JSEL
Journal of Studies in the English Language

Fragmented Identities and Feminist Schizoanalysis: Reimagining the Self in Contemporary American Fiction

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Received April 16, 2025; revised June 1, 2025; accepted June 12, 2025

Abstract

Fragmented identity is not merely a theme in the works of Toni Morrison, Roxane Gay, and Don DeLillo—it is embedded in the very structure of their narratives. This paper examines how fragmentation functions as both theme and form in selected contemporary American fiction. Bringing together Deleuze and Guattari's schizoanalysis with feminist psychoanalytic thought from Kristeva and Irigaray, this study engages with the ways in which literary form becomes a site for negotiating trauma, memory, and dislocation. Using a close textual analysis of *Beloved*, *An Untamed State*, *Difficult Women*, and *White Noise*, the study explores how these narratives challenge the notion of a coherent self. Nonlinear timelines, disjointed syntax, and shifting voices echo the fragmented psyche, where trauma distorts time, language falters, and identity refuses containment. Morrison's haunted maternal bodies, Gay's fractured yet resisting women, and DeLillo's media—ghosted men reveal not a loss of self, but its reassembly through dissonance.

The findings suggest that these texts do not attempt to resolve fragmentation, but rather dwell within it—offering a literary and theoretical map of the disassembled self. Rather than seeking closure or resolution, these texts remain with the broken—where meaning is unstable, but no less urgent. This study contributes to feminist and post—structuralist literary scholarship by demonstrating how schizo—feminist readings illuminate the interplay between narrative form and identity construction in the postmodern era.

Keywords: schizo—feminist reading, fragmented narrative form, trauma and voice, identity, contemporary fiction

In the sprawling landscape of contemporary American fiction, characters rarely arrive whole. They wander through pages fractured and uncertain, pieced together from memories, traumas, and the chaos of modern life. Toni Morrison, Roxane Gay, and Don DeLillo do not seek to restore them. Instead, they reveal the self as a site of collision—where history and media, violence and desire, race and gender fold into one another. *Beloved* breathes in the

haunted past, where enslaved bodies carry a memory too heavy to bear, and identity shatters under the weight of what must not be forgotten (Hirsch, 2012; Morrison, 1987). Gay's women, wounded and wise, move through worlds that disfigure them and demand their silence, yet they speak—with ruptured, deliberate force—through the very fissures their lives have become (Butler, 2016; Gay, 2017). In DeLillo's spectral narratives, language dissolves and personas flit like static on a screen; here, the self is not lost—it was never fixed to begin with (DeLillo, 1985).

The stories these authors tell resist containment. They unfold in broken timelines, in polyphonic voices, in language that stutters and doubles back (Lodge, 1990). Their worlds do not offer clarity, but reflect a deeper, more truthful disarray—the kind that comes when capitalism frays attention, when systemic violence robs coherence, when the body remembers what the mind tries to forget (Hutcheon, 1988, 2015; van der Kolk, 2014).

To wander through these texts with Deleuze and Guattari is to give up the search for the whole and listen instead for the cracks. Schizoanalysis unfastens identity from the old myths of unity and linearity, exposing it as a constellation of impulses and pressures—a desiring—machine caught in the gears of culture (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/2009). Fragmentation here becomes a mode of survival, even resistance (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/2009). Where schizoanalysis maps this terrain, feminist psychoanalysis writes its pulse. Kristeva's abjection lurks in Morrison's ghost—child, in the mother whose boundaries collapse under grief (Kristeva, 1982). Irigaray's writing, split and sensuous, finds rhythm in Gay's refusal of patriarchal syntax, in voices that fracture rather than fuse, that echo "two lips" over one truth (Irigaray, 1985, p. 24). Recent expansions—such as Kolyri's (2020) exploration of the Body Without Organs in narrative trauma and Gherovici and Steinkoler's (2023) transfeminist approach to destabilizing binary gender norms—deepen our reading of these fractured voices.

