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Broken Landscapes: Eco-Trauma in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and *Beloved*

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Abstract:

Eco-trauma refers to the emotional, psychological and cultural impact of environmental degradation, especially on subaltern groups. This paper explores how Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and *The Bluest Eye* show not only psychological, physical and systemic trauma of racism but also environmental trauma. In *The Bluest Eye*, the failure of marigolds to bloom demonstrates Pecola Breedlove's emotional breakdown, while in *Beloved*, 124 Bluestone Road is a possessed and disquieting place, where the trauma of slavery has made people numb. They are unable to feel, and even experience their surroundings. Drawing on eco-critical theory, trauma studies, and Black environmental perspectives—particularly the work of Cathy Caruth, Anissa Wardi, and Paola Nardi this paper examines how Morrison positions nature as a witness to historical trauma. Her narratives reveal how environmental degradation and alienation from the land are inextricably linked to the deep emotional and historical wounds borne by her Black characters.

Keywords: Trauma Theory, Eco trauma, Race, Ecology.

Introduction

Toni Morrison, is a Nobel and Pulitzer Prize-winning writer and is widely regarded as one of the most influential African-American women writers of the twentieth century. For her, writing is a liberating tool and she seeks to produce literature which is irrevocably and unequivocally black. Morrison explores her own identity as a black woman, values her marginalized existence and promotes the idea of a strong, resilient black community. Multiple forces informed the development of Morrison's literary sensibility, mostly African American folklore, which has been the basis for magic and mysticism which pervades her fiction. Morrison's work very often explores the intersections of memory, history, race, class gender and identity. Known for her musical prose, and realistic depictions of Black life, her novels such as *Beloved*, *Song of Solomon*, and *The Bluest Eye*, are centered around the experiences of Black women. They also depict the idea of sisterhood and the importance of Black communities. She often delves into inherited trauma, repressed histories, and the resilience of her characters. While her contributions to African American literature and trauma studies are well recognised, her treatment of the natural world as an active presence in her stories has received comparatively less critical attention. This paper takes up that understudied area by examining Morrison's ecological imagination through the lens of eco-trauma. In Morrison's fictional universe, trauma transcends the boundaries of individual psyche, permeating the physical and environmental landscapes. It is manifest in the soil the characters tread upon, the charged spatial settings they occupy and the distorted cycles of the seasons..

However, a meaningful engagement with eco-trauma necessitates an initial consideration of Cathy Caruth's conceptualization and theorization of trauma. Caruth talks about belatedness of trauma in *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), where she describes trauma "as an overwhelming experience of

sudden and catastrophic events in which response to the event occurs in the often delayed, and uncontrolled repetitive occurrences of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomenon” (Caruth 181). She argues that individuals do not fully grasp trauma at the moment it occurs. It is registered unconsciously and resurfaces later in incomplete or delayed ways, through flashbacks, repetition, or silences. This “belatedness” makes trauma difficult to communicate and process. Trauma is therefore not just a past event, but a wound that festers and continues to return, lodged in the unconscious zone of the brain. This can be seen especially in *Beloved* with Sethe’s rememory haunting her, as she remembers the catastrophic event in bits and pieces, mostly repressing the central event of the infanticide. Similarly, in *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola doesn’t recount her trauma directly, rather, the trauma reaffirms itself through her fragmented identity and psychosis. She believes she has attained the blue eyes she longs for, reflecting not only her internalised racism but also her mental disintegration. This fantasy is the traumatic event resurfacing in symbolic, distorted form, exactly how Caruth describes trauma’s return.

