

FROM INSECURE ATTACHMENT TO SOCIAL RECONNECTION: DENVER'S HEALING JOURNEY IN TONI MORRISON'S BELOVED

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how a second-generation daughter character takes a psychological path toward healing the historical trauma she inherited and the severe sense of emotional detachment in a fragmented household. Even though the tragic past of the maternal figure is usually the center of the literature analysis, this work will attempt to alter the interpretive lens toward the dynamics of a daughter overcoming her psychological paralysis. Applying a qualitative literary-critical design, the proposed study will employ a dual-theoretical model of attachment theory and trauma theory to examine the latent narrative nuances. It was done through systematic close reading of particular narrative units, which collected the data based on aspects of spatial symbolism, internal monologues, and the dynamics between characters. The findings reveal two main mechanisms in the character's storyline. First, her excessive domestic seclusion and psychosomatic withdrawal, namely, two years of deafness and a physical retreat into a secluded natural setting, are diagnosed as the direct result of a broken maternal attachment and deep, insecure attachment. The haunted-house setting is essentially unhelpful as a secure base; it is an inhospitable refuge that reinforces her isolation. Second, the daughter character's definitive recovery is achieved not through internal resilience alone but through an active process of social reconnection. She establishes reparative interpersonal relationships with substitute maternal figures by breaking the spatial boundaries of her isolation and ultimately mobilizing a collective intervention, which allows her to overcome her psychological barriers. The study concludes that resolving intergenerational trauma requires rebuilding social connections to deliberately break entrenched insecure attachment patterns. These findings contribute to Morrison scholarship by demonstrating Denver's agency and offering a replicable dual-theory framework for analyzing trauma recovery in literary texts.

1. INTRODUCTION

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) presents one of the most profound literary explorations of how intergenerational trauma is transmitted within a family and how it can be overcome. Although current literature has addressed Sethe as the major centre of the traumatic aspects of slavery (Wyatt, 1993), the less popular figure of the daughter Denver has not been discussed as an agent of healing. In this paper, the focus of analysis is changed, moving away the traumatized maternal



body to the psychological path of the daughter, which is the insecure attachment to social reconnection.

Attachment Theory as developed by John Bowlby (1982) offers something to use to see how Denver is isolated. According to the arguments presented by Bowlby, the capacity of the child to develop important relationships is predetermined by the availability of a “secure base” a caregiver providing safety and freedom of exploration. This has been refined by the recent developments in attachment research. As Waters, Zhu, and Roisman (2025) show, the secure base script is a cognitive representation of the cumulative experiences of early caregiving that defines how a particular person thinks about being safe and having an attachment throughout his or her lifetime. Loss of this secure base, when it happens, as with the traumatized family at 124 Bluestone Road, leads the child into what Bowlby refers to as an insecure attachment, where the child becomes hypervigilant, withdrawn and can never fully trust anyone. Additionally, according to Mohammed (2018), the prompt necessity of human connection is not only personal, but collective, i.e., loneliness, creates a discontinuity between the self and the social fabric.

Considering the dialectic in the particular historical environment of slavery, Lorenz (2021) notes that motherhood is then a territory of trauma when it confronts the violence of the institution. In *Beloved*, Sethe commits the infanticide that she does to protect her child against slavery, which turns her into the woman who murdered her child as opposed to the woman who protects her child by saving her. As such, Denver is raised in a “hostile sanctuary”, where the place expected to offer protection becomes the source of terror. It is against this backdrop that the daughter figure presents another paradigm of recovery. Nevertheless, as Herman (2015) with her seminal contribution to the concept of trauma and recovery suggests, recovery after such serious psychological traumas is impossible on its own; it is necessary to be conscious of “social reconnection.”

In modern literary trauma theories, narratives are considered key vehicles through which to study profound psychological traumatization and compounded circumstances in the handling of systemic trauma. More current literature indicates the proficiency of literary works when tracing how the characters cope with unspeakable or delayed trauma (Maslida and Wajiran, 2025). However, a significant part of the contemporary discussion of *Beloved* is focused on the maternal body as the main emphasis point of trauma (Wyatt, 1993). However, even as Lakshmi, Priyadarshini, Kumar, and Gobalakrishnan (2025) explore the ways in which communal and spiritual spaces in the novel provide outlets to reclaim identity and agency, an essential gap remains: how does the plot-driven action in *Denver* specifically mediate the tension between domestic isolation and communal reintegration? The fact that the daughter is an active agent who intentionally ruins her insecure attachment by socially reconnecting with it has not been well-systematically analyzed based on the dual-theoretical framework of attachment and trauma theories.

