الذاكرة والصدمة والهاونتولوجيا في رواية "محبوبة" لتوني موريسون

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Memory, Trauma, and Hauntology in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

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Abstract

This research focuses on the application of the concept 'hauntology' by Jacques Derrida from a critical perspective, suggesting that in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, the past itself is called back, not as something that can ever be made historical, something that can ever belong to the past, but by existing instead in a spectral form that disrupts the present. The narrative technique used by Morrison, revolving around the figure of *Beloved* and the haunted house at 124 Bluestone Road, also illustrates how the past, through its memories, has refused any closure, how trauma has remained in its corporeal form, and how communities bear the restless legacy of past injustices. The application of the concept, hauntology, also allows the researcher to decipher how, through the narrative technique, the linear notion of time has been disrupted, how the line separating the dead from the alive has also been blurred, and how, thereby, it requires its audience to subscribe to it. The study progresses in revealing how, through trauma studies, discussions on memories, and spectral theory, the researcher identifies how Morrison's narrative form, through its fragmentation, repetition, silence, and use of the ghost figure, also signifies the inevitability of past wounds. Thus, it also signifies how,

through its narrative technique, it has turned literature into a 'space for mourning.'

Introduction

The haunting that permeates the pages of Toni Morrison's, *Beloved*, is the central logic of the novel, so that "the past," what is so commonly understood, will not remain in the past. Still, instead hauntingly return, disrupting both the present and past constructions of memories, because from the first line, "124 was spiteful. Full of a baby's venom," (Morrison 3) the house at 124 declares its haunting, its past, from the start. This first line does more than introduce the haunting that permeates the house, because instead, it signifies that from the start, a world is created that signifies absence can, in its own right, also signify presence, so that instead, through architecture, through silence, through the elements, memories are conveyed, so that what signifies the supernatural is, in reality, the real, that is, the unburied body of slavery.

To read *Beloved* through a hauntological lens is to view its haunting from both philosophical and ethical perspectives. Jacques Derrida writes that "in the spectral Order, 'the time is out of joint,' for 'the spectre 'introduces the possibility of thinking the past that has not passed" (Derrida 40, 10). The spectre, then, disrupts ontological assertions by inhabiting the liminality of 'being and non-being, presence and absence.' The relationship that *Beloved*, via its protagonist, enacts is, in fact, that of disrupting ontological assertions by inhabiting that space in between, making it impossible to divide that 'in-between' from the 'in.' The ghost of *Beloved* does not only embody 'memory,' it actualizes it, making 'trauma' its actualization, making 'history' an actual, speaking 'other' that speaks through the 'lives.'

This is the state of dislocation that serves both to shape and define form and character. The scattered memories that Sethe retains, the narrative temporality that defies linearity, and the social silence that permeates the lives of the people around her indicate that memories inscribed by trauma defy enclosure. This interpretation is borne out by Cathy Caruth's explanation that "trauma … is not locatable in the simple violent or original event itself, but rather in the way that its unassimilated nature returns to haunt the survivor later on" (Caruth 4). The narrative pulsation that propels the novel forward—temporarily, imperfectly, and repeatedly replicates the process of haunting, where each haunting is a process of imperfect exorcism, each silence a manifestation of that which has not yet spoken. The hauntological process, then, in *Beloved* is less a figure than a mode that erases the difference between the living and the dead, past and present, narration and remembering.

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The aims of this research are threefold. The first is to locate a hauntological framework for the study's consideration by demonstrating that through the spectral conceit, the novel disrupts the teleological historiographical impulse, instead insisting upon the recurrence of slavery's violence. The second is to explore the relationship that the novel forges between trauma, narrative, and memorials, particularly through its depiction of how traumatic time troubles narrative coherence, leading instead to fragmentation, repetition, and narrative gaps that confound traditional historiographical practice. The final, related, consideration is that through its spectral conceit, the novel presents a meditation on the ethics of recurrence, asserting that through its act, the reading process itself is transformed from a trivial pursuit to that of an act of critical witnessing: that is, reading, from the perspective posed by the text, is an act that requires recognition and response.

The study is divided into six parts. The first section discusses the hauntological presuppositions of Derrida's arguments and how hauntology is important for the study of trauma and memories. The second section focuses on trauma's trace in *Beloved* and identifies the modalities of remembering that organize the narrative. The third section discusses *Beloved* as a figure that undertakes both private and collective haunting, thereby disrupting the boundaries between the individual and the archive. The fourth section investigates the narrative temporality and strategies that instantiate a hauntological time in *Beloved* through the use of strategies such as repetition, fragmentation, and the importance of the figure's voice. The final section deals with the implications that hauntology has for its relation to trauma, and what *Beloved* presents that can restore the communities that it depicts.

