropriate framework for analyzing "Everyday Use."

Cultural Trauma uses cultural trauma theory, social movement theory, and narrative frames, to outline "conflicts over the form and meaning of representation and culture in successive generations of Black Americans after slavery" (Heir 318). *Cultural Trauma* posits slavery as the event that incites cultural trauma amid African Americans, but stresses that their articulation of cultural trauma formed after slavery as a reaction to Reconstruction's failure to grant the guarantees of the Emancipation Proclamation.

In the process of mediating cultural trauma, African Americans embraced three distinct models toward liberation, each with its own approach for fulfillment. The first model embraced ideals of independence, virtue, and "rights to full citizenship" (Eyerman 19), calling for legal battles to change laws. The second embraced "culturalism and nationalism," using a strategy of "racial identification, solidarity, and withdrawal" (Eyerman 19). The third supported emigration, intending to unite the Black race and go back to a motherland. These approaches were vital to the process of collective identity formation within the social movements from which they respectively derived.

Cultural Trauma employs the cognitive approach to social movement theory as developed in Eyerman and Jamison's *Social Movements: A Cognitive Approach.* The cognitive approach views pronunciation of collective identity as a vital, characterizing trait of social movements. This notion is a constitutive aspect of the concept of cognitive praxis, which asserts that social movements helps govern knowledge and change the historical path and collective memory of participants. In this context, social movements are "knowledge practices" (Casas-Cortés et al. 45) where collectives and intellectuals endeavor to revise the cognitive understandings of their social environment. *Cultural Trauma* highlights how social movements help to revise collective memory and collective identity. Also, through narrative frames, *Cultural Trauma* emphasizes how social movements help facilitate the formation of collective identity by mingling "individual biographies" into… a collective narrative" (Eyerman 21).

In addition to the influence of social movements, generational awareness is also critical to cultural trauma theory's views on remembering and reconceptualizing the past. *Cultural Trauma* employs a sociological interpretation of "generation" to outline the changes within African Americans' responses to cultural trauma. In this sociological interpretation of generation, generation is not defined by birthdate. Instead, generations are marked by "collective consciousness." After Reconstruction, the first generation articulated cultural trauma and formulated reactions to it. In the 1920's, the second generation was fashioned by the first surge of migration at the end of WWI. During this time, the progressive and tragic/redemption narratives took form, significantly reshaping African Americans' collective memory. Shaped by urban migration, the third generation that reformulated the collective memory of African Americans arose during WWII.

Changes in the collective memory of each upcoming generation were influenced by dissimilarities in their social conditions, social ills, interests, and needs when compared with their predecessor. Media is vital to how generational consciousness is formed and revised too, because media is an authority on representation, which plays a central role in the process of reinterpreting the past as it designates how the past is signified in the present, shaping views and ideas that affect how collectives contextualize historic events.

The notion of representation is vital to the process of reconciling cultural trauma and to my examination of the relationship between cultural trauma and "Everyday Use." Consequently, it is important to note that representation can be "examined across several dimensions" (Eyerman 12). Representation can be assessed along "aesthetic dimensions," as "re-presenting" (Eyerman 12). Here, representation is conveyed through symbols that take the form of words, images, or other icons. Representation can also signify a political process regarding a group's image as a political collective. There are also "moral dimensions" to representation, which approaches concerns like "how should a people be represented" (Eyerman 13). There is a "cognitive dimension" too, where representation becomes the privilege of specialist who cultivate "procedures and criteria of and for representation, claiming special privileges regarding the materials presented" (Eyerman 13). Lastly, as "representativeness," representation denoted "types and exemplars" (Eyerman 13). My analysis intersects with two of these dimensions of representation. Most salient, my study emphasizes representativeness by analyzing how the characters in "Everyday Use" exemplify specific interpretations of identity. Also, my analysis highlights moral dimensions of representation too, engaging in an argument concerning how African American identity and heritage should be embodied.

Historically, African Americans been concern about how they are represented and who has the power to represent them. Phyllis Rauch Klotman and Janet Cutler's *Struggles for Representation* explains that African Americans have constantly struggled to be viewed as contemporaries in a society that rejects their equality. This struggle is fought against interlopers and internally between members of the community, occurring through various mediums: art, literature, public discourse, etc. Though connected by experiences of racial oppression and imposed marginalization, the Black community is, and has always been, a diverse collective with assorted perspectives. So, African Americans' internal discourses about representation and liberation consists of numerous and divergent ideals. This was particularly evident within the "urban public sphere that emerged with the Great Migration" (Eyerman 14). In the 1920's the progressive and tragic/redemption narratives reshaped the collective memory of African Americans. revising the collective memory of the first generation, which hoped to neglect slavery to move forward. Contrastingly, the progressive and tragic/redemptive narratives both remember slavery as a "usable past" (Eyerman 90), but in two different ways.

