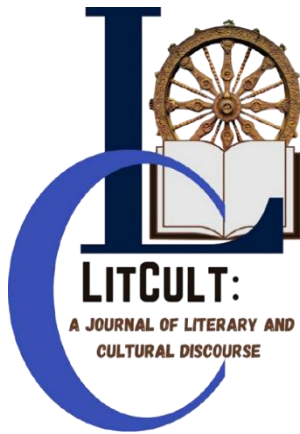




Devouring Intimacy in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

Examining Pamela E. Barnett's Succubus Figure Through Queer Theory

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Abstract

This paper focuses on a critical reading of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* by synthesising Pamela E. Barnett's reading of *Beloved* as a succubus-like devouring force with Audre Lord and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's theories of queer intimacy and erotic power. *Beloved* has frequently been read through the lenses of trauma, history and memory, Barnett's unconventional and innovative reading foregrounds the erotic dimensions of *Beloved*'s presence. This paper argues that in the novel, *Beloved* is not merely a ghostly presence but a psychically consuming one as well. Her relationship with Sethe destabilizes normative structures of motherhood while her seduction of Paul D challenges his masculinity and sexual agency. If Sedgwick and Lord's theories are applied to Barnett's reading, the bond between Sethe and *Beloved* unsettles the "cultural purity" of society. The paper employs a qualitative research methodology, with *Beloved* as its primary text. The analysis focuses on noteworthy episodes in the novel, including *Beloved*'s encounter with Paul D and her intense, obsessive bond with her mother. In addition, the study draws on a range of secondary sources, featuring critical perspectives from Pamela E. Barnett, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Audre Lorde, Hortense Spillers, Saidiya Hartman, Trudier Harris, Barbara Christian, and Cathy Caruth to establish its theoretical framework. By situating Morrison's narrative at the intersection of trauma, sexuality, and kinship, the paper highlights how *Beloved* reconfigures forms of emotional attachment within the enduring historical context of slavery.

Keywords: Queer Theory, Trauma, Mother-Daughter Relationship, Succubus.

Introduction

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) remains one of the most impactful novels of the twentieth century. Set in the Reconstruction Era, the novel, through flashbacks, it takes us to Kentucky, when slavery was a going concern in the American South. This paper amalgamates Pamela E. Barnett's interpretation of *Beloved* as a succubus-like figure with readings from Queer Theory, especially the works of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Audre Lorde, to explore how Morrison builds up forms of intimacy that unsettle conventional frameworks of sexuality, motherhood, and kinship shaped by the enduring legacy of slavery.

One of the most interesting readings of Morrison's novel emerges in Pamela E. Barnett's seminal essay *Figurations of Rape and the Supernatural in Beloved* who interprets *Beloved* as a succubus-like figure. She opines: "The character *Beloved* is not just the ghost of Sethe's dead child; she's a succubus, a female demon and nightmare figure" (Barnett 193)

Barnett argues that *Beloved*'s presence within the household at 124 is not simply ghostly but erotically stimulating and psychologically invasive. Rather than functioning only as a symbol of trauma, *Beloved* actively devours the emotional and bodily vitality of those around her. Through her interactions with Sethe and Paul D, *Beloved* destabilises relationships, claims attention, and gradually drains the strength of the household.

Placed in dialogue with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's understanding of queer attachment and Audre Lorde's conception of the erotic as a form of power, Barnett's interpretation becomes particularly enlightening. Sedgwick is of the view that intimacy and yearning often operate along a continuum that cannot always be bound within socially sanctioned classifications such as heterosexual relationships or succinctly defined familial bonds. Rather than reducing desire to established identities, Sedgwick highlights how emotional undercurrents such as dependency and obsessive attachment can imbue relationships with an erotic intensity. Lorde similarly develops the meaning of the sensual beyond purely sexual acts. In *Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power*, she describes the erotic as a source of emotional understanding and connection ingrained in deeply felt experience. For Lorde, the erotic is a form of embodied awareness that can become distorted when shaped by histories of oppression and deprivation. When these theoretical perspectives are placed alongside Pamela E. Barnett's interpretation of *Beloved* as a succubus-like figure, they offer a different framework for understanding the disturbing dimensions of intimacy that develops between Sethe and *Beloved*, where the latter

is ready to devour Sethe and conflates her identity with her mother: “ She imitated Sethe, talked the way she did, laughed her laugh and used her body the same way down to the walk, the way Sethe moved her hands, sighed through her nose, held her head” (Morrison 283). Morrison repeatedly depicts Beloved’s desire for Sethe as excessive and consuming. As Beloved’s presence grows more demanding, her mother’s life increasingly revolves around satisfying her needs. Morrison describes how Sethe arranges her daily routines around the young woman’s demands, suggesting an intimacy that gradually becomes consuming and isolating.