Theoretical Framework: Derrida's Hauntology and the Spectral Turn

"Hauntology," a concept that Jacques Derrida introduces in his "*Specters of Marx*" (1993), describes a "situation in which presence is always already marked by absence, and the present is always already traversed by the traces, the ghosts, of that which is no longer, or not yet, fully present." Indeed, for Derrida, "the specter 'begins by coming back'" (Derrida 11); in other words, his notion completely disrupts the metaphysical logic that emphasizes the pairing of "beginnings and endings," placing instead the logic of "temporal return," or haunting, at the forefront. This can, in turn, necessitate a reversal of traditional "ontology," or the study of "being," through its corresponding concept, "hauntology," which replaces the logic of "being" through that of "revenance," or haunting.

According to Derrida's terminology, the ghost neither appears as an "allegory," nor does it present itself "as a product of imagination," but instead, it presents itself "as a form of presence that disrupts the traditional opposition between presence and absence." Moreover, he argues, "The specter is a paradoxical incorporation, becoming body, a certain phenomenon and carneality of spirit" (Derrida 6). This portrays the ghost as both present and elusive, resistant to closure through materialization, thereby making the hauntological "subject inhabit a liminal space, at once both 'material' and 'immaterial,' caught up in the figure of 'then' and 'now'" (Derrida 6). This contradictory placement allows for a "radical rearticulation of responsibility," since Derrida argues that "to be hauntological is to acknowledge oneself caught up in the unresolved residue and debt of the past" (Derrida 39)

The hauntological shift in literary studies has emerged as a central paradigm for understanding how narrative remembers, represses, or revives the past. Avery Gordon asserts, for example, that haunting is a social experience that "always registers the harm inflicted or the loss sustained by a social violence" (Gordon 8). The ghost, for Gordon, is more than a beautiful figure; it is knowledge: it lays bare the secrets covered by traditional historiography. Again, for Mark Fisher, hauntology signifies "the persistence of the past, the unfulfilled potential of the no longer and the not yet" (Fisher 16). Both critics apply the logic from Derrida's concept to the social realm, making hauntology a methodology for decoding the traces left by modernity, colonialism, and trauma.

But when related to the novel "*Beloved*," hauntology allows for a terminology regarding how "*Beloved*" treats the aftermath of slavery. The returning figure of "*Beloved*" is the ghost, pure and simple, in Derrida's sense, not for the purpose of offering any sort of consolation, only to trouble. This figure chimes, in Derrida's words, "with a politics of memory, of inheritance, and of generations," (Derrida xviii). Via the ghost form, Morrison witnesses the violence experienced through slavery manifesting itself in "a certain impossible temporality," a continuous haunting process that undoes linear historicity through its "afterlives that disrupt its aftermaths" (Derrida xviii).

This theme also corresponds to trauma studies, specifically Cathy Caruth's explanation that trauma is an "*unclaimed experience*," occurring belatedly and beyond the control of the subject (Caruth 4). Like Derrida's specter, trauma does not lend itself to definitive interpretation, instead inhabiting a liminal zone in time, where past events continue to manifest with renewed intensity. Dominick LaCapra has also insisted that "the process of acting out and working through," inherent in trauma narratives

in general, mirrors the pendulum-like motion of haunting (LaCapra 144). However, in Morrison's *Beloved*, the motion paradigmatically shifts to enact the process through narrative form itself, through narrative interstices, time, and dialogic repetition that haunts.

Thus, hauntology straddles deconstructive philosophy and psychological thought, and it also represents an ethical model. Derrida argues that "the specter demands justice," because it "testifies to an unsolved wrong" (Derrida xviii). The ghostly appeal, then, is an appeal to responsibility, to recall, to respond, and to testify. This particular trait of hauntology is particularly resonant in its application to post-slavery and postcolonial texts, in which the violent past has not received either psychological or political closure. The appearance of the ghost, then, signifies the coexistence of structural absence, namely, the slaves whose names are lost, the tales untold, and the bodies erasing themselves from structural existence. The novel by Morrison enacts exactly this particular responsibility for hauntology, insisting that the reader recall the haunting return that the nation has refused to acknowledge.