The Two Narrative Frames

The progressive and tragic/redemptive frames presented contrasting and frequently conflicting ideas on connecting the past to the present and future. These two perspectives were unified by a historic connection with slavery and both attempted to reconceptualize the previous generation's approach to mediating cultural trauma. However, their differing interpretations of the past produced divergent pathways toward approaching the future. The progressive narrative presented a forward-looking view of

the past, motioning toward integration, on the grounds of "racial regeneration" achieved through sifting the past for present use" (Eyerman (92). In contrast, The tragic/redemptive frame espoused a narrative of "tragedy and redemption, of loss and retrieval" (Eyerman 91), signaling toward a rejuvenated Black society in Africa. The key differences between the progressive and tragic/redemptive frames stem from how the regard the African and the American, and how they interpret the meaning of slavery.

Thus, Africa is a vital marker for identity in both of these narrative frames. The progressive narrative does not view Africa as a place, must instead as a symbol of a "lost and forgotten past" (Eyerman 92). In contrasts, the tragic redemptive narrative viewed Africa as a "homeland" (Eyerman 93). These varying perceptions of Africa influenced each narrative frame's perception of the African American concept, which was fundamental to each narrative's approach to manifesting African American identity While the progressive narrative embraced the duality of the term African American, the tragic/redemptive narrative prioritized African identity.

These competing views were prominent in the social consciousness of the second generations' collective memory and would remain active in the collective consciousness of African Americans for generations. Though the emerging generation "struggled to define itself in opposition to the ideas and beliefs" of the preceding generation, "they were bounded by inherited interpretative frames" (Eyerman 130). Hence, the progressive and tragic/redemptive narrative are perspectives that have "grounded" (Eyerman 130) and influenced the formation of African American identity since the Great Migration. Accordingly, the progressive and tragic/redemptive frames are relevant to explaining the representations of African American identity articulated in "Everyday Use."

READING “EVERYDAY USE” THROUGH THE LENS OF CULTURAL TRAUMA

African Americans are a heterogeneous group of people with varied standpoints and worldviews. Accordingly, there are various ways that African Americans have handled representing their identities. The progressive and tragic/redemptive perspectives are two distinct, yet interconnected, narrative frames that have foundationally and enduringly influenced African American identity formation since the 1920’s. Written and set in the 1970’s Walker’s “Everyday Use” depicts the progressive and tragic/redemptive perspectives through the identities and ideals of its characters.

All four of “Everyday Use’s” characters portray representations of African American identity and heritage that align with the either tragic/redemptive or progressive narrative. These perspectives are conveyed through the characters’ embodiment of the “African-American” concept. Mama and Maggie convey representations of identity and heritage that reflect of the progressive narrative frame through their position as hard working laborers that sustain African American traditions and beliefs. In contrast, Dee/Wangero and Hakim express representations of African American identity that reflect the tragic/redemptive narrative. They convey these characteristics through their locus as Black Nationalist and their affiliation with Africa.

Mama, Maggie, and the Progressive Narrative

Mama and Maggie exemplify the progressive narrative’s approach to mediating cultural trauma. They personify this frame through their identity and work as Black agricultural laborers. Additionally, Mama and Maggie’s approach to embodying the

"African American" concept further suggests an association with the progressive perspective. Their expression of African American identity illustrates the duality of the double consciousness, embracing both the American and African aspects of their identity. These factors indicate that Mama and Maggie's representations of African American heritage and identity were shaped by the progressive frame.

As black laborers, Mama and Maggie illustrate representations of African American identity that reflect the third generations' progressive perspective on mediating cultural trauma. One perspective that encapsulates this standpoint is W.E.B DuBois' 1935 study, *Black Reconstruction in America 1860–1880,* which evaluates slavery and Reconstruction through a "Marxian variant of the progressive narrative," insisting that the collective identity of African Americans is based in "the laboring process" (Eyerman 132). *Black Reconstruction in America* frames Reconstruction as a time that held potential for America to transition from a slave-based economy to a work-ruled democracy, which was a promising idea in the eyes of African Americans. Through the lens of *Black Reconstruction*, Reconstruction was "a splendid failure" (DuBois 708), key in the "modernization of peasants into workers" (Eyerman 132). Through the progressive perspective of the 1930's, Reconstruction was a "misstep on the road to a new future" (Eyerman 132), a future where African Americans could advance through hard work.