Read through Sedgwick’s notion of queer attachment and Lorde’s perception of the erotic as embodied power, Barnett’s succubus metaphor becomes particularly instructive. Beloved’s hunger for stories, attention, and physical closeness converts maternal care into a form of destroying intimacy. The attachment between Sethe and Beloved cannot be understood solely within the framework of normative motherhood. Sedgwick’s theory helps explain how this closeness operates outside conformist relational categories, while Lorde’s erotic demonstrates how the depth of this connection becomes both supporting and destructive.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is limited to a critical analysis and close reading of Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, which is examined through Barnett’s interpretation of Beloved as a succubus figure. *Beloved* has been studied through a myriad of contexts like Trauma Theory, History and Memory, Black Feminism, African American folklore, Motherhood and Community. Critics have often interpreted the ghostly figure of Beloved as a symbolic incarnation of individual repressed memory or as the return of collective memory. Yet Morrison’s text continually resists singular interpretation. Morrison deliberately leaves gaps for the readers to fill in. Thus, *Beloved* is not merely a ghost story or a historical narrative, it is a slippery text that resists closure and meaning.

Combining select insights from queer theorists and Barnett’s interpretation, the paper primarily focuses on the interpersonal bond between Sethe and Beloved, which challenges the normative and societal structures of the mother-daughter relationship.

Literature Review

Critical scholarship on Toni Morrison's *Beloved* has developed along several important theoretical tracks, most importantly Trauma Studies, Black Feminist Criticism, African American Folk Traditions, and Queer Theory. The latter, however, remains underexplored. Most early readings of the novel looked at its representation of slavery's psychological impact. Later studies have expanded the interpretation framework to look at the complex forms of narrative structure and cultural memory that shape the narrative. These diverse critical approaches show how Morrison creates *Beloved* as not only a historical but also a symbolic figure whose presence dislocates orthodox understandings of kinship, identity, and memory.

One of the most important approaches to reading *Beloved* is Trauma Theory. Scholars such as Cathy Caruth have shown that traumatic experiences resist immediate comprehension and return through fragmented or repetitive narrative forms. In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma and the Possibility of History*, Caruth describes trauma thus: "Trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed and uncontrolled, repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (Caruth 181)

Caruth argues that trauma is often experienced belatedly, the event cannot be fully comprehended at the moment it occurs and instead lies buried in the unconscious zone of the mind, reappearing later through memory and haunting. This theoretical model has been widely applied to Morrison's novel, where the ghostly return of *Beloved* functions as a symbol of unresolved historical trauma. Ashraf H. A. Rushdy similarly interprets *Beloved* as a chronicle of historical memory, arguing that Morrison recreates the emotive realities of slavery by drawing upon both historical documentation and oral storytelling. According to Rushdy, the novel functions as an act of historical recovery that brings underlying experiences into narrative perceptibility, and it becomes a story to be passed on. Rushdy looks at *Beloved* as both an oral and an aural text.

While Trauma Theory has provided a powerful lens for interpreting *Beloved*, other critics have emphasised the folkloric aspects of Morrison's narrative. Trudier Harris's work on African American folklore is noteworthy in this respect. Harris opines that Morrison draws expansively on African American folk traditions in her depiction of *Beloved*'s haunting presence. These

spirits often return to demand recognition, justice, or remembrance. In this context, Beloved is the *abiku* child, born to the same mother repeatedly. Harris also underscores the fact that African American folklore commonly portrays the boundaries between the living and the dead as porous rather than fixed. Within this cultural framework, the return of Beloved can be interpreted as part of a broader tradition in which ancestral spirits remain actively connected to the lives of the living. Harris's interpretation situates *Beloved* within a cultural tradition that views haunting not simply as horror but as a meaningful form of historical reckoning.