The spectral turn in contemporary thought exceeds Derrida's initial project, embracing psychoanalytic, feminist, and postcolonial theorizations. The use of the "phantom" by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok in *The Shell and the Kernel* antedates Derrida's analysis, albeit in anticipation of his logic, wherein "the phantom 'is the gap produced by the cryptic incorporation of the unspeakable secret (Abraham and Torok 171). This helps to explain how repression, silence, and absence themselves become the locus of haunting. On a similar trajectory, Grace Hong sees haunting in the female writing of color as a politics that can produce intelligibility for "the violences that liberal humanism disavows" (Hong 109). These readings position Morrison's spectral imagination in the larger genealogy of counter-memory, wherein the ghost functions as an ideational figure for the production of knowledge through literature.

Furthermore, hauntology upends traditional historiography in its challenge to the "homogeneous, empty time" of modernity, a concept articulated by Walter Benjamin (261). While Benjamin's concept of historical materialism asserts that the past must be understood not as a linear progression, but rather through its interruptions, Derrida's concept exceeds that notion in its claim that history is not only interrupted, but that it is inhabited by ghosts. Thus, time becomes a "haunted topology," in which every instant is marked by that which comes both before it and from beyond it, and the narrative structure that reflects that is clearly found in Morrison's use of the cyclical form.

Thus, from a theoretical perspective, the spectral turn is neither a figurative expression nor a desire, but rather a critical imperative. The haunting mode is how literature—and by implication, culture- recognizes that which is beyond representation. This is how justice is administered to that which will never be restored. Derrida asserts that "speaking to the ghost is learning to 'live finally,'" (Derrida xviii), but the dilemma inherent in this expression is that learning is contingent on ceaseless unlearning, an openness to the uncertain. _*Beloved*_ by Morrison performatively negotiates the contradiction in that it neither departs nor solves the haunting, but teaches its endurance by requiring the living to coexist with the dead, instead of existing past it.

Trauma, Memory, and the Unburied Past in *Beloved*

The notion of slavery in Toni Morrison's "*Beloved*" does not manifest itself through memory or history, but through the figure that insistently haunts it. The narrative does not commence through exposition, either, but through haunting, "124 was spiteful. Full of a baby's venom" (Morrison 3). The first sentence of the narrative domestic space itself in the spectral, so that the house, through its mnemonic body, finds itself inhabited by the figure that haunts it. The spectral figure haunting 124 Bluestone Road is not, in other words, a figure for the past, nor does it figure something past, but it is past itself, insistently present, demanding to be noticed. The first sentence in the narrative, through its hauntological logic, provisionally inhabits the "being-in-history," that is, the past that haunts, since it "marks the unburied residue of a violence that has never ended," (Derrida 11).

Morrison's depiction of trauma caused by slavery draws attention to the flaws in linear notions of time when it comes to understanding the violence of history. "Trauma," says Cathy Caruth, "is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor" (Caruth 4). This cyclical, rather than progressive, structure is manifest in the narrative itself, where trauma is conveyed through recursions, interruptions, and enactments. The memories that the characters have occur not in a linear fashion, but by replay, through haunting—the entry of the unassimilated past into the present. This fragmentation, then, reflects the psychological split caused by trauma, for memories don't narrate; they haunt.

The act of infanticide that Sethe commits is the traumatic nucleus of the novel, an act of unbearable violence that is both cause and symptom of haunting. Sethe's killing of her daughter, meant to be a protective act, is repeatedly disavowed and relived, never fully worked through. When

Sethe thinks back to the act, words fail her: "It was the right thing to do, but she had no right to do it" (Morrison 251). This contradiction summarizes the double bind inherent in trauma, where neither justification nor repetition can occur. Dominick LaCapra has identified trauma as "a process of acting out that replays the past and a working through that transforms it" (LaCapra 144). For Sethe, the tension between the two states encompasses her whole existence; she acts out her trauma by haunting its ghost, but can't work through it since the past is unburied. The house, in particular, is its realization, a manifestation of its psychic structure, a hauntingly repetitive structure.

Thus, the novel has also illustrated how the hauntological reality of slavery haunts both the psychological aspect of individuals and the social aspect, or the memory, that people hold. The character *Beloved* has become the metaphor for "the seething presence of a force that is not visible but demands to be reckoned with" (Gordon 8). However, her manifestation in 124 is the return from the past, which has become the reality for the individuals concerned, yet her form does not present any clarity to that matter since it is child, woman, spirit, and body at the same time. This can support Derrida's explanation that "the specter is neither living nor dead, but the in-between" (Derrida 6). In that way, the novel's depiction presents a conflict between the past and the present since, through *Beloved*'s manifestation, Sethe and Denver are obliged to recall the past, yet *Beloved*'s drive for recognition has the potential to destroy them.