This perspective is further conveyed in the appendix of Dr. Carter G. Woodson's *Mis-Education of the Negro,* entitled, "Much Ado About a Name." This piece emphasizes effort and self-sufficiency as a means of advancement. Woodson expresses, that if "the Negro…would…struggle and make something of himself and contribute to modern culture, the world will learn to look upon him as an American rather than as one of an

undeveloped element of the population" (200). Woodson's assertion contends that struggle and hard work are the path to autonomy and respect. Woodson's ideas on progress and liberation reflect the progressive narrative. This variant of the progressive perspective is central to my point regarding "Everyday Use." Mama and Maggie embody the progressive approach toward mediating cultural trauma through agricultural labor, which allows them self-sufficiency.

Mama is a sharecropper whose affinity for work is evident, she expresses her appreciation for labor several times throughout the story. She conveys that she "was always better at a man's job" (Walker 50), which communicates Mama's ability to perform tasks that require strength. She further articulates the extent of this strength, bragging about how she "killed bull calf with only a sledgehammer and had the meat hung before nightfall" (Walker 48). Mama's capacity for hard work is further conveyed through her physical appearance. Mama describes herself as "large, big-boned, with rough, man-working hands" (Walker 48). She includes these details to convey her merit as a worker. Furthermore, Mama also sheds light on her commitment to work and her endurance in working through adverse conditions, explaining that she can "work outside all day" (Walker 48). All of these qualities and characteristics illuminate that Mama is a very capable, hardworking farmer.

In contrasts to Mama's ability to be a productive manual laborer, Maggie's role as a laborer is more domestic in nature. Maggie's domestic duties are conveyed from the very beginning of the story when Walker reveals that Maggie assisted in helping Mama make the yard "clean, wavy, and comfortable" (Walker 47). Furthermore, the fact that "Maggie hung back in the kitchen over the dishpan immediately after dinner" (Walker

56) to wash the dishes after the family's meal is another indication of Maggie's fluency with domestic labor. Additionally, Mama and Maggie's work to maintain their "pasture" (Walker 51), despite its destitute condition, which shows that they are proud of what they have, no matter how tattered. Mama and Maggie contribute "to society" (Woodson 200) through active agricultural labor. They represent the lineage of African Americans who stayed in the South and maintained plantations even after the Great migration.

Moreover, Mama and Maggie further exemplify representations of African American identity that reflects the progressive perspective through their approach to embodying the concept of "African American." Aligned with the progressive approach, Mama and Maggie articulate a cultural identity that embraces the idea of "double consciousness" as outlined by W. E. B. Du Bois, where the duality of being "African and American" offers an identity that suggests "loyalty to a nation but not necessarily to its dominant culture or way of life" (Eyerman 4). They embody this ideology through their Southern American farm life that preserves African American customs and traditions that have been around since the Antebellum period. They embrace many traditions, beliefs, and practices that were influenced by the institution of American slavery. Their embodiment of African American culture is illustrated through their language, religion, work, and meal choice. They exclusively speak English. Mama and Maggie are Christians. They work as sharecroppers and prepare a meal that is traditional African American cuisine. Furthermore, another indication of Mama and Maggie's maintenance of African American traditions is their ability to quilt. These customs and traditions exemplify Mama and Maggie's identity as "African American."

Mama and Maggie's use of English is an indication of the Americanness within their identity. Specifically, their use of solely English becomes a glaringly indicative of their Americanness when their language practices are observed in relation to Hakim and Dee/Wangero's. When Dee/Wangero and Hakim utilize foreign language and names, Mama and Maggie are perplexed. For example, when Hakim greets Mama with the term "Asalamalakim" (Walker 52), Mama believes that this is Hakim's name at first. Furthermore, when Dee introduces herself as "Wangero Leewanika Kemanjo," Mama finds the name to be extremely hard to pronounce. She asks Dee/Wangero to "ream it out" (Walker 54) several times so that she can get used to pronouncing it. Moreover, when Hakim conveys his real name, Mama states that it is "twice as long, and three times as hard" (Walker 54) to pronounce as Dee/Wangero's name. Mama trips over his name "two or three times" (Walker 54), so he compromises and suggests that Mama just call him Hakim-A-Barber. Yet, even in providing her with a designation that is more easily pronounced, Mama is still confused by Hakim's name. When he tells her to call him "Hakim-A-Barber," Mama "wanted to ask him if he was a barber" (Walker 54), but she just assumed that he wasn't and decided not to asks. These exchanges where Mama grapples with Dee/Wangero and Hakim's language and names convey not only their foreignness to her, but it also illuminates that Mama's language conventions are exclusively American.