Any reading of *Beloved* that looks to read the passion of Sethe's attachment to Beloved must be situated within the theoretical frameworks developed by Black feminist scholars such as Hortense Spillers, Saidiya Hartman and Barbara Christian. All the theorists emphasize that the institution of slavery fractured Black kinship structures and transformed the meaning of motherhood and family relationships.

Hortense Spillers' pivotal essay *Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book* offers one of the most important accounts of how slavery reconstituted Black kinship. Spillers opines that the transatlantic slave trade and the plantation system deprived enslaved Africans of their social and cultural identities and changed them into what she calls "flesh." Spillers makes an important difference between "body" and "flesh," suggesting that the enslaved subject was reduced to flesh, an objectified, commodified "body" whose humanity was strategically and progressively denied. Within the institution of slavery, the Black women were treated as "breeders" and not mothers, leaving Black motherhood marked by instability and denial. Sethe has never witnessed the normal cycle of motherhood; her mother did not feed and nurture her.

Saidiya Hartman's work further expands this analysis by exploring the lasting effects of slavery on Black subjectivity. In *Scenes of Subjection*, Hartman introduces the concept of the "afterlife of slavery," suggesting that the social and psychological consequences of slavery continue to shape Black life even during the era of Reconstruction. Hartman's framework is particularly useful for understanding the pattern of ingestion that characterises Beloved's relationship with Sethe. Beloved's presence can be interpreted as a display of the historical trauma that slavery has left unresolved. Her limitless hunger for food, stories, and attention symbolises the lingering impact of a past that refuses to go away.

Barbara Christian's critical perspective interconnects with the work of Hortense Spillers and Saidiya Hartman because all these theorists are of the view that Black literary and cultural texts must be read through the intersectionality of slavery, racial violence, and the destruction of Black identity rather than through abstract theory alone. Christian's argument in *The Race for Theory and Black Feminist Criticism* foregrounds the idea that Black women writers generate meaning through lived experience, voice, and narrative form. This complements Spillers' analysis of how slavery transformed Black bodies into "flesh" and Hartman's emphasis on the continuing emotional and social afterlife of slavery. Together, these thinkers make it possible to see *Beloved* not merely as an individual story of grief but as a text in which Black female subjectivity, maternal devotion, and intimate relations are historically constituted through loss, dispossession, and survival.

Recent scholarship has expanded the critical dialogue by examining *Beloved* through the lens of Queer Theory. Queer theorists contest the belief that relationships must follow clearly demarcated categories of sexuality or kinship. Instead, Queer Theory focuses on forms of relationships that resist normative structures. Rebecca Balon's influential essay on *The Unthinkable Queer Slave in Toni Morrison's Beloved and Robert O'Hara's Insurrection* argues that Morrison's novel exposes how the institution of slavery disrupts conventional frameworks of sexuality and kinship. According to Balon, *Beloved's* sexual domination of Paul D cannot be understood simply as supernatural seduction; rather, it reflects the distortions of desire produced by a system that systematically denied enslaved people control over their bodies and identities (Balon 141–55). Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's work has been particularly pathbreaking in this regard. In *Epistemology of the Closet*, Sedgwick argues that relationships often exist along a continuum of affective intensities, including secrecy, dependency, and emotional closeness. These dynamics can produce forms of intimacy that blur the boundaries between friendship, familial affection, and erotic attachment. (Sedgwick 1-5)

Applying Sedgwick's framework to *Beloved* reveals the complex interpersonal relations that emerge between Sethe and *Beloved*. Their relationship cannot be easily categorised as purely maternal. *Beloved's* attachment to Sethe is exclusive and emotionally demanding. She devours with an extreme hunger, the stories of the past and becomes grasping of Sethe's attention. Sedgwick's theory helps elucidate how this passion can function as a form of queer attachment that exists outside conventional definitions of motherhood.

Audre Lorde's concept of the erotic provides an additional dimension to this queer reading. In *Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power*, Lorde defines the erotic as a deeply felt form of emotional and embodied knowledge. The erotic, for Lorde, represents a powerful source of connection that can challenge oppressive social structures. Within *Beloved*, the emotional intensity between Sethe and Beloved can be understood through this framework of embodied connection. Their relationship emerges within the historical trauma of slavery, where conventional family structures have been violently disrupted. Lorde's theory therefore, helps explain how the depth of this attachment reflects both love and historical loss. (Lorde 54-55).