The quality of Morrison's language also indexes this unstable temporality. The narrative shifts effortlessly from first to third-person narrative, from interior monologues to the collective voice, so that the distinctions between individuation and temporality become blurred. This narrative shift signifies the process that Marianne Hirsch describes as "postmemory," whereby "the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth" is defined (Hirsch 22). Denver's relationship with both *Beloved* and Sethe signifies exactly that, since she has memories that are not her own, defined by the absence that haunts her existence.

The process of remembering in *Beloved* is therefore neither restorative nor redemptive in nature. Rather, it is a spectral process of haunting, or spectral animation, that deconstructs the notion of the self. The memories that Sethe has are called "rememories," and they blur time and space: "If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place, the picture of it, remains, and not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world" (Morrison 43). With this, Morrison posits an ontological view of memories similar to

that found in hauntology by Jacques Derrida. The past does not remain merely in the human mind, existing instead within geographical space, haunting it through its spectral presences. The "rememory" is a hauntological space that erases the lines distinguishing the human from history. "It can signal 'the constant return of what has been denied or repressed,' and 'it challenges the boundaries of time, identity, and narrative,'" according to Colin Davis, citing the form and function of hauntology (379). The specificity and concreteness of Morrison's words literalize this concept, making memories a spatial construct instead.

Additionally, the significance of spectral aesthetics can then be understood in relation to what Saidiya Hartman has called "the afterlife of slavery," the social structures produced by slavery that continue the logic of slavery in its aftermath (Hartman 6). This afterlife, concerning *Beloved*, is not a narrative act that reveals slavery's aftermath through historical knowledge, but rather it is an affective haunting. The figures in the narrative are caught up in invisible bonds, economic, psychological, and social, that recreate enslavement. The appearance of the ghost, then, is neither surprising nor exceptional, but rather it lays bare the fact that the end of slavery is itself an illusion that proceeds through denial. The time heterogeneity, again, insists upon that insight.

However, simultaneously, *Beloved* presents trauma through the language of survivor experience. The telling of trauma itself is how the unsayable can both be retained and become altered. This, according to Caruth, is because "the story of trauma, then, does not merely reflect the experience of the survivor, but bears witness to a truth that cannot be fully known" (Caruth 4). The polyphonic narrative offered by Morrison bears witness in that it establishes a shared memory that can include both the dead and the actual survivors. The series of voices that end the novel, "This is not a story to pass on" (Morrison 324) is an example of what Derrida identifies as "the ethical injunction of the ghost," essentially a call to remember and resist forgetting (Derrida xviii). The failure to "pass on" instead meets its goal, in that silence itself also then testifies.

Therefore, haunting in Morrison's paradigm is more than the aftereffect of trauma; it is its language. The ghost is the voice that fills the void that silence has made in the absence of history. The presence of *Beloved*, the ghost, in the novel instills a poetry of haunting that fuses trauma studies and deconstructivism, exploring the psychological and actual manifestation of the violence inherent in slavery. Memory in *Beloved* is not closure; it is justice through haunting, the necro-poetics that aims for the unclosure that comes from mourning and recognition.

The Ghost and the Ethics of Haunting in *Beloved*

Instead, haunting in *Beloved* emerges not as the invasion by something from another world, but as an imperative that comes from inside that world itself, a world that bears the traces of unaccomplished justice. The spirit that haunts 124 Bluestone Road defies the redemptive, Western metaphysical notion that assigns the dead a symbolic and redemptive task. Instead, *Beloved*'s figure troubles the moral and chronological unity that follows the dead. The haunting performed by *Beloved* enunciates what French philosopher Jacques Derrida has called "the mandate of the ghost," the imperative "to live otherwise, and better," in the company of "those for whom life was not given" (Derrida xviii). Here, the spectral narrative that Morrison weaves through *Beloved* enacts the philosophical mandate in its practice, "to live with ghosts is to live with history," the history that traces the debt that the world of the living owes to the silent dead.