The daughter figure in this analysis embodies the textual transformation from domestic confinement toward community expansion. Unlike the tragically static figure of the mother, Denver represents what Kono (2021) terms the possibility of "self-recovery" woven into the storyline. This discussion also draws on the concept of "healing spaces" (Dénes, 2023), examining how such spaces are reconfigured from the haunted house of 124 Bluestone Road to the open embrace of the village as Denver progresses toward recovery. Dénes (2023) concludes



that social acceptance and forgiveness, facilitated through communal storytelling, constitute the primary sources of the healing process, a framework that directly supports the analysis of Denver's trajectory.

Based on this dynamic, two main research questions arise: (1) How is insecure attachment manifested in Denver's character within the domestic isolation of 124 Bluestone Road in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*? (2) How does social reconnection function as a mechanism for Denver to recover from her attachment trauma? Ultimately, this paper argues that Denver's ability to "tell her story" with and to the community represents the literary moment in which she finally overcomes her inherited trauma a finding that carries implications not only for Morrison scholarship but also for understanding trauma recovery more broadly.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

To understand the mechanics of this isolation fundamentally, the Attachment Theory describes the narrative exchange between a child and the main caregiver, usually a mother. Bowlby (1982) states that a child needs to have a "secure base", a safe haven where they can venture in the world without any fear. Ideally, the home is a space where fear is controlled, a concept that Rout (2024) elaborates by examining how communal solidarity functions as a source of survival and resistance in *Beloved*. Rout argues that the novel demonstrates how the Black community's collective silence, followed by its eventual intervention, shapes the domestic space of 124 Bluestone Road, transforming it from a site of isolated trauma into a space of collective healing (Rout, 2024). Here, mothers play the role of giving the confidence to venture into the unknown, which is a healthy path. On the other hand, the lack or misrepresentation of such a connection results in what Maharani and Margawati (2025) term as a form of "maternal deprivation," in which the absence of a protective figure in the child undermines their spiritual and psychological resilience. In this way, the caregiver within a normal situation is the ultimate groundwork of the child's reality that is developing.

However, when that "secure base" is defiled, it turns into a den of horror, and that is when severe destruction will occur. Instead of being protective, the relationship can become suffocating and might even get dangerous as it happens in the extreme mother-daughter relationship in *Beloved*, where Sethe and Denver are both. This conforms to the argument put forward by Judith Herman (2015) that traumatic experiences do not only produce fear; they kill the basic structures of attachment that connect the person to the community. Once the main connection is broken by violence, the person becomes unable to trust, which leads to significant "psychological fragmentation" or what Selfridge (2018) is inclined to call the physical expression of psychological trauma. Combining the diagnostic scheme proposed by Bowlby and the recovery model by Herman, the survival of the protagonist is depicted as not based on her inner strength alone, but the ability to substitute the "failed secure base" of the mother with the communal security of the community.

In relation to the novel itself, the literary criticism of *Beloved* has also explored at length the ways in which Morrison confronts the trauma of slavery by constructing a fragmented narrative. Kim (2025) focuses on Morrison's narrative ethics, demonstrating that the novel dramatizes a movement from guilt and shame toward relational responsibility through dialogic



storytelling. Kim argues that Denver's decision to leave 124 Bluestone Road and seek help from the community represents the climax of this ethical arc a moment where shame is transformed into collective action (Kim, 2025). In the same way, Toksöz (2024) points out that the non-linear narrative approach that Morrison has chosen aims to make both the characters and the readers face the "unspeakable" past and deal with it as it is, instead of pushing it aside.

To address the gap between psychological theory and literary interpretation, the analytical prism to fill this gap is the role of the daughter as an agent of the future. Ford (2020) offers a new perspective on agency in *Beloved* by analyzing Sethe's act of infanticide as a "property claim" and the haunting of *Beloved* as an attempt to reclaim personhood. Although Ford's focus is on Sethe, her framework of agency, ownership, and haunting can be extended to examine how Denver as the surviving daughter actively constructs her own agency to break the cycle of inherited trauma (Ford, 2020). This view can be compared to a comparative study by Maharani and Margawati (2025) on *The Secret Life of Bees*, in which the authors note that the bildungsroman (coming-of-age) of a motherless character is usually the result of the emergence of "substitute mothers" to trigger character development. Besides, Ungar and Theron (2020) advance the concept of "hidden resilience" by proposing a multisystemic framework: resilience depends not on individual traits alone but on the interaction between biological, psychological, social, and ecological systems. Ungar and Theron (2020) emphasize that behaviors which might be perceived as rejection or withdrawal can actually be understood as unconventional coping strategies termed 'hidden resilience' but only when the community provides culturally meaningful resources for navigation. This insight creates further levels of ambiguity in the characterization of the daughter before she is finally brought back into the social world of the narrative.