Additionally, Mama and Maggie further convey a representation of African American identity that is deeply American through their Christian identity. Mama and Maggie's religion is subtly accentuated in the story, yet we can easily discern that they are Christians. This detail is conveyed when Mama says that she and "the church" raised

money to send Dee/Wangero "to Augusta to school" (Walker 50). Mama and Maggie's position as Christians is further conveyed when Mama she says that she will "sing church songs" (Walker 50) to herself when Maggie marries John Thomas and leaves the house. Furthermore, Mama explains that Maggie "knew God to work" (Walker 58) a certain way. Also, when Mama has her "awakening" (Tuten 125), she describes that "something hit" her "in the top of" her "head and ran down to the soles" of her "feet just like when" she is "in church and the spirit of God touches" (Walker 58) her. All of these references to God and church illuminate Mama and Maggie's position as Christians. During the transatlantic slave trade, enslaved Africans were forced to observe Christianity. Yet, over time, African Americans embraced the religion as their own. Thereafter, Christianity and the Black church continuously played an imperative role in African American culture. *Cultural Trauma* notes that "the church was a central source of community and identity-formation…during slavery and continued to be so" (Eyerman 25). Thus, as members of the Black church, Mama and Maggie further express their African American identity.

Moreover, though it may seem like an obscure detail, the meal that is prepared for dinner is another indicator that Mama and Maggie adhere to traditional African American culture. Their dinner spread consisted of chitlins (pig intestines), corned bread, collard greens, and sweet potatoes. These dishes are commonly viewed as traditional African American foods. In fact, James McWilliams's "African-American Cooking beyond Chitlins" characterizes chitlins and collard greens as "stereotypical" African American contributions to American cuisine. Likewise, Korenman characterizes Mama's "chitlins and collards" as a part of her "rural Black Southern roots" (144). Enslaved people were often given the least desired parts of the animals to eat. This included chitins which,

through time, became a common food item amongst African American meals. Additionally, cornbread and sweet potatoes are also "traditional black American foods" (Korenman 147). Hence, this meal choice further conveys the Americanness within Mama and Maggie's African American identity.

Along with their customs, religion and language, Mama and Maggie further display their African American identity through the traditions in which they embrace. Specifically, the custom of quilting is the most salient tradition that Mama and Maggie practice, which illuminates their African American identity. Quilting is a convention that is viewed as a traditional craft for African Americans, African American women in particular. Barbara T. Christian's introduction to the Rutgers University Press's collection of essays regarding Walker's "Everyday Use," also entitled "Everyday Use," explains that in "Everyday Use," "Walker articulates the metaphor of quilting to represent the creative legacy that African Americans have inherited from their maternal ancestors" (3). In this regard, quilting is a practice that represents a specific heritage that African American women can claim and use as a source of cultural pride. The Johnson family has a long history of women who participate in this tradition, including, Grandma Dee, Big Dee, Mama, and Maggie. In contrasts to Maggie and Mama, Dee/Wangero does not know how to quilt, which conveys her disregard for the practice, one that is both a familial tradition in the Johnson family and cultural tradition amongst the African American community. Through this comparison, we can further view differences in how Mama and Maggie embody African American identity as opposed to Dee/Wangero. Through quilting, Mama and Maggie further sustain African American cultural traditions.

Though it may seem apparent that Black Americans like the characters in "Everyday Use" would predictably embody the duality associated with being "African Americans," one must take into account that this designation was introduced to Black Americans over time and it was not, and still is not, necessarily adopted by all who it is applicable to. *Cultural Trauma* communicates that anticipating "the appellation 'African American'…may seem more or less obvious and natural today but it was one of several paths or reactions to the failure of reconstruction to fully integrate former slaves and their offspring as American citizens" (Eyerman 4). Because of this assumption, many readers of "Everyday Use" categorize Mama and Maggie as having "genuine" interpretations of African American identity. These readers often glorify Mama and Maggie's virtue and "their allegiance to their specific family identity and folk heritage" (Farrell 179). These interpretations often juxtapose these qualities to Dee/Wangero and Hakim's representations of African American identity, which features the utilization of foreign names, languages, and clothing. Therefore, because they prioritize non-American concepts, many readers have assessed Dee/Wangero and Hakim's representations of cultural identity as "lacking a 'true' understanding" (Farrell 179) of African American heritage. Yet these readings don't usually account for the fact that the concept of being African American is not a "natural category," but instead a "historically formed collective identity" (Eyerman 4), which necessitated expression and acceptance. Furthermore, "the idea of returning to Africa had been a constant theme" (Eyerman 4) expressed by Black people since the 17th century. Thus, there are a variety of ways to express Black identity. Many African Americans prioritize their African identity over their American identity aim to reclaim their relationship with Africa, even if their return

to Africa symbolic instead of physical. Dee/Wangero and Hakim reflect a tradition of African Americans who embody attempt at reclamation. Their gestures can be framed through the tragic/redemptive narrative.