The ethics of haunting in the novel begins with the knowledge that violence does not end with its act. The cruelty of slavery is not only not effaced by its act, but it also lingers in the memories, in the communities, and in the words. The claim that "nothing ever dies" (Morrison 36) is neither magical nor religious; it is ontological, asserting that every act has a remainder, that time itself is permeable to its past. The hauntology proposed by Derrida refers exactly to this condition of "the being of what is no longer or not yet" (Derrida 10), that is, to its time difference, making responsibility an endless task. To practice responsibility in relation to time is, then, to be haunted.

The return of *Beloved*'s ghost raises the issue of moral trial through domesticity. With her return, *Beloved* requires a type of redemptive love that defies rationality. The hunger for recognition that *Beloved* expresses becomes both a testimony and a form of torture. Sethe interprets *Beloved*'s hunger for recognition as the measure of her maternal righteousness when she asserts, "*Beloved*, she is my daughter. She is mine" (Morrison 200). However, *Beloved*'s desire escalates to parasitism, draining Sethe's resources and alienating her from the rest of the world. It is this parasiticism that expresses what Dominick LaCapra identifies as the "danger of acting out," an impasse wherein the subject rehearses the past without any transcendence (LaCapra 144). This impasse is something that Morrison portrays to demonstrate that recognition by the ghost requires more than mere repetition.

The act in which Denver calls upon the support of the whole community distinguishes the phenomenon of haunting from a social responsibility to a private issue. The process of exorcizing the woman's spirit, "they stopped praying and took a step back to the beginning," (Morrison, 308)

attaches importance to the ability of collective ritual to address and articulate the spectral phenomenon. The act also distinguishes haunting from pathology to ethics, from repetition to relation. This can be supported by Avery Gordon, who argues that haunting "is not a pathology but a social form of being in time, one that produces a sense of something-to-be-done" (Gordon, xvi).

The ethical implications of haunting also appear in the way that testimony is presented in "*Beloved*". The fragmented memories that the characters exhibit are meant to establish a narrative that is not necessarily premised on redemption, but instead on testifying to the unrepresentable reality of pain. According to trauma studies, Cathy Caruth argues, "to be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event" (Caruth 4). The haunting that "*Beloved*" portrays exteriorizes that possession, making the unobservable inside of trauma observable and audible. However, instead of reducing haunting to the inside, to pathology, Morrison elucidates how haunting can become an ethical act, "in which the silenced can speak to the living through haunting".

However, for Derrida, communication with the ghost is not a paradigm for mastery but, instead, a practice of ethical hospitality, since "It is necessary to learn to live finally, to learn to live with ghosts" (Derrida xviii). Such hospitality supposes the deferral and displacement of the self and its identity concerning the interruption by the other. Sethe's experience, in *Beloved*, is a realization of that process, since it causes Sethe to efface her autonomous selfhood for a relational, collective understanding, wherein the borders between "I" and "you" are blurred. This is clearly a realization of the ethical philosophy advanced by Derrida, wherein there is an openness to that which thwarts understanding and incorporation. Thus, in *Beloved*, the ghost of *Beloved* does not manifest itself as something monstrous, since it appears instead as a moral counterpart, whose haunting presages the limitations of humanist subjectivity and the emergence, instead, of an ethic premised upon haunting and responsibility.

On the collective level, the novel presents what Christina Sharpe has termed "the wake," "living in the aftermath of slavery, where 'memory is a practice of care and resistant practice" (Sharpe 15). The wake is a location that Morrison's figures occupy not as victims, but as witnesses. The question then shifts from how haunting it can be to end to how it can be survived. The final line of the novel, "This is not a story to pass on" (Morrison 324), distills its contradiction: it is necessary to remember, but the form that remembers comes in must avoid commodification. The narrative is not to "be passed on" to become spectacle, yet it must also

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disseminate, become a form of justice. This contradiction formulates what Derrida has termed "hauntological justice," a justice that is not possible through restitution, but through the responsibility needed to remember.