3. METHODOLOGY

The paper is designed as a qualitative literary criticism study to discuss the psychological development of the character Denver in *Beloved* by Toni Morrison. Creswell and Creswell (2017) choose this approach as it is necessary to describe the latent psychological dynamics and narrative undertones of trauma, which cannot be measured. The first source of data is *Beloved* novel (Morrison, 2004), and the second ones are academic literature that pertains to the theoretical framework. The analysis lies in the dual theoretical framework but uses the Attachment Theory by Bowlby (1982): It is used to find the origins of the problem of Denver, to be the insecure attachment that she, and her isolation at home, indicated, and the Trauma Theory of Herman (2015) to analyse the process of her recovery, which is the so-called social reconnection

Data collection employs the systematic close reading technique. The text is examined to identify narrative elements, such as dialogues, internal monologues, and symbolism, that demonstrate the character's psychological trajectory. The analysis specifically examines how Denver transitions from the defensive stance of insecure attachment, manifested in the setting of 124 Bluestone Road, toward active social interaction. Finally, the findings are synthesized to offer a conclusion regarding the ultimate resolution of the character's inherited trauma, namely social reintegration.



4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the qualitative analysis of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, this study draws two main conclusions about the psychological development of the protagonist, Denver. First, Denver's extreme domestic isolation at 124 Bluestone Road is not a mere plot device but a textual manifestation of John Bowlby's concept of insecure attachment. This insecure attachment, as revealed in the text, is fueled by a failed maternal "secure base," which compels the character toward extreme psychosomatic withdrawal namely, her two-year deafness and her spatial retreat into what is known as the "emerald closet." Second, this paper concludes that Judith Herman's concept of "social reconnection" serves as the ultimate narrative mechanism driving Denver's recovery. This recovery is actualized through three consecutive moves in the textual evidence: Denver traversing the liminal space of the porch, developing a healthy attachment with a substitute mother figure (Lady Jones), and finally mobilizing the surrounding community of women to expel the inherited trauma. These findings are elaborated below.

4.1 The Manifestation of Insecure Attachment in Domestic Isolation

To gain deeper insight into the depth of Denver's psychological paralysis, it is necessary to examine how her insecure attachment, as described by John Bowlby (1982), is reflected in her relationship with her environment. A child's proper psychological growth cannot be achieved without a solid foundation a place where the child feels safe. In *Beloved*, Toni Morrison has broken this structure systematically. In this paper, I will look at the causal dialectical analysis of how Denver became isolated, beginning with the external cause called: "Hostile Sanctuary" (as well as the home failing to provide a secure base), which is succeeded by the internal consequence called: "Psychosomatic Withdrawal" (where the body of the character shuts down as a defense mechanism).

4.1.1 The Hostile Sanctuary: 124 Bluestone Road as a Failed Secure Base

John Bowlby argues that the physical house should be the main refuge of safety as a child should have a firm foundation in which to venture out. In *Beloved*, Morrison plays with this expectation, as the house itself becomes the initial adversary of the bond of Denver. The animosity of this home set up in the novel is instituted in the very first lines: "*124 was vile. Stuffed with a baby. The women in the house were aware of it and so were the children*" (Morrison, 2004, p. 11). Morrison resorts to a vivid imagery of being poisoned internally by turning the house into what he calls a metaphor of being "spiteful" and full of "venom." The house, which is supposed to provide nurturance and shelter to the child, creates an ambiance of fear in every corner. This "venom" is no longer just in the air; it is like a wall that actually divides Denver and the community of Cincinnati. The neighbors cannot even approach the haunted yard, and this essentially makes the house a fortress of trauma, which rules out the entire isolation of Denver as far as normal social development is concerned.