Pamela E. Barnett's influential essay *Figurations of Rape and the Supernatural in Beloved* further complicates queer interpretations of the novel by introducing the metaphor of the succubus. Barnett argues that Beloved functions as a consuming presence who exerts erotic and psychological power over the household at 124. Her encounter with Paul D is marked by coercion rather than mutual desire, destabilizing his sense of masculinity and agency. Barnett's analysis foregrounds Beloved's bodily presence and her capacity to consume emotional and physical energy. (Barnett 193-201).

These theoretical approaches have enriched the understanding of the novel. However, Barnett's study has not been given sufficient attention, and the study of the erotic dimension in the Sethe-Beloved relationship remains underexplored. Integrating Barnett's understanding with Sedgwick and Lorde's theories, this paper attempts to fill the research gap left by Queer Theories.

Research Methodology

The paper adopts a qualitative research methodology. The primary source for this research is Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. The novel has been critically analyzed through key episodes, such as Beloved's encounter with Paul D and her obsessive intimacy with her mother. The study also relies on a range of secondary sources which include critical works by Pamela E. Barnett, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Audre Lorde, Hortense Spillers, Saidiya Hartman, Trudier Harris, Barbara Christian, and Cathy Caruth, which provide the theoretical framework through which the novel is studied. The paper develops a critical approach that places Morrison's story at the crossroads

of trauma, sexuality, and kinship, thereby demonstrating the complex ways in which *Beloved* reshapes emotional attachment given the historical legacy of slavery.

Analysis

The Succubus and the Collapse of Male Agency

Mini-section eleven of *Beloved* begins with a powerful and disturbing episode, in which the omniscient narrator tells us, “She moved him” (Morrison 134). Paul D is moved out of Sethe’s bed, moving from room to room, until he finds himself in the cold house. Here Beloved meets him as a sexually menacing figure, seducing him against his will and demanding, “ You have to touch me. On the inside part. And you have to call me my name”. (Morrison 137). This scene has attracted significant critical attention because it undermines established norms about gender, power, and agency. When read through Pamela E. Barnett’s interpretation of *Beloved* as a succubus-like figure, the encounter reveals how Morrison depicts Beloved as a sexually powerful presence who disrupts the fragile masculine identity Paul D has constructed after the trauma of slavery.

Barnett argues that *Beloved* should not be understood merely as the supernatural return of Sethe’s murdered daughter but as an entity who exercises erotic domination over the household. According to Barnett, Beloved “is not just the ghost of Sethe’s dead child; she’s a succubus, a female demon and nightmare figure that sexually assaults male sleepers and drains them of semen” (Barnett 193). The succubus in African folklore is depicted as a female demon who seduces men while they are sleep in order to drain their vitality. Although Morrison never clearly labels Beloved as a demon, the dynamics of her encounter with Paul D strikingly resemble this folkloric pattern.

When Beloved confronts Paul D in the shed, she repeatedly commands him: “touch me on the inside part” (Morrison 137). The language of the scene is deliberately unsettling. Morrison presents Beloved’s voice as completely authoritative and hypnotic, while Paul D experiences an overwhelming sense of paralysis. Rather than participating in a mutually desired sexual union, he is repeatedly forced by Beloved’s insistence. Morrison underscores his horror and lack of control, describing how his defences collapse as the memories he has locked away begin to re-emerge.

Paul D's emotional survival has long depended on the metaphorical "tobacco tin" where he stores his painful memories. Throughout the novel, this image represents his attempt to shut out the memories and trauma of enslavement, humiliation, violence and loss of masculinity. The episode with Beloved forces opens this psychological container. Morrison writes: "What he knew was that when he reached the inside part he was saying 'Red heart, Red Heart over and over again'" (Morrison 138). The sexual encounter therefore, functions not merely as a physical act but as a moment of psychic desecration.

Through Barnett's succubus metaphor, the scene can be read as a form of predatory intimacy in which Beloved extricates emotional and bodily energy from Paul D. His already fragile sense of masculine authority collapses under her hypnotic gaze. The scene reverses established gender dynamics. Rather than occupying the position of prime mover of sexual actions, Paul D becomes the object of Beloved's demands. Queer theory helps demonstrate why this reversal is so unsettling. Rather than functioning as a conventional heterosexual encounter, the interaction between Paul D and Beloved becomes a site where power, vulnerability, and trauma intersect.