The weave of these theories—schizoanalysis and feminist thought—brings something alive in these narratives. Not just the characters, but the very language they inhabit, resists legibility. Identity becomes an event, not a possession; a series of becomings, not a final shape. Morrison's maternal bodies, Gay's violated women, DeLillo's spectral men—they are not portraits but echoes, stitched from pain, media, memory, and flesh. Theorists such as Sholtz and Carr (2024) have formally extended schizoanalysis into feminist critique, queering psychoanalysis and interrogating white privilege through literary form. This convergence reveals how fragmentation operates not just as a textual feature, but as an act of political resistance.

What emerges is more than an interpretation. It is a way of listening: to broken syntax, to disjointed lives, to the unfinished, unfinishable project of being. By bringing these thinkers into conversation—by allowing Deleuze,

Guattari, Kristeva, and Irigaray to trail their hands across the same pages — this work does not resolve fragmentation. It lingers in it. It hears in each rupture a refusal to obey the smooth, coherent self demanded by patriarchy, white supremacy, and consumer culture. Braidotti's (2019) posthuman critique amplifies this reading, situating non—unitary identity as both feminist and anti—anthropocentric. And it offers a path forward for reading contemporary fiction—not for answers, but for the questions that fracture leaves behind (Braidotti, 2011, 2013).

Materials and Methods

The voices of Morrison, Gay, and DeLillo each echo from a different corner of American experience, yet all hum with the same fractured tone. This work steps into their worlds not to fix the broken, but to understand what that brokenness reveals. *Beloved* (Morrison, 1987) draws readers into a past that does not stay buried. Sethe's memories bleed into the present, her identity shaped by the ghost of what she endured and what she chose. In Gay's *An Untamed State* (2014) and the piercing vignettes of *Difficult Women* (2017), bodies become battlegrounds. Her women live in fragments—some born from violence, others from race, migration, or the demands of love. DeLillo's *White Noise* (1985), meanwhile, holds up a mirror to a media—drenched world where identity flickers like a television channel—always on, never grounded.

Each text opens a different wound. Morrison traces historical trauma and its echoes in memory. Gay explores what happens when violence splits a self from the inside out. DeLillo surveys a landscape where the self evaporates under advertisements and ambient fear. Together, these works span centuries of fragmentation—across enslavement, diaspora, and consumer excess. The analysis unfolds through these intersections, guided not just by literature but by voices from theory: Cathy Caruth's meditations on trauma (Caruth, 1991, 2016), Jameson's diagnoses of postmodern dislocation (Jameson, 1984, 1991), Baudrillard's imploding realities (Baudrillard, 1994; McHale, 1987).

Walking beside the characters and through the pages are Deleuze and Guattari (1972/2009), whose schizoanalysis unravels the idea of a stable self. They speak of desiring—machines and detours, of identities pulled apart by capitalism's relentless flow and patriarchy's quiet violence. Kristeva (1982) brings the abject into focus—a way to read what resists coherence. Sethe's guilt is not just memory; it is the collapse of borders between life and death, mother and ghost. And Irigaray (1985), with her *écriture féminine*, offers another rhythm—one where Gay's disjointed narratives mirror the body's memory and its refusal to speak in the language of the father.

While many studies adopt either a psychoanalytic or a feminist literary lens in isolation, this study intentionally integrates them through a schizo—feminist reading. This combined approach diverges from classical psychoanalysis (Freud/Lacan) by resisting Oedipal models and embracing fluid identity structures, while also extending feminist theory beyond binary frameworks via multiplicity and embodied disruption.

Reading happens slowly here. Close reading, first. Pausing on the sentences where a character fractures or a narrative loops back on itself. In *Beloved*, that moment on page 23 where voices blur, and Sethe speaks across time (Morrison, 1987). In *White Noise*, where J. A. K. Gladney wears his academic identity like a costume, performing gravitas while slipping into absurdity. Then, the lens widens. Cultural contexts seep in—Baudrillard's simulacra frame the supermarket aisles and TV screens of DeLillo's world (Baudrillard, 1994). The theories tighten around the language: Irigaray's mimicry finds echoes in Gay's prose, Kristeva's abjection in Morrison's grief—haunted women.