Dee/Wangero, Hakim, and the Tragic/Redemptive Narrative

Dee/Wangero and Hakim convey representations of African American identity and heritage that reflect the tragic/redemptive approach to mediating cultural trauma. Dee/Wangero and Hakim illustrate the tragic/redemptive perspective through their prioritization of Africa in their approach to embodying the notion of being "African American." Dee and Hakim both erect "Africa" through their appearances, greetings, ideologies, and adopted names. These characteristics convey their alignment with the tragic/redemptive narrative; Hakim's identity reflects that of a Black Muslim and Dee/Wangero's identity suggests that she has adopted Pan African beliefs.

The tragic/redemptive narrative is hinged to ideas associated with Black nationalism. In fact, nationalism is "encased within" (Eyerman 165) the tragic/redemptive frame. During the second generation, Garveyism was the key articulator of the tragic/redemptive narrative, but the third generation's revision of the narrative expanded the tragic/redemptive frame to reflect the ideals of various other factions of nationalism. Here, the tragic/redemptive narrative was transformed through a new understanding of Africa. Many Nationalist and Pan African groups that arose during this time reinterpreted Africa as a "symbolic homeland…cultural resource…and site of redemption" yet, "the…site of redemption… was without fixed geographical location" (Eyerman 167).

This reinterpretation of Africa allowed African Americans return to Africa, whether that homecoming materializes in a physical or spiritual form.

Commonly referred to as "Black Muslims," the Nation of Islam (NOI) is an influential sect of nationalism that played a key role in reinterpreting the tragic/redemptive narrative. Moreover, along with helping to revise the narrative, the NOI also played a significant part in articulating and disseminating the tragic/redemptive narrative through the course of several decades since its establishment, as the group grew into the "largest and most long-lasting" (Eyerman 168) faction of Nationalism.

The Nation of Islam was founded in Detroit, Michigan on July 4, 1930 by Wallace Fard Muhammad. Tynetta Muhammad's "Nation of Islam in America: a Nation of Beauty and Peace," describes the mission of the NOI, explaining that the NOI aimed to "teach the downtrodden and defenseless Black people a thorough knowledge of God and themselves, and to put them on the road to self-independence with a superior culture and higher civilization than they previously experienced." After Fard Muhammad's disappearance in 1934, his successor, the honorable Elijah Muhammad, was instrumental in developing the organization. He contributed to the progression of the NOI by establishing temples and mosques, a school, farms, and various national and international real estate holdings. Furthermore, disciples of Muhammad helped to carry out the mission of the NOI. Contemporarily, NOI members like Minister Louis Farrakhan, who succeeded as the leader of the NOI after Elijah Muhammad, are still continuing to espouse the tragic/redemptive ideas of the organization. The NOI is an important sect of Nationalism that helped to reinterpret and modernize the tragic/redemptive narrative frame, articulating it to the Black community since the 1930's.

Hakim's Black Muslim identity conveys his alignment with the tragic/redemptive narrative; his association with the NOI is illustrated through his greeting, name, and ideologies. Hakim uses the greeting "Asalamalakim" (Walker 52), which means "peace be upon you." The expression is an Arabic salutation used by Muslims worldwide. Additionally, Hakim's Islamic identity is further conveyed by his name. The name Hakim is often considered a "Muslim name" as it has an Arabic origin, it means "wise man, physician, or ruler." Hakim's use of this designation points to his participation in renaming, a tradition amid many who convert to Islam. Furthermore, Hakim doesn't eat pork, characterizing it as "unclean" (Walker 55). This is a common ideology and dietary restriction in the Islamic faith. Specifically, it may be analyzed that Hakim is a member of the Nation of Islam—or a Black Muslim—instead of Shiite or Sunni because when Mama mentions the "beef cattle peoples down the road" who also say "Asalamalakim when they meet you," Hakim replies that he accepts "some of their doctrines" but "farming and raising cattle" is not his "style" (Walker 55). This distinction signifies that Hakim participates in a different version of Islam than the Muslims that Mama alluded to. Hakim's characteristics collectively convey that he is likely a Black Muslim, which in turn illuminates his alignment with the tragic/redemptive narrative. Moreover, Hakim's union with Dee/Wangero signifies the relationship between the Nation of Islam and Pan Africanism, which are connected through their shared involvement in Black Nationalism. Like Black Muslims, Pan Africanists also espouse the tragic/redemptive narrative.