Paul D's inability to resist Beloved also reflects the broader historical context of slavery. His memories of being chained, forced to wear an iron bit, and treated as property reveal how the system of slavery systematically stripped Black men of bodily autonomy. In this sense, Beloved's domination echoes earlier experiences of coercion, memories of the Chain Gang in Alfred, Georgia where the prisoners were sexually assaulted. Morrison therefore complicates the meaning of sexual agency by showing how historical violence continues to shape intimate relationships.

Through the figure of the succubus, Morrison suggests that Beloved's sexuality is not oriented toward pleasure or romance but toward consumption. She feeds on the emotional vulnerability of others, destabilizing the fragile identities that the survivors of slavery have attempted to construct.

Queering Motherhood: Sethe and Beloved

While Beloved's seduction of Paul D exposes her capacity to unsettle masculine identity, her relationship with Sethe reveals an even more troubling form of intimacy that complicates conventional understandings of motherhood. Morrison portrays the bond between mother and

daughter as increasingly obsessive and consuming, gradually transforming maternal affection into a relationship marked by exclusivity, dependency, and possession. As Mary Paniccia Carden observes in her essay *Models of Memory and Romance: The Dual Endings of Toni Morrison's Beloved*, "Beloved's infantile romance with her mother reflects her vision of selfhood" (Carden 412). Carden's observation suggests that Beloved's attachment to Sethe is not merely filial but is also tied to her search for identity, making their relationship one in which emotional intimacy and self-definition become inseparable.

As mentioned earlier, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's theory of queer relationality elucidates how such closeness operates outside normative frameworks of motherhood. In addition, Audre Lorde's concept of the erotic provides an important lens through which the intensity of the relationship between Sethe and Beloved can be understood. For Lorde, the erotic is not limited to overt sexual expression, rather, it represents a deeply exemplified form of personal awareness that emerges through emotional and physical closeness. The sensual, therefore becomes a source of power that reveals forms of connection capable of exceeding socially sanctioned structures of family and sexuality. When this framework is applied to *Beloved*, the emotional intensity that characterizes the bond between Sethe and Beloved begins to appear as a form of intimacy that cannot be contained within conventional definitions of maternal affection.

From the time Beloved arrives at 124, her relationship with Sethe is marked by a passion that surpasses normal affection between a mother and daughter. Beloved, continuously commands Sethe's attention and repeatedly insists on hearing stories about the past. Morrison describes how Beloved's hunger stretches out beyond food to incorporate memory itself. She feeds off stories about Sweet Home and Sethe's escape, absorbing the narrative fragments that constitute Sethe's traumatic history. This insatiable desire for stories parallels Beloved's physical appetite, suggesting that she feeds on both memory and emotional attention. Sethe gradually reorganises her life around Beloved's needs, withdrawing from work and isolating herself from the community. Morrison describes how Sethe stops working and structures her routine around the younger woman's demands. The tight circle of possession, which the three women form after Paul D leaves 124, is broken when Sethe and Beloved push Denver out of it. Denver then becomes an observer to their "games".

The bodily closeness between the two characters frequently unsettles the boundaries of maternal affection. The relationship between Sethe and Beloved exemplifies an abnormal intimacy. In an earlier episode in the novel, Beloved kisses Sethe under her chin and Sethe reprimands her saying “You too old for that” (Morrison 115). Pamela E Barnett opines:

“When Beloved kisses Sethe’s neck in the Clearing, Sethe is transfixed but suddenly becomes aware that the act is inappropriate. Perhaps she also senses the danger of a kiss on the neck as prefiguration of a vampiric attack. This haunting is marked by an infantile sexual desire for the mother”. (Barnett 199)

Morrison’s language subtly introduces an erotic undertone into their interactions. Beloved’s “hunger” for Sethe is described thus: “Beloved could not take her eyes off Sethe... Sethe was licked, tasted, eaten by Beloved’s eyes”. Like a familiar, she hovered, never leaving the room Sethe was in unless required and told to.”(Morrison 67). Barnett opines that Beloved’s appetite is for her mother.