The ethics of haunting in *Beloved*, therefore, moves from the text itself to the critique of historical consciousness. This is where Morrison converts the novel into what Walter Benjamin has called "constellations," where "the past flashes up at the moment of its recognizability" (Benjamin 263). The act of every spectral apparition is such a flash, where the simultaneity of time and the connection between ethics and memory become clear. The structure of the text, its monologues, and its time shifts reflect the same ethics of time; it requires that the act of reading, the act of recognition, happen through the same act that witnesses. Reading, thereby, is the act of hospitality to the voices that modernity has suppressed

Ultimately, then, Morrison's reimagination of haunting comes to constitute an "ethical imagination," wherein a once frightful figure, haunting, comes to instantiate itself through the medium of moral imagination itself. Thus, through the apparition of "*Beloved*," Morrison figures Derrida's notion that justice "is owed to the ghosts, to the others who are no longer or who are not yet there" (Derrida xviii). Interestingly, then, justice comes to inhabit the domain that is neither juridical nor legal, instead manifesting through an "affective relation," wherein justice comes to manifest through an 'act' that actualizes itself through the practice of 'hearing,' 'remembering,' and through 'responsibility.' Thus, through the act of transhistorical engagement, wherein the past comes to manifest through the protagonist's connection to "*Beloved*," instead comes to inhabit a sort of coexistential relationship that necessitates existing simultaneously in the same world that is shared by 'ushering' the ghosts that inhabit the "history's unavenged past," wherein "*Beloved*," through its manifestation, comes to actualize the act that instructs its 'narrative' to constitute itself through the act of spectral hospitality.

Section 4: The Haunting of History: Memory and Collective Trauma

The haunting presence that signifies *Beloved* signifies much more than the dramatization of Sethe's personal memories. Rather, it is connected to the larger cultural and historical trauma that signifies the African American experience. Therefore, the representation of haunting in Morrison's works fuses both the psychological and the historical, demonstrating how the ghosts associated with slavery still inhabit the shared mindscape. The hauntological lens, in particular, plays a crucial role in making Derrida's concept of the specter central, since it signifies

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something that is both absent and present, that is, "a visitation of the past that will not die" (Derrida 11).

Indeed, as critics note, in Morrison's fiction, history is reconstructed as an act of haunting, as something that defies closure. The figure of *Beloved* represents this process, becoming the embodiment of both Sethe's dead daughter and the spirit of the millions that were enslaved. This figure is more than "just a dead white woman," or "just a victim," and instead has become the manifestation of "the *unclaimed experience*," the return of trauma before its narrative incorporation (Caruth 4). The appearance of *Beloved*, then, represents the return of the suppressed memories that continue to inform African American subjectivity through the violence of slavery.

Moreover, the way Morrison weaves her narrative defies the traditional historiographic attempt to 'contain' history through linear time. The way time is presented in the novel through circular patterns defies the linear patterns associated with traditional historiographies, indicative of how traumatic experiences defy linear presentations through fragmented and circular patterns. The memories that Sethe has are not flashbacks; instead, they are relapses that disrupt the present through flash memories that 'pierce the present tense.' As Dominick LaCapra explains, "trauma disrupts the past/present divide, so that history becomes an 'open wound' rather than a 'closed chapter' (LaCapra 41).

Thus, hauntology, in this regard, emerges both as an aesthetic and an ethical project. This is because, by permitting the interruptions from the past to occur, Morrison argues for the importance of remembering through the haunting that takes place. The haunting also requires recognition, not only on the part of Sethe and Denver, but also on the part of the reader, who is thereby brought into the process of witnessing through haunting. Derrida argues, "To be haunted is to bear the other in oneself, to be responsible to ghosts" (Derrida 18). This responsibility is instantiated in the text by forcing recognition through what has either been made silent or made invisible.

Furthermore, the theme of collective haunting in Morrison's work distinguishes the transmitted trauma from historical trauma. Denver, the only survivor, inherits both the trauma and the fear that her mother has transmitted through haunting. The seclusion that Denver experiences in the haunted house at 124 Bluestone Road can, therefore, represent the social isolation that results from historical trauma, an inheritance that is a spectral burden. According to Hirschi, "postmemory", memory transmitted through imagination, not experience, "marks a shift from haunting to cure, from trauma to recovery, from tragic past to hopeful

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future" (Hirschi 22). The depiction by Morrison of Denver's reconciliation with the rest of the people, then, is indicative of trying to overcome haunting and start a process of collective healing.

However, the novel defies the impulse towards absolute redemption. The exorcisms that drive away *Beloved* also do not remove her traces, but rather indicate the conversion of memories from the personal to the social level. The presence of the female figures that arrive for the exorcisms can well be understood as a social act of mourning, converting the private sorrow for *Beloved*'s existence and death to a social ritual. This act, as various critics observe, is the culmination of the conversion from the private trauma, that is, the past, to social memories (Krumholz 110).