African Americans who adopt Pan Africanism articulate the tragic/redemptive narrative with their view of Africa as a motherland and through their approach to being African American, which puts their African cultural identity at the forefront instead of

their Americanness. Manifesting in various forms, Pan Africanism is both an ideology and a movement that supports the alliance of members of the African diaspora. Thorough this lens Africa is a central homeland that connects all who derive from it. Thus, many Pan Africanists believe that indigenous and diasporic African groups have commonalities and shared interests, and therefore should be unified. Hence, the goal of Pan Africans is to cultivate cohesion and strengthen ties between all the members of the African diaspora, on and off the continent. *Cultural Trauma* positions Pan Africanism as a "form of cultural nationalism" (Eyerman 67), a form of nationalism that is defined by shared culture. The cultural nationalism of Pan Africanism emphasizes national identity through cultural traditions associated with Africa, as opposed to common ancestry or race.

Accordingly, through her espousal of Pan Africanism, Dee/Wangero's identity aligns with the tragic/redemptive narrative. Two key indicators of Dee/Wangero's Pan Africanism are her appearance and greeting. Dee/Wangero's Pan African identity is first conveyed through her look; when Dee/Wangero surfaces in "Everyday Use," she emerges wearing a long, flowing, yellow and orange dress," large gold earrings that "hung down to her shoulders," and "dangling bracelets" (Walker 52). Her black hair "stands straight up," and "around the edges are two long pigtails that rope…behind her ears" (Walker 52). This style of dress conveys her dissention from usual clothing associated with Americans, as "she wears an African dress and hairstyle" (Korenman 144). Moreover, Dee/Wangero's Pan African characteristics are further conveyed through her greeting. She addresses her family by exclaiming "Wa-su-zo-Tean-o" (Walker 52), which is a greeting from Uganda that means "good morning." Dee/Wangero's use of a greeting from a foreign African language further conveys her dissention from traditional African

American culture in favor of a more African based traditions. *Cultural Trauma* notes that "the return to the ancestral culture, if not place, was a central ingredient" in black nationalism "movements of the mid-1960s" (Eyerman 194). These ancestors provided "a source of identity that reached behind slavery, to a form of life which could be useful even in urban America, a positive source of identification, a symbolic homeland, and a useable past, like that available to other ethnic groups" (Eyerman 194). This return to the past is not only conveyed through Dee/Wangero's greeting but it is also exemplified by Dee/Wangero's name change. Thus, Dee/Wangero's name change is also a significant indicator of her relationship with the tragic/redemptive narrative.

Like Hakim, Dee/ Wangero's name indicates that she has also followed the tradition of renaming, which is regarded as an important custom in Nationalistic movements. With roots in emancipation, "renaming" is a "ritual" that is "central to the cultural nationalism…a new name was both a symbol of personal liberation and an act of political defiance" (Eyerman 189). Dee/Wangero undertakes this process in "Everyday Use." When Mama addresses Dee/ Wangero, she informs Mama that she changed her name to Wangero Leewanika Kemanjo. Then momma asks her, "what happened to Dee" (Walker 53)? Dee/Wangero responds by saying, "she's dead" (Walker 53). This "death" applies to previous identity, which was defined by the customs of slavery. Dee/Wangero expounds on her statement by expressing her reasoning for changing her name, stating, "I couldn't bear…being named after the people who oppress me" (Walker 53). The irony within Dee/Wangero's name change, and statement regarding her renaming, is apparent to the reader. While Dee believes that she is shedding herself of a name that reflects the culture of slavery, Mama perceives this same action as a loss of a tradition, as

Dee/Wangero discarded a name that has been passed down in the Johnson family since before the Civil War. In this sense, Dee/Wangero doesn't know the true implications of her actions from a familial standpoint. Her name itself, was an heirloom! Hence, her change in names can be viewed as a move that destroys her family heritage. Thus, authors like Korenman express that "Walker shows us that…Dee is not liberating herself from some distant white oppressor but is rater turning her back on her female ancestors" (Korenman 146). While this viewpoint has validity, from Dee/Wangero's perspective, one that embraces the tragic redemptive narrative, her renaming was both necessary and liberating. From this perspective, the name Dee is a remnant of slavery that represents institutional control over Black people. In this sense, the introduction of the name into the family history was a loss. Thus, Dee/Wangero feels that renaming herself is a redemptive action, "a gesture of personal and racial affirmation" (Korenman 153). Understanding Dee/Wangero's actions through the lens of the tragic/redemptive lens clarifies the reasoning behind, and symbolic power of, her actions.

Though different, Dee/Wangero and Hakim's representations of African American identity are equally as important as Maggie and Momma's. Glorifying Mama and Maggie's representations of African American identity over Dee/Wangero and Hakim's reinforces a false binary between these two type of identities. The dissimilarities within the perspectives of the tragic/ redemptive and progressive narratives are relevant in explaining the diverse representations of African American identity articulated in "Everyday Use." These differences in these opposing narratives is also key in explaining why the characters' ideologies conflict or cause misunderstandings throughout the story.