Kolyri's (2020) study of the Body Without Organs also informs this reading, particularly in recognizing how non—linear narrative acts as resistance against the "organ—ized" self.

Methodologically, the study proceeds through three key stages:

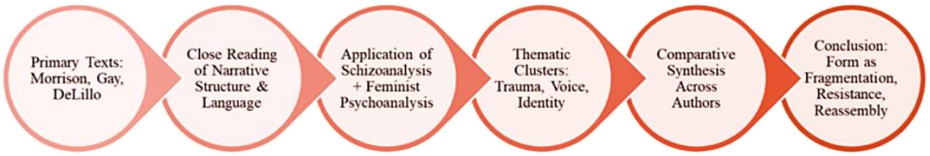
1. Close textual analysis of each primary novel, identifying formal and thematic instances of fragmentation.

2. Theoretical application, where selected concepts from schizoanalysis and feminist psychoanalysis are mapped onto narrative structures and character arcs.

3. Comparative synthesis, reading the three authors in tension and dialogue to reveal how literary form encodes psychological and political disassembly.

Figure 1

Analytical Sequence for the Study of Fragmented Identities in Contemporary American Fiction



Each reading builds toward a conversation. Not between author and critic, but among texts. Morrison's trauma does not contradict DeLillo's disaffection—it deepens it. Gay's diasporic pain speaks to the same rupture that Deleuze and

Guattari map in multiplicities. Together, these voices sketch a field where identity is never singular, never still. Therefore, the work moves—across pages, across disciplines—with care. Not just to analyze, but to trace the fault lines. To read not for resolution, but for what cracks and keeps on echoing.

Results

Toni Morrison: Fragmented Memory and Identity in Beloved

In *Beloved*, Morrison unravels the smooth surface of narrative to reflect a deeper fracture—one etched into the psyches of people haunted by slavery's legacy. Sethe, a mother who escaped enslavement, lives with a guilt so immense it takes shape in the world: her dead daughter returns not just as a ghost but as something more troubling—a living echo of the self she buried to survive (Gibson, 2025). Beloved is not just a haunting. She is the abject, that unassimilable presence Kristeva (1982) describes as the thing that "disturbs identity [and] system" (p. 4). In this house on 124 Bluestone Road, the past does not whisper; it demands embodiment.

Sethe's past cannot be stored neatly in memory. It invades her present, as Morrison's concept of "rememory" suggests. "She steps into [rememories] as if walking into a room" (Morrison, 1987, p. 43)—and the narrative follows suit, refusing chronological comfort. Morrison does not let her characters tell their stories in straight lines (Genette, 1980). She lets them circle, stammer, repeat, forcing the reader to inhabit their mental chaos.

In Part II, voices merge—Sethe, Denver, and Beloved collapse into a collective chant, their selves no longer bounded: "You are mine, You are mine, You are mine" (Morrison, 1987, p. 248). Deleuze and Guattari (1972/2009) might see this as a moment of "desubjectification" (p. 36)—a breakdown of the discrete self into overlapping flows of desire, loss, and need. The novel performs fragmentation linguistically and structurally. When trauma surfaces—especially the murder of Beloved—it arrives in poetic fragments, indirect glances, stories told from multiple, contradictory angles.

The result is not confusion but revelation. This fractured telling mirrors the characters' shattered psyches. One scholar calls *Beloved* a portrait of a "disjointed family" (Rushdy, 1999, 568), and Morrison makes us feel that disjointedness. However, she also leaves room for repair. Healing begins not in isolation but in community. The collective ritual that drives Beloved away is more than exorcism—it is a symbolic reclaiming of memory, a re—assembly of Sethe's fragmented self. Morrison offers no neat conclusions, only a slow, painful possibility: that shattered identities can begin to piece themselves together when witnessed and held.