Thus, "*Beloved*" is a realization of Avery Gordon's concept of "ghostly matters": "The ghost is neither present nor absent, it is ghostly" (Gordon 8). The haunting is then used metaphorically for politics, making it difficult for the audience to forget that the presence of slavery's afterlife is felt in contemporary times in the form of "injustices and racial memories" (Morrison). The use of haunting, then, by Morrison is not merely for aesthetic reasons, linked to "the 'Gothic,'" (Morrison), but it conveys a complex level of meaning related to the way the past reconceptualizes itself in the present.

Therefore, Morrisson's concept of haunting, acting as a metaphor for trauma and collective memory, also argues against both historical amnesia and the notion of literary realism. To blend the spectral and historical strands, Morrisson applies a different definition for narrative, where ghosts are not banished; rather, the narrative act listens to the ghosts. Therefore, according to the hauntological perspective, *Beloved* can also be defined, through its connection to the aforementioned concept, as a literary text that defies reconciliation by instead inhabiting the space of 'productive discomfort.'

The Ethics of Haunting: Reading, Responsibility, and Resistance

The haunting in *Beloved* is more than a literary mechanic, becoming instead an ethical mandate that encourages the reader to respond to history and trauma in ways that are beyond the scope of traditional narrative consumption. The book argues that trauma and history must become more than an aesthetic representation; instead, they require active remembrance. This is supported by the critical concept that "To be haunted is to be responsible to what is no longer or not yet there," according to Jacques Derrida (Derrida xviii). The haunting narrative of _*Beloved*_ asserts that critical concept, placing the act of reading in relation to the responsibility for historical justice.

The moral meaning of haunting can also be discerned in the character of *Beloved*. *Beloved* represents both the trauma that Sethe has experienced and the trauma that has resulted from slavery, which forces both the characters and the audience to face the unresolved past. According to Avery Gordon, haunting "makes present the persistent effects of social injustices," making it more of a call to action than a reflection (Gordon 8). The presence of *Beloved* upsets the linearity of time, showing how the experience of slavery has resulted in its aftermath, lingering through time. The significance of Morrison's narrative, therefore, is not relegated merely to remembering the past; its significance also rests in inhabiting it, its messages, and its wounds.

Reading, in Morrison's text, is given an ethical dimension by requiring the recognition of that which has hitherto been silenced. The narrative structure, perspectives, and use of polyphonic voices reflect the reality of trauma and its unrepresentability. Cathy Caruth discusses trauma by saying, "Trauma is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known, and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly" (Caruth 4). This plays out in *Beloved* through the repetition that either encounters *Beloved* or Sethe's memories, pulling the reader into the cycle of trauma that remains unassimilated.

Ethical reading, according to Morrison's structure, also requires witnessing communal responsibility. The intervention of the community in the exorcism ritual of *Beloved* reflects the need for collective recognition and ethical labor. This is backed by Morrison's words, "They stopped praying and took a step back to the beginning" (Morrison 308). The action reflects a process of joint ethical commitment. The act of exorcism, both literal and symbolic, is not only a logical way out of haunting, having important implications for the solution to haunting, but also reflects the social responsibility to respond to the aftereffects of slavery. This has been supported by Christina Sharpe, "Being in the wake is not only to survive, but to respond ethically to the ongoing afterlife of slavery" (Sharpe 15). The act reflects that the text itself is demonstrating an ethical structure, placing both the figures in the narrative and the audience inside the world of ethical witnessing.

However, the ethical dimension of haunting is not only present at the level of the narrative, but it also derives from the politics of memory. This has been reaffirmed by Saidiya Hartman, according to whom the "afterlife of slavery" is a reality that lives on through social structures, institutions, and the social imagination (Hartman 6). The haunting that comes through in Morrison's narrative indexes a reading that is sensitive to the historical injustice that has taken place and that assumes

responsibility for it. The ghost in *Beloved* emerges, then, as an ethical interlocutor, whose existence provokes activity rather than complacency.

Additionally, Morrison highlights the power for transformation that can occur through ethical engagement. The process of watching and intervening in haunting can function in opposition to erasure through time. Through memory, narrative, and social action, the characters are given power over memories that were forcibly denied them. The relationship that Sethe and Denver share with *Beloved* can be understood through this concept, that memory, although painful, is made relational through social action. This process, according to Dominick LaCapra, is integral to trauma: "Both acting out and working through, a dialectic of repetition and transformation" (LaCapra 144).