The cultural clash that occurs over the quilts in "Everyday Use" is also a result of varying views that relate to cultural trauma. The characters' differences be attributed to their differing perspectives on how to "appropriate the past as heritage." *Cultural Trauma* explains that during the second generation that reinterpreted cultural trauma, African Americans began to conceptualize the past as heritage and tradition. During this time, there were various views on how appropriate the past as heritage. This dissention seems to be at the heart of the dissimilarities that the characters express, as it pertains to how they utilize artifacts from the past.

Interpretations on Employing the Past as Heritage and Tradition

Some of the divergence that occurs in "Everyday Use" seems to derive from the characters' varying approaches to "reconceptualizing the past as cultural heritage" (Eyerman 91). *Cultural Trauma* explains that as heritage and tradition, the past can be reconceptualized in two ways: "as heritage, the collective past is usable in at least two senses: it is central to the maintenance of group identity, part of a collective memory; it is source material, a cultural resource for a distinct aesthetic, explored and exploited not only by members of the group itself but by others as well" (Eyerman 90). These differing approaches to conceptualizing the past as heritage can appropriately explain much of the divergence between the characters' varying understandings of heritage in "Everyday Use." These variant perspectives on heritage are at the root of the story's central conflict.

In "Everyday Use," Mama and Maggie have "sifted" several items of the past for "present use" (Eyerman 94). These pieces can be viewed as artifacts of "heritage and tradition" (Eyerman 90), which are symbolic representations of cultural pride including,

"the benches" Dee/Wangero and Maggie's "daddy made for the table" when they "couldn't afford to buy chairs," "Grandma Dee's butter dish," "the top to a churn that Uncle Buddy whittled," and "the dasher that Aunt Dee's husband Stash whittled" (Walker 55). Mama and Maggie have strong connections to these artifacts. They know the history of these pieces and are appreciative of the usefulness and sustainability of these objects. These artifacts represent the family heritage of the Johnsons. These pieces can be seen as symbols of cultural pride because they convey the resourcefulness and beauty of ancestral efforts of self-sufficiency through craftsmanship. Mama and Maggie convey their appreciation for these objects by continuing to put them to "everyday use."

In contrast to Mama and Maggie, Dee/Wangero isn't keen on the origins of these pieces, though she wishes to possess them. Dee/Wangero needs assistance from Mama and Maggie to track their geneses. Furthermore, Dee/Wangero plans to appropriate these items for aesthetic purposes, claiming, she will use "the churn top as centerpiece for the alcove table," and she would "think of something artistic to do with the dasher" (Walker 56). Dee/Wangero's plans for the family artifacts convey that she wants to utilizes them as "a cultural resource for a distinct aesthetic" (Eyerman 90). Yet, the heirlooms that are most central to this argument are the family quilts.

The clash over the clash over quilts in "Everyday Use" seems to be a clash over how to utilize the past as "heritage" (Eyerman 90). The two quilts that incite the conflict in the story had been "pieced" (Walker 57) by Grandma Dee and quilted by Mama and Big Dee. Mama describes the two artifacts:

> One was in the Lone Stat pattern. The other was Walk Around the Mountain. In both of them were scraps of dresses Grandma Dee had worn fifty and more years

> ago. Bits and pieces of Grandpa Jarrell's Paisley shirts. And one teeny faded blue piece, about the size of a penny matchbox, that was from Great Grandpa Ezra's uniform that he wore in the Civil War. (Walker 56)

These quilts were heirlooms to the Johnson family, inheritances that incorporated pieces of clothing from various family members; some of the articles of clothing utilized in the construction of the quilts date back to slavery. *Cultural Trauma* explains, "as heritage and tradition, the slave past can, and should, be collected", since "collecting could…be considered a valuable activity… for racial pride" (Eyerman 90). Thus, the family quilts are heirlooms Mama and Maggie utilize as a source of racial and familial pride. Moreover, since the practice and products of quilting represent "the creative legacy that African Americans have inherited from their maternal ancestors" (Christian 3), Mama and Maggie utilize their knowledge of quilting and the quilts that they produce from it as resources to remember previous generations. Walker conveys this function for the quilts through the dialogue between Mama, Maggie, and Dee/Wangero during the clash over the artifacts. When Mama conveys to Dee/Wangero that can't have the quilts because she has already promised the quilts to Maggie, Dee/Wangero adamantly protests this reality and their exchange quickly becomes heated. Thus, to diffuse the tension, Maggie tells Mama, "she can have them…I can 'member Grandma Dee without them" (Walker 58). Maggie's statement conveys that she desired the quilts in order to remember her maternal ancestors. Cowart notes that "for Maggie and her mother the idea of heritage is perpetually subordinate to the fact of a living tradition, a tradition which one generation remains in touch with its predecessors by means of homely skills" like quilt making, that

get passed on" (179). Thus, for Maggie, the quilts represent her connection with Grandma Dee and Big Dee, the women who "taught her how to quilt" (Walker 58).