This ecological aggressiveness is directly linked to the breakdown of the main mediator, Sethe, who embodies the final collapse of the so-called "secure base". In the case of Denver,

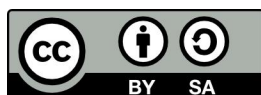


Sethe is a terrifying paradox: a murderous mamma who killed her own daughter to free her of slavery. This fact completely demolishes the internal working model of attachment in Denver and creates an insecure attachment where the source of comfort is also the source of terror. This agonistic duality (as Morrison puts it in an inner monologue of Denver): *“I love my mother and I know that she killed one of her own daughters, and I am tender with her, but I am afraid of her because of it.”* (Morrison, 2004, p. 211). Denver even goes as far as feeling that she may be the next target of Sethe, a nightmare that keeps her constantly on high alert in 124 Bluestone Road. The word scared used by Denver instead of a less strong word as “uneasy” or “worried” reveals the fact that being close to her mother makes her feel unsafe, but more than that, it makes her aware of her mortality. The use of the phrase “because of it” when referring directly to the direct action of infanticide of Sethe makes known that the fear that Denver has is not an abstract one but one directly tied to a certain traumatic event she is fully aware her mother can do.

As a result, the inability to have a secure base causes Denver to operate in a condition of hypervigilance all the time. In contrast to having a well-attached child, which sleeps peacefully in the presence of a mother, Denver is always on the lookout to see whether Sethe is about to be attacked or not. The story unfolds that Denver is always suspicious of her mother. This hypervigilance is reflected in her interior monologue: *“Don't love her too much. Don't. Maybe it's still in her the thing that makes it all right to kill her children. I have to tell her. I have to protect her”* (Morrison, 2004, p. 212). The insecure attachment of Denver is actually exposed in her internal alert of the city of “Don't love her too much.” She finds herself in a mental dilemma since she feels that she is obligated to love her mother out of the need to survive, but her survival instinct requires that she be emotionally detached. The monotony of the word “Don't” and the adjective “maybe” imply that Denver is not sure whether “the thing” is still there in Sethe, but “I have to protect her” is sufficient just to lead Sethe to live in the state of hypervigilance. This further twists this dynamic, as Denver recognizes herself as her mother deserves protection, which, in its turn, is an inversion of a typical mother-daughter dynamic, and this reversal only adds to her mental load. The unknown people outside the yard seem even more threatening since the menace lies inside her own house; therefore, it is not surprising that she does not leave the yard to communicate with the world.

4.1.2 Psychosomatic Withdrawal and the "Emerald Closet" as Defense Mechanisms

Due to the unsuccessful secure base, Denver turns into a highly developed physical defense. So frightening is her history in the family that her body is scared to process sensory information, fearing that it would damage her fragile psyche. This denial according to the excerpt is provoked when her schoolmate Nelson Lord inquires about the crime that her mother has committed. Instead of and processing this verbal assault, the body of Denver completely disengages to her hearing: *“She went deaf rather than hear the answer... For two years she walked in a silence too solid for penetration”* (Morrison, 2004, p. 122). This two-year deafness is an influential literary tool of utter avoidance. Denver helps build an unconscious biological wall of exclusion to the history of her family by becoming deaf. She literally mutes everything the world hears, since her internal world is so much for her to process to the point that she cannot even have a conversation in any social reconnection.



Besides, not being able to take shelter in 124 or even in the company of her mother, Denver forms another safe base in nature. Even she shrinks into an obscured grove of boxwood bushes known as the “emerald closet.” Morrison explains this space as sensuously isolated and comforting: “*Veiled and protected by the live green walls, she felt ripe and clear, and salvation was as easy as a wish*” (Morrison, 2004, p. 37). In the view of Bowlby, such live green walls are catastrophically in the place of the womb of a mother. In this case, Denver is playing out a fantasy of a kind of security that can never be achieved in real life. She creates an extreme contrast between the ‘venom’ of the house and the purity of her green sanctuary, between the quiet, lifeless embrace of trees and the unpredictable and possibly hostile nature of human contact.

Finally, this withdrawal becomes obsessive and possessive as the ghost of Beloved becomes a tangible creature. The isolation that Denver finds herself in does not stop, but it is completely focused on the newcomer, thus getting her to be even more detached from the outside world. Denver is desperate and in need of genuine love, which makes her pathologically desperate as she cries out, “*She's mine, Beloved. She's mine*” (Morrison, 2004, p. 215). When Denver uses the possessive pronoun “mine,” this shows that she is not developing a healthy, mutually rewarding social relationship but instead possesses an emotionally meaningful object to compensate for the loss of her mother. She does not see Beloved as a separate person and believes she wants a secure base. This obsession with the ghost on such a strong, single-purpose level further immerses Denver into the disruptions of the traumatization cycle to the point where she is unable to realize how much her mother is physically and mentally decaying until it is almost too late.