The moral duty imposed upon the reader, according to Morrison's construction, is therefore doubled: first, that of acknowledging and addressing the presence of trauma and its historical injustices, and second, that of developing from that acknowledgement a practice, empathy, and sense of shared humanity. The emphasis upon the moral duty imposed by the ghost, as expressed in Derrida's writings, resonates well along these lines: "The ghost is not an object of knowledge, but a call for responsibility" (Derrida xviii). Reading *Beloved* from a moral perspective, therefore, involves dwelling in the painful truth of history, hearing the unheard, and feeling the traces of violence inscribed upon its body.

The ethics of haunting in *Beloved* cannot be understood apart from its literary and historical preoccupations. The novel inscribes a fraught interaction between memory, trauma, and specter that prompts the reader to face that which is both unacknowledged and, by extension, repressed. The text of *Beloved* illustrates the tenets of an ethically oriented engagement through narrative, expressing both the imperatives and possibilities of witnessing, and the redemptive forces of shared and transmitted memory. This text argues that haunting, understood through such a framework, is both a literary mode and a way for critical thought to interrogate its relation to responsibility, history, and conscience.

Conclusion: Hauntology, Historical Memory, and the Legacy of *Beloved*

Beloved by Toni Morrison can thus be seen to manifest itself as an important text that embodies the theoretical and ideological elements of haunting, memory, and trauma. With the usage of the hauntology concept by Jacques Derrida, it can be understood that the past will never remain in the past, and it will continue to affect both the individuals and the collective unconscious (Derrida 11). The apparition figure of *Beloved*,

therefore, assumes the form of both a memorial figure and a moral referent, nudging the characters and the readers to respond to the implications of slavery in a manner that is both ideologically, psychologically, and historically complex (Caruth 4; LaCapra 144).

The literary methods used by Morrison, such as fragmented temporality, polyphonic narration, and spectral embodiment, turn reading itself into an ethical act. The theme of memory and trauma can neither be grasped nor captured through representation, since it has to be performed on the level that forces the readers to witness the aftermaths of erasure and repression (Gordon 8; Hartman 6). The placement of the ghost not only in the narrative framework but also in the framework of ethical discourse unites the aesthetic structure of the literary form and its moral dimension by clearly outlining that the only way to resist is through recognition and responsiveness to the past, two things that are only possible through addressing and attending to the past (Sharpe 15). This is clearly presented in Morrison's *Beloved*, where the psychological and social elements of historical responsibility are both presented.

Additionally, the hauntological paradigm that the novel presents contributes significantly to contemporary literary studies by synthesizing psychoanalytic trauma theory, deconstructive thought, and post-colonial critique. Cathy Caruth's claim that trauma "is experienced too suddenly, too abruptly, to be fully understood" receives its narrative manifestation in Morrison's text (Caruth 4). The situations in both Sethe's and Denver's lives bear testimony to the unassimilated and repetitive nature of trauma, and the intervention by the group in Denver's case reveals how trauma can be made meaningful through the mediation of responsibility for its existence. The notion that "the ghost 'demands justice'" threatens to overwhelm Derrida's philosophy, pointing to the responsibility that narrative itself assumes when it comes to haunting (Derrida xviii).

Thus, through the spectral manifestation of the aftermaths of slavery, Morrison blurs the boundaries separating the past from the present, life from death, and memory from forgetting. The appearance of *Beloved*'s ghost signifies the unclaimed lives of the slaves, struggling to acknowledge them, forcing a closure that indirectly requires an ethical scrutiny. Through this, the practice of haunting assumes the roles of both narrative and social critique. Indeed, Avery Gordon argues that haunting "exposes what official histories conceal," encouraging an ethical imagination that is sensitive to social injustices (Gordon 8). This way, the novel assumes the responsibility of creating a literary world where mourning, memories, and resistances converge, exposing the ethical dimensions underlying the notion of historical awareness.

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Ultimately, then, *Beloved* proves the exemplary value of hauntology for literary analysis. The novel proves that the complexities of trauma, both as an ethical, affective, and temporal issue, can find narrative expression through strategies that celebrate fragmentation, recurrence, and spectralization. The contemporary relevance, the timelessness, if you will, of *Beloved* is its challenge to the notion that memory is ever a bland, trivial, or merely internal issue, that trauma is ever something that gets safely contained, that it is ever possible to acknowledge without also wondering how we can, through our act of recognition, bear responsibility for it. The ghost, in the vision that haunts her imagination, is not merely something dreadful, not merely symbolic; it is an ethically fraught object, a figure for witness, for the only way to live.

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