Roxane Gay: Trauma, Intersectionality, and the Fragmented Self

Gay writes not into metaphor but into the wound itself. In *An Untamed State* (2014), Mireille's identity is split cleanly in two—"Before" and "After." The division is not merely narrative. It is internal. After her kidnapping and brutal assault in Haiti, Mireille survives by splitting off the part of herself that is suffering. The woman who endures the trauma is not the same woman who once smiled in courtrooms or cradled her son. This is dissociation, described in trauma theory as a bifurcated self (Caruth, 2016). Her body survives. Her psyche fragments.

Gay's language reflects this break. Her staccato prose and narrative shifts embody this inner fracture: "She moves through [life] like a ghost" (Gay, 2014, p. 156). The clean—cut identity she once inhabited—lawyer, wife, daughter—is now only partly hers. Mireille is also the woman who lived in a locked room for thirteen days, and those two selves refuse to reconcile. Cultural displacement deepens the split. As a Haitian—American, Mireille stands between two nations, two class positions, two versions of selfhood (Mohanty, 2013). She does not belong fully to either. Bhabha's (1994) idea of the "unhomely" comes alive here—Mireille's very identity vibrates in the space between cultures (p. 9). The "before" version of her identity was already precarious, built atop contradictions that trauma exposes.

Gay's *Difficult Women* (2017) continues the pattern. Her protagonists are women with sharp edges and compartmentalized lives. One wears "toughness like armor" (Gay, 2017, p. 89). Another is polished by day and broken by night. Their identities fracture under patriarchal pressure—expected to be strong yet soft, silent but outspoken. Irigaray (1985) names this: the feminine, she argues, is fragmented when forced to speak in a discourse that denies multiplicity.

However, these women do not vanish into their trauma. Gay's protagonists resist victimhood. Mireille's healing begins not with forgetting, but with voice. Reclaiming her story becomes a way back into herself. Gay has said the same of her own experience—that naming each broken piece is the first step toward living whole (Gay, 2014, 2017). The fragments are not erased. They are acknowledged (Ahmed, 2017).

This is the feminist current that runs through her work. Her characters may be splintered by violence, culture, and expectation, but Gay insists that voice—however halting—can stitch them back together.

Don DeLillo: Postmodern Identity and Schizoanalytic Narratives

In DeLillo's world, the fracture is ambient. It hums through fluorescent supermarket lights, flickers across television screens, crackles in academic

jargon. In *White Noise* (1985), Jack Gladney is a man with a title, a robe, and a made—up middle initial. He constructs "J.A.K. Gladney" to shield himself from mortality, to feel like more than a man. However, the shield is paper—thin. When the "airborne toxic event" ruptures daily life, Jack's carefully constructed identity falters (DeLillo, 1985, pp. 17, 52). Fear seeps in—unfiltered and total. His mind becomes a soundscape of media phrases and brand names, invaded by the language of consumerism. This is Baudrillard's (1994) hyperreality in motion: reality is not disappearing; it is dissolving into signs. DeLillo does not just describe fragmentation—he writes it. His prose jumps from philosophical musings to grocery lists. One sentence might reference Hitler; the next, Pop—Tarts. The white noise is not background. It is internal.

Falling Man (2007), written in the long shadow of 9/11, fractures even further. Memory and trauma distort time. The story flickers between moments, between people, between versions of reality. Keith, a survivor of the Twin Towers, cannot move through time in a straight line. His mind is shaped by rupture, and the novel mimics that disorientation (Kauffman, 2008). DeLillo does not offer closure; he lets readers live in the static. Women in DeLillo's world, like Babette in *White Noise*, often drift into the margins. Their fears take the form of hushed secrets and pills, barely spoken. Irigaray's (1985) idea of women being "off—stage" in patriarchal language finds a home here, where female characters often remain voiceless or peripheral (p. 134). Still, even in silence, their disquiet registers.