4.2 Social Reconnection as a Mechanism of Recovery

Although Bowlby framework being a right diagnosis of the paralyzing isolation that Denver collects, Judith Herman (2015) theory of traumas gives the blueprint of how she would get out of the situation later. As psychological trauma is, is essentially a cancer within relationships existing between an individual and a community, Herman claims that healing involves a conscious effort to establish a ‘social connection,’ which she names as social reconnection. The recovery in Denver is not a one-day revelation, but a processed discussion that is shown in two phases in this paper: the first is the physical experience of the “Breaking of the Siege,” where the main character overcomes the liminal barrier of the porch to avoid starvation; and the second one is the “Restoration of the Social Bond,” where the main character receives an individual validation and collective intervention.

4.2.1 Breaking the Siege: The Crisis of Starvation and the Liminality of the Porch

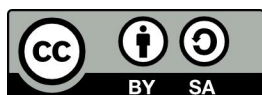


According to Herman, complex trauma victims are likely to stand in the same spot in their so-called “secure base” until a big crisis occurs, dismantling their protective processes. In the case of Denver, this crisis is the bodily and spiritual rottenness of her mother. As the story unfolds, the ghost of Beloved becomes more of a sister, but the parasite, literally sucking the life out of Sethe and the family on the whole. An already frightening haven is transformed into a location of the looming famine. Morrison vividly presents this reversal of roles whereby the mother becomes small while the ghost grows larger: “*Denver saw the flesh between her mother's forefinger and thumb fade... Sethe was trying to make up for the handsaw*” (Morrison, 2004, p. 248, 257). Following the downfall of her family, Denver understands that the cocoons of the “emerald closet” and the seclusion of 124 are no longer her, but tombs. She has no choice but to be the nurse in order to make both ends meet as she has to go through a process where she has to forsake her neediness like a child, and face salvation in the world.

However, the taste to leave does not happen at once; it is a fierce mental battle in the course of which Denver will have to resort to a pool of ancestral power. Denver hears the voice of her dead grandmother, Baby Suggs, telling her to act before her before going outside. This spiritual intervention is important since it explains that Denver is starting to lose her faith in her broken mother and finding some greater wisdom of the ancestors. Denver has fears of the external world but the voice of Baby Suggs is the one that helps her go through a short and very important dialogue: “*But you said there was no defense. / 'There ain't.' / Then what do I do? / 'Know it, and go on out the yard. Go on'*” (Morrison, 2004, p. 250). This interchange affirms the agency of Denver twice: firstly, Denver is already actively inquiring the voice, asking her “Then what do I do?”, and this is a sign of Denver's increasing ability to seek solutions, not passively accept her circumstances; secondly, Baby Suggs fails to refute the agency of Denver, “there ain't” is not because Denver does not fear, but because she instructs her to do it. This ironic lesson helps Denver to understand that courage is not the lack of fear but the act despite the fear. Her internal “secure base” is starting to reshape her, making her not afraid of breaking the isolationist law put forward by Sethe. This is the revelation that compels her to take a tangible leap to initiate the concluding point in her character development: the act of leaving the porch. The 124 Bluestone Road porch acts as a type of liminal space, a boundary between the known world of trauma and the terrifying new world of the unfamiliar and the unknown community within the spatial economy of the novel. After years of being left behind the yard, Denver is scared of the world on the outside, as he thinks it is a place of death. Instead, Morrison illustrates how deeply this shift plays on the psyche:

"She would have to leave the yard; step off the edge of the world, leave the two behind and go ask somebody for help." (Morrison, 2004, p. 249)

The language that Morrison applies when saying “step off the edge of the world” is a deep metaphor for the worldview of the traumatized child. Denver is a good adherer to a theory of trauma a “flat earth” theorist: she is of the opinion that there is nothing beyond the line of her isolation but a black hole. Leaving the porch would require her to destroy the defensive insecure attachment that she has led her life with. It is a sovereign agent action. Denying her family history by not being a passive victim and by taking the risks of approaching the her-must-grow-



up void to rescue her mother, Denver takes the first step in the Herman safety model: seeking safety in connectedness and not withdrawal.