After attacking Paul D, Beloved attacks Sethe as a female demon. Barnett writes: “The vampire trope is usually played out in the heterosexual paradigm of earlier nightmare figures, but the vampire figure in *Beloved* enacts an incestuous, homosexual desire. Paul D remarks that Beloved is constantly aroused but he knows she not shining for him”. (Barnett 199). Barnett opines that like Paul D, Sethe experiences Beloved’s attention as a nocturnal visitation. “She was sliding into sleep when she felt Beloved touch her. A touch ne heavier than a feather, yet loaded with desire” (Morrison 68)

Beloved’s presence allows Sethe to reclaim the daughter she once lost, but the restoration of this bond quickly becomes destructive. Morrison describes how Beloved’s demands escalate as the narrative progresses. Sethe grows weaker while Beloved appears increasingly stronger. The dynamic resembles a parasitic exchange in which Beloved feeds on Sethe’s vitality.

This relationship between Sethe and Beloved, closely allies with Barnett’s succubus theory. If Beloved functions as a succubus figure, her relationship with Sethe becomes a form of devouring intimacy in which maternal care is transformed into a mechanism of ingestion. Beloved is not simply looking for love, she demands total devotion. In the last section of the novel, Beloved and Sethe are locked in a struggle for survival: “They grew tired, and even

Beloved, who was getting bigger, seemed nevertheless as exhausted as they were” (Morrison 285)

Conclusion

Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* resists any reading that binds it to a single critical structure. It can be read as womanist a neo-slave narrative, a trauma narrative, a gothic story, and a deliberation on the juxtaposition of memory and history. The character of Beloved, like the “trickster” figure of African American folklore defies any kind of categorisation. As this paper has argued, when Pamela E. Barnett’s interpretation of Beloved as a succubus-like figure is read alongside the queer theoretical insights of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Audre Lorde, Beloved emerges as an immensely unsettling presence whose devouring hunger reconfigures the emotional, sexual, and maternal relations at the heart of the novel.

Barnett’s reading is especially important because it foregrounds the corporal and erogenous facets of Beloved’s presence. In her relationship with Paul D, Beloved appears not as an object of desire but as an invasive force who forcefully seduces Paul D, and robs him of his agency. Paul D’s encounter with Beloved is not only a nightmare but also a repetition of the degradation of Black manhood under slavery. Through Barnett’s succubus metaphor, Morrison reveals that sexuality in *Beloved* is never innocuous. It is coercive and entwined with histories of domination.

Concurrently, the relationship between Sethe and Beloved demonstrates an even more disruptive challenge to normative categories. Read through Sedgwick’s theory of queer attachment, the bond between mother and daughter cannot be contained within conventional models of maternal devotion. It is marked instead by bodily proximity and controlling passion. Mary Paniccia Carden’s observation that Beloved’s “infantile romance” with Sethe reflects her vision of selfhood is crucial here, because it draws attention to the ways in which Beloved seeks not merely affection but a complete merging with the maternal figure. Morrison thus queers motherhood by revealing how, in the aftermath of slavery, maternal love becomes inseparable from grief, guilt, possession, and desire. (Carden 401-427)

Audre Lorde’s concept of the sensual lends further depth to this analysis by showing that the erotic is not limited to sexual acts alone, but functions as a form of bodily emotional attachment. The relationship between Sethe and Beloved exhibits the legacy of slavery, an institution that commodified the maternal body and denied Black women the natural cycle of motherhood.

Given this background, the erotic aspect of the Sethe–Beloved relationship does appear as a transgression rather, exposes how intimacy itself has been reshaped by the trauma of slavery. Morrison shows that when family structures are violently ruptured, the forms of attachment that remain may appear excessive, unsettling, or unintelligible within normative frameworks. (Lorde 53-59)

The convergence of Barnett, Sedgwick, and Lorde is extremely productive. Together, they enable us to see *Beloved* as a figure of devouring intimacy. By reading *Beloved* through Barnett’s succubus figure and Queer Theory, the novel enables us to understand that the most disturbing legacy of slavery lies not only in the return of the dead, but also in the changed and disturbing forms of love that its survivors are left to experience.

The model developed in this study unlocks several possibilities for further research. This approach may be used to study how Morrison’s other works, such as *Sula* and *Paradise*, represent homosexual relationships and non -normative forms of sexuality and intimacy.

Further research could explore intersectionality between Queer Theory, Black Feminist thought, and Trauma Studies to analyze how historical violence relationships. Additionally, comparative studies may look at how supernatural figures in other neo-slave narratives function as examples of historical trauma and non-normative desire.

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