What DeLillo captures best is not breakdown, but the condition of living with brokenness. His characters enact schizoanalysis—they are desiring—machines caught in a system that recodes them endlessly (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/2009). There is no stable ego, no firm identity to cling to. The system does not allow it. Late capitalism floods every channel with noise, and DeLillo writes the world from within that flood. Each of these authors steps into fragmentation from a different path—Morrison through the scars of slavery, Gay through trauma and intersectional rupture, DeLillo through media—drenched disintegration. However, all three reach the same conclusion: the self is not whole. It is constructed, broken, reshaped, and often stitched together with narrative itself.

In *Beloved*, fragmentation is a form of survival. Sethe's fractured memories and the ghost of Beloved allow Morrison to show how trauma lives on—not only in minds, but in bodies and homes. The form of the novel mimics the shattered psyche. In Gay's fiction, fragmentation emerges through trauma's brutality and the difficulty of living in—between: between cultures, identities, expectations. But Gay also suggests the possibility of reintegration—not through erasure but through speech, through naming.

DeLillo, meanwhile, offers no balm. His characters drift in the blur of simulation, where identity is performance and narrative itself becomes noise. He does not offer healing. He offers exposure.

Each employs a fractured form that mirrors the thematic ruptures within: multiple perspectives, nonlinear timelines, broken syntax. Their prose makes readers work, asking them to reconstruct meaning from shards (Waugh, 1984). None of them offers a single truth—only fragmented ones. Together, these authors map the landscape of the contemporary self: disjointed, desiring, incomplete. Their narratives resist resolution, offering instead a mosaic of shards through which meaning might be glimpsed.

Discussion

Identity Construction and Narrative Form: A Schizo—Feminist Synthesis

Stories do not just tell us who characters are—they often show us how they fall apart. In the hands of Morrison, Gay, and DeLillo, form itself becomes an extension of identity. These narratives do not unravel by accident; they fracture with purpose. Each disruption—each shift in voice, each tangled timeline, each refusal of clean resolution—echoes a deeper truth: the self, too, is unstable.

Morrison's *Beloved*, Gay's *An Untamed State*, and DeLillo's *White Noise* push against the neat arcs of realist fiction (Brooks, 1984). There is no steady protagonist sailing from beginning to end. There is no stable ground (Lodge, 1977). Instead, we get spirals, ruptures, collisions. Sethe's "rememory" bleeds time, Mireille's trauma splits her into a "before" and "after," and Jack Gladney tries to bury fear beneath an invented name (DeLillo, 1985; Gay, 2014; Morrison, 1987). This is what Deleuze and Guattari called "deterritorialization"—a dismantling of fixed structures so desire and difference can move freely (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/2009, p. 36). However, that movement is not only philosophical. It is political. Morrison and Gay write fragmentation as resistance. They break form because the world broke their characters first. They do not write from the center—they write from the margins. And they do so in a way that Irigaray (1985) would call *écriture féminine*: writing that flows without closure, that fragments as a way of surviving.

Sethe's voice does not follow a line—it swirls, crashes, pauses. Her story is not one woman's—it belongs to Denver, to Beloved, to the chorus of memory that will not go silent. When their voices blend into a chant—"You are mine, you are mine"—they are not losing individuality. They are showing how deeply trauma fuses lives together (Morrison, 1987, p. 248). Deleuze and Guattari (1972/2009) saw this kind of multiplicity not as disorder, but as possibility.

Gay's Mireille, split by violence, speaks in fragments because her mind cannot do otherwise. Her story flips between timelines and perspectives — not to

confuse, but to reveal how survival distorts time. The form mirrors the psyche. And the refusal to smooth things over is a feminist gesture, too—a refusal to cater to the comforts of coherence. Even DeLillo, whose work comes from a different place, takes up the same project. Jack Gladney's persona — J. A. K.— is armor, language built to protect from the terror of death (DeLillo, 1985). But language fails him. So does theory. So does culture. What remains is a man surrounded by noise, trying to speak above it. And as he crumbles, so does the myth of the unified, rational, white male subject.