Furthermore, through this exchange, we also learn that Maggie will likely put the quilts to "everyday use" (Walker 57). When Mama reveals to Dee/Wangero that already she has already promised the quilts to Maggie "for when she Marries John Thomas," Dee/Wangero replies by exclaiming that Maggie "can't appreciate" the quilts because "she'd probably be backward enough to put them to everyday use" (Walker 57). Mama responds, "I reckon she would…God knows I been saving 'em long enough with nobody using 'em" (Walker 57). Mama's retort to Dee/Wangero's statement conveys that she would prefer that their family artifacts be used instead of preserved.

In contrasts, Dee/Wangero doesn't want to use the quilts, she wants to "hang" (Walker 58) and display them. Thus, like all of the other artifacts that she collects or attempts to collect from Mama's home, Dee/Wangero wants to make an exhibition of the family quilts. This fact reveals that Dee/Wangero views the quilt as "a cultural resource for a distinct aesthetic" (Eyerman 90). In observance of this, many readers criticize Dee/Wangero's intentions and reason for desiring the quilts. For example, Korenman conveys, "whereas…Maggie wants the quilts because she was close to the grandmother and aunt who made and who taught her the art of quilting, Dee covets them simply because such artifacts of the Southern black heritage are now in vogue" (145). While I agree that is fair to question Dee/Wangero's right to the quilts and understand why readers take issue Dee/Wangero's approach to obtaining the quilts, I contend that it is inequitable to condemn Dee/Wangero for her desire and plans for the quilts.

Whether for folk culture or as source material, African Americans have historically commissioned elements and artifacts of the past to use as a form of cultural capital. Introduced by French sociologist, anthropologist, and philosopher Pierre Bourdieu, cultural capital refers to the symbols, ideas, tastes, and preferences that can be strategically used as resources in social action. Though Dee/Wangero and Maggie have very different approaches to doing so, they both share a desire to use the quilts as cultural capital. Hence, when observing Dee/ Wangero's aims through the lens of cultural trauma theory readers can better understand that her intentions reflect an enduring approach to understanding and utilizing the past as cultural heritage, one that has been employed by various African Americans since the 1920's. Thus, Dee/Wangero's intentions for the family quilts are just as customary and valid of an approach to appropriating the past as heritage as Mama and Maggie's, both of which are a part of, and a result of, African Americans' ongoing struggle to mediate the cultural trauma of slavery.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, scholars who have studied cultural trauma have done essential work in explaining the relationship between cultural trauma, collective memories, approaches toward negotiation cultural trauma and identity formation. In this article, I extend these ideas toward an examination of identity and heritage in "Everyday Use." Utilizing the cultural trauma to conceptualize representations of African American heritage and identity embodied by the characters in "Everyday Use," I demonstrate how the characters reflect associations with the tragic/redemptive and progressive narrative frames. Though contrasting and habitually conflicting, the tragic/redemptive and progressive narrative frames are an intertwined parts of a larger narrative which attempted to negotiate culture trauma. Though they employed different approaches the tragic/redemptive and progressive narrative frames both saw the past as a usable entity to achieve a fully emancipated future for African Americans.

Hence, although, Dee/Wangero and Hakim's behavior and expressions of selfhood are commonly interpreted as foreign, misguided, or oppressive, Hakim's locus as a Muslim and Dee's Pan Africanism are imperative reactions to the cultural trauma of slavery. The diversity they bring to the story reflects the diversity that African Americans adopted in their varying approaches. Both the tragic/redemptive and the progressive narrative were important approaches for African Americans. These equally imperative to the preservation and progression of African American cultural heritage.

This assessment indicates how the character in Alice Walker's "Everyday Use" all exhibit negotiations with cultural trauma. Yet, this piece doesn't focus on the author's

relationship with cultural trauma as an African American women writer. Thus, further research can be conducted, as it pertains to analyzing how cultural trauma influenced Walker's approach to constructing "Everyday Use." Furthermore, as Walker's writing often focuses on representations of African American identity, further research can be conducted analyzing how cultural trauma influences Walkers other writings as well. Moreover, cultural trauma is a research paradigm that can potentially be utilized to analyze representations of identity and heritage in the works of other African American writers and artist as well.

Cultural trauma is a useful research paradigm because it highlights the relationship between impactful events and identity formation. Further research on cultural trauma has the potential to reveal how cultural trauma not only effects individuals and groups, but how it can also influence group relations and dynamics as well. Through exploring cultural trauma, researchers can better understand how cultural trauma has manifested in various ways within different collectives across the world.

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