4.2.2 The Restoration of the Social Bond: Individual Validation and Collective Exorcism

After overcoming the physical boundary, interpersonal trust is restored as the next step in the recovery process. Herman posits that recovery is realized when humanity of the survivor is validated by the others. The initial person Denver meets is Lady Jones, her former teacher. This interaction constitutes a "corrective emotional experience." Denver holds Lady Jones in the same light as she would have been judged by society, to poison her. Rather, she receives a deep maternal sympathy. Morrison recounts this life-changing experience:

"Oh, baby," said Mrs. Jones. "Oh, baby." Denver looked up at her. She did not know it then, but it was the word "baby," said softly and with such kindness, that inaugurated her life in the world as a woman". (Morrison, 2004, p. 254)

This is a climax in the emotional recovery of Denver. The word "baby" spoken with love symbolically revives Denver to the loving childhood she lost due to trauma by Sethe. It substitutes the poison of 124 with the "kindness" of the broader society. By talking to Lady Jones and hearing her, Denver becomes a transformation of a voiceless, traumatized object in the bushes into a speaking subject. She learns that a secure base is never a physical place but instead, it is a structure of human relationships. In addition, the bridge between 124 and the village is enhanced with a food exchange ritual. Upon meeting Lady Jones, the female neighbors had started setting food plates on a tree stump outside the house of Denver, with many of them writing their names on pieces of paper and tying them to the baskets or plates like: "M. Lucille Williams" (Morrison, 2004, p. 255). This does not imply charity but nonverbal communication. Reading the names on the plates back and giving them back, Denver takes part in a silent dialogue, gaining trust after a certain period. Both the food and the image of communal motherhood and it shows Denver that the community is not the predator she had perceived but a provider of life and nourishment.

Finally, Herman's theory of complete healing comes when the community observes the trauma and helps the survivor to absorb it. The individual bravery of Denver elicits a great collective reaction. Empowered by the scream of Denver who called out to her, thirty women in the community who had hitherto been afraid to come anywhere near 124 gather outside the house to send the ghost of Beloved away. Morrison cogitates about this concerted intervention as a reversion to primal, curative solidarity:

"In the beginning there were no words. In the beginning was the sound, and they all knew what that sound sounded like." (Morrison, 2004, p. 265)

This is a mute, mass chorus that symbolizes the final healing of the social fabric. The alienation of the slavery experience and infanticide are too distressing to be captured in words at first (no words). But the collective "sound" denotes that the society sympathizes with and expresses the suffering. This communal sisterhood is put into motion by the daring gesture of



Denver stepping off the porch. This last episode validates the theory Herman put forward: the answer to the crippling effect of inherited trauma is to break up the broken, isolated nuclear family and instead feel the broader, more collective safety of society. This triumph comes out of social reconnection, whose ultimate outcome is not merely the salvaging of the mother of Denver but the actual last appearance of the story of Denver as the healed and truly healed survivor.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper analyzes the psychological development of Denver in *Beloved* using Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1982) as well as Trauma theory (Herman, 2015). Three works of scholars emerge. The first is extreme domestic isolation, which has created Bowlby's "insecure attachment" in two ways: (a) the home as a "hostile sanctuary" where the maternal secure base fails, and (b) psychosomatic withdrawal, including her two-year deafness and retreat into the "emerald closet." These results build up the knowledge base because they go beyond Sethe the main locus of trauma to demonstrate the functioning of insecure attachment in the second generation.

Second, contrary to readings emphasizing Denver's internal resilience (Kono, 2021), her recovery depends fundamentally on external social reconnection through three sequential mechanisms: traversing the porch, bonding with Lady Jones, and mobilizing collective intervention. Each corresponds to Herman's recovery model, demonstrating the novel encodes a clinically recognizable pathway from isolation to reintegration. Third, the dual-theoretical framework facilitates close reading of spatial symbolism (porch as threshold, yard as siege perimeter), character action, and narrative structure, prompting the suggestion that close reading of spatial demarcations can be more systematic than thematic analysis may be when it comes to discerning the psychological condition of characters. The research is limited to only Denver, leaving open how other Morrison characters negotiate attachment trauma. For Morrison scholarship, this makes Denver a participant and not a victim. In trauma research, intergenerational trauma needs to be repaired through intentional reconstruction of social bonds (Ungar & Theron, 2020).

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