Recent scholarship, such as Schmidt (2022), reveals how digital space transforms identity into a fluid, algorithmically influenced construct (Clough, 2018). In this light, DeLillo's Jack becomes not just a postmodern figure, but a proto—digital subject—his sense of self shaped by consumer data, mediated emotion, and news cycles. This aligns with Hur's (2024) critique of necropolitics, where constant exposure to digital death, disaster, and commodified fear reconfigures trauma into passive scrolling and fragmented presence. All three authors write selves that are constructed and deconstructed through narrative. They show us not identity as essence, but identity as performance, assemblage, reaction. And the texts themselves—polyvocal, recursive, chaotic—become mirrors of that instability.

Negotiating Fragmentation: Linguistic, Psychological, and Socio—Political Dimensions Language

When experience becomes too much for the body to carry, language stumbles. Such is the case in all three of these works. Morrison's syntax collapses into rhythm when Beloved's death surfaces. Punctuation disappears. Grammar breaks. Meaning comes through sound, repetition, silence (Morrison, 1987). Kristeva (1982) might call this the semiotic returning—the raw, unspeakable body trying to speak. Gay uses staccato to similar effect. Mireille says, "I am two women" (Gay, 2014, p. 156), and the sentence lands like a cut. Her words do not flow. They jab. She's not explaining—she's surviving. In DeLillo's world, language does not even belong to the speaker. His characters echo headlines, product names, weather reports. Jack does not think—he absorbs. Yet, each of them—Sethe, Mireille, Jack—tries to reclaim voice. Sethe tells her story to the community. Mireille eventually breaks her silence. Jack jokes, intellectualizes, scrapes together fragments of humor and thought to name his fear. Language hurts. But it also stitches.

The Mind

Fragmentation does not stay on the page. It cuts into the mind. Sethe is never just one person—she is a mother, a fugitive, a wound. Her emotions swing

wide: numbness, guilt, tenderness, rage. When Beloved returns, Sethe pours herself into the past. It almost destroys her. Only when the community steps in does healing begin. Mireille travels her own arc—from shutting down to breaking open. Gay tracks her across the stages of trauma recovery: from dissociation to testimony to cautious reconnection (Caruth, 2016; Felman & Laub, 2014)). Her identity does not return to what it was—it reshapes around the break.

Jack's arc is subtler, but no less fractured. He begins as a man wrapped in titles. He ends aware of his own mortality, stripped of certainty. The fear does not vanish. But he keeps going. He watches his children buy cereal. He lets silence in. Each character moves. None of them remains shattered. And the movements happen in relation: to community, to family, to another voice willing to listen.

The World

No fracture exists in a vacuum. Sethe is torn because slavery tore families apart, erased names, made killing a child seem like the only protection left. Mireille's trauma is not just personal—it is postcolonial, gendered, systemic. She's punished not just for being a woman, but for being a rich one in a poor nation, a Haitian—American trying to live in both places at once (Crenshaw, 1991).

Jack's world is flattened by capitalism. His self is shaped by what he consumes: media, medication, distraction. Even his dread is a product (Osteen, 2000). In *Mao II*, DeLillo shows us masses where individuality disappears (Walker, 1999). In *Falling Man*, collective trauma ruptures narrative time itself. Yet these texts do not settle for diagnosis. They search. Sethe's community gathers to expel Beloved. Mireille's father tells her Haitian stories. Jack, for all his irony, still finds a kind of comfort in watching his family move through a supermarket. These are not resolutions. But they are gestures—toward meaning, toward others, toward a future shaped by something more than fracture.

Reading across these texts reveals how similar formal strategies, broken syntax, nonlinear timelines, and disrupted voice carry distinct political and psychological loads. Morrison's disjunction speaks to collective historical trauma; Gay's reflects intimate violence and diasporic duality; DeLillo's critiques capitalist abstraction and cultural detachment. While all three fracture narrative, they do so from different margins—historical, gendered, digital—and with different stakes. This comparative frame underscores the necessity of context when interpreting fragmented form.

Implications for Feminist and Post—Structuralist Literary Scholarship

What happens when theory meets story? When the sharp tools of schizoanalysis and feminist critique are placed in the hands of novelists? These works offer a glimpse.

First, the pairing itself—Deleuze and Guattari with Irigaray and Kristeva—creates more than a theoretical alliance. It creates a method for reading, one that sees the self not as singular, but as a process. One that sees form not as neutral, but as political. As Buchanan (2021) notes, such readings enact what he calls 'applied schizoanalysis,' where theory meets lived trauma through narrative form.

Morrison, in particular, pushes schizoanalysis beyond its focus on individuals. Her stories are held together not just by personal desire, but by collective memory. She offers a vision of healing that is relational, spiritual, historical. Gay's structural choices do the same: her fragmentation is not theoretical—it is visceral. Her work forces feminist theory to contend with violence not just as theme, but as texture.

DeLillo, though less anchored in feminist discourse, still opens space for critique. His men are no longer monoliths. Their voices are interrupted. Their certainties unravel. Reading him through a feminist lens—does not flatten his work—it complicates it. It reminds us that even the center can break. Gherovici and Steinkoler (2023) expand this reading, showing how trauma literature like Gay's destabilizes binary gender norms through structural fracture.

This matters. Too often, postmodern or post—structuralist readings treat fragmentation as abstract. However, these texts say otherwise. Sethe's trauma is not theoretical. Mireille's pain is not metaphoric. The rupture is real. And it is shaped by history, by race, by gender. Jack's fragmentation may share the same formal qualities—but its cause, its context, its consequence are not the same.

This is what this schizo—feminist reading asserts on: that fragmentation is lived. That it is different for everyone. That the same form—broken syntax, nonlinear time—can carry entirely different weights depending on who speaks, and why.

These authors do not stop at fracture. They ask what comes next. What voice grows in the silence. What kind of identity can be made not in spite of brokenness, but because of it.

In this way, the theory bends. It grows. Morrison's work introduces empathy and community into a framework that was once dominated by flow and code. Braidotti (2019) builds on this by linking non—unitary subjectivity with posthuman, anti—anthropocentric resistance—an insight visible in Morrison's and Gay's embodied ruptures. Gay insists that voice, not just desire,

drives survival. DeLillo reminds us that whiteness and masculinity, too, are constructed—and deconstructed—by language.

Literature does not just reflect fragmentation. It shapes how we live with it. These authors give us tools—not to fix, but to feel. Not to simplify, but to carry complexity forward. And in that, they invite scholarship to follow. Not to tidy things up, but to read more deeply into what breaks—and what might be built from the pieces. Sholtz and Carr (2024) insist that feminist schizoanalysis requires us to read rupture not only as loss, but as a means to critique whiteness, gender performance, and narrative authority itself.

Conclusion

When this journey began, the idea was simple: to understand what happens when the self breaks apart in literature—and what that breaking might tell us about identity, power, and storytelling itself. But as we moved through the voices of Morrison, Gay, and DeLillo, the inquiry deepened. Fragmentation, it turned out, was not just a theme tucked into their pages. It was the form. It was the texture of their language. It was the way their characters think, speak, and remember. The broken self was not a conclusion. It was a beginning.

The groundwork for this study was laid early: bringing together feminist theory and schizoanalysis to explore contemporary fiction through a lens that could hold complexity without rushing to resolve it. From Deleuze and Guattari's vision of fluid, decentered subjectivity (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/2009) to Kristeva's focus on the body's disruptive relationship to language (Kristeva, 1982), and Irigaray's insistence on multiplicity and difference (Irigaray, 1985), the theoretical frame was designed not to tame fragmentation, but to listen to it. Each of the authors we followed—Morrison, Gay, and DeLillo — offered their own way of writing the self in pieces. What emerged was not disorder for its own sake, but a literary logic of survival and resistance.

This framework constitutes a distinct contribution: a schizo—feminist methodology that attends to identity as both constructed and embodied, mapping how fragmentation operates across race, gender, and digital culture. By aligning schizoanalytic flows with feminist specificity, the study bridges abstract theory and lived trauma, particularly in contemporary literature.

One of the central insights came from watching how identity and narrative form intertwine. These novels did not just describe fragmented selves—they built them, sentence by sentence. Morrison's *Beloved* assembled Sethe's identity out of memory, myth, and communal grief (Morrison, 1987). Gay's *An Untamed State* refused to offer linear healing, instead tracing Mireille's splintered psyche through rupture and return (Gay, 2014). And DeLillo's *White Noise* let Jack Gladney construct an identity out of cultural detritus—only to watch it collapse under the weight of death and advertising (DeLillo,

1985). Across these texts, form became content. Nonlinearity, polyphony, and syntactic breakdown were not literary flourishes—they were methods of revealing what it feels like to live inside a fractured self.

Fragmentation also revealed itself as a layered experience—linguistic, psychological, and political, all at once. The prose faltered when trauma came too close. Sentences broke. Grammar collapsed. Voices overlapped. These linguistic ruptures gave shape to psychic ones. Sethe's grief refused chronology. Mireille's dissociation took over her voice. Jack's words echoed with static. But none of this happened in isolation. Behind every personal shatter was a larger system: slavery, patriarchy, capitalism, media. The novels remind us that identity does not fall apart alone — it is pushed.

Morrison's narrative offered a way forward—through community, through memory, through shared ritual (Morrison, 1987). Gay's Mireille began to rebuild her voice, not in spite of trauma, but by speaking from within it (Gay, 2014). DeLillo's characters did not find resolution, but they found rhythm—familiar patterns of domestic life, irony, and repetition that made their chaos feel, if not stable, at least bearable (DeLillo, 1985). In each case, language became both the site of fracture and the tool of repair.

But beyond the readings themselves, this study did something more—it demonstrated what happens when critical frameworks begin to speak to each other. Feminist theory and schizoanalysis, often kept in separate corners, came together here not for fusion, but for dialogue. Schizoanalysis brought a way of thinking about movement, rupture, and desire (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/2009). Feminism brought embodiment, voice, and social critique (Irigaray, 1985; Kristeva, 1982). Where Deleuze and Guattari map the flows of identity, Morrison reminds us those flows are soaked in memory. Where they offer escape routes from power, Gay shows how trauma and history stay with us, even as we move.

This methodological synthesis—what Sholtz and Carr (2024) call "feminist schizoanalysis"—is still emergent in literary criticism. This study offers one of its early literary applications, demonstrating how narrative form interacts with embodied fragmentation across feminist and posthuman terrains.

This critical conversation does not stay in the text. It offers a toolkit. Future scholars might turn this lens on digital narratives, on speculative fiction, on memoirs and autofiction—anywhere identity is being pulled apart and patched back together. What happens to the fragmented self when it is staged on a screen? How does voice fracture differently across language, class, or nation? These are questions that open outward from this study, not to finalize answers, but to invite further mapping.

In the end, what these texts remind us is that fragmentation is not the end of identity—it is its terrain. The self, in these stories, is always provisional. Always stitched together from memory, desire, culture, trauma, resistance.

Yet — there is a self. There is survival. There is voice. Literature captures that paradox better than theory often can. It does not explain fragmentation. It lets us feel it. It gives us the disjointed syntax of grief, the silence after assault, the strange comfort of watching children buy cereal under fluorescent light. It does not offer solutions. It offers presence. This study, too, resists resolution. However, it does affirm something: that literature, when read with the tools of both feminist critique and schizoanalytic thought, becomes more than a mirror. It becomes a map. A map of what breaks us. And of what we might yet become—when we gather the fragments and begin, once again, to speak.

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