Caruth’s essay also highlights the difficulty of signifying trauma linguistically. Because the traumatic event is not fully experienced at the moment it occurs, it resists expression in conventional narrative forms, resulting in a breakdown of language. This is seen in *The Bluest Eye*, where Morrison signals the breakdown of language and narrative coherence from the very beginning of the novel, through the complete twisting of the Dick-and-Jane primer, a symbol of standard white, middle-class American life. The repetition and gradual removal of punctuation and spacing in these chapter headings indicate the complete disintegration of Pecola’s psyche, mirroring what Cathy Caruth identifies as trauma’s disruption of temporal rhythm and clear speech. The corrupted primer becomes not just a literary device but a formal enactment of trauma’s impact on language itself.

In *Beloved*, the breakdown of language serves as a structural and thematic enactment of trauma. Sethe, who suffers the trauma of slavery and infanticide, is numb and unable to communicate her past in coherent or logical language. Her speech is marked by repetition, hesitation, and circling around the subject. This is because language cannot adequately explain the act of infanticide. When Beloved returns, as the ghost who is the physical reincarnation of the dead baby, the “belatedness of memory” dynamic plays out in Sethe’s compulsive need to explain herself to Beloved.

The arrival of Beloved, a ghost and physical embodiment of repressed memory, further fragments language and time in the narrative. Beloved’s monologue in Part II, devoid of punctuation and conventional grammar—“I am Beloved and she is mine”—epitomises Caruth’s notion of trauma disrupting narrative structure and speech (Morrison, *Beloved* 210). The incoherence of Beloved’s voice echoes Caruth’s idea that trauma speaks not through factual recounting, but through ruptures in language, silence, and symbolic expression. Morrison uses broken and disconnected language not just to show trauma, but to demonstrate how confusing and repetitive it can feel.

This breakdown of language, memory and history as seen through Caruth’s trauma theory, gains additional depth, when understood through the perspective of eco-trauma, specifically theorised in the works of scholars like Paola Nardi and Anissa Janine Wardi. Eco-trauma refers to the psychological, cultural, and disturbing impact of environmental destruction, coerced separation from land, and the disruption of natural rhythms, particularly as experienced by marginalised communities. In Black literature, eco-trauma frequently functions through, tropes of broken seasons, poisoned soil, or forgotten landscapes, demonstrating a grief that is spatial and temporal. This paper will undertake a close study of *The Bluest Eye* and *Beloved*.

Kimberly N. Ruffin, in *Black on Earth: African American Ecoliterary Traditions*, argues that the African American relationship with the environment has been historically complex, shaped by both exploitation and resistance. Her concept of "ecoliterary traditions" centres Black ecological consciousness not just around pastoral beauty or environmentalism, but around the traumas of slavery, displacement, and systemic exclusion from land ownership and environmental agency.

Eco Trauma in *The Bluest Eye* and *Beloved*

The Bluest Eye (1970) is Toni Morrison's debut novel, set in 1940s Ohio, which explores the themes of racism and its internalisation through the story of a young Black girl, Pecola Breedlove. Pecola grows up in a deeply dysfunctional family and internalises society's idealised fantasy of white beauty, particularly blue eyes and fair skin as the ultimate standard of worth. Morrison aligns this painful narrative with the Dick and Jane primer, a repetitive textual motif that parodies the perfect visualisation of the white American family. Initially it is presented with proper punctuation and spacing, but the primer gets distorted over time: "Here is the house. It is green and white. It has a red door. It is very pretty. Here is the family. Mother, Father, Dick, and Jane live in the green-and-white house. They are very happy" (Morrison 1). However, the last iteration are gasping, unpunctuated lines that make no sense "Here is the house it is green and white it has a..." suggesting a disintegration not only of language but also of meaning, and structure. Morrison uses the disassembling syntax of the primer to demonstrate the psychological breakdown and systemic disorder within the Black community including absorbed prejudice. The ideals of the primer are unreachable to them and entirely distant to Pecola. Through this device, Morrison critiques the myth of the American Dream and reveals a twisted world where even foundational narratives like childhood primers become complicit in exclusion and trauma.

As a result Pecola feels “invisible” in the eyes of the community because of her race, class, gender and appearance. Her experience of repetitive abuse and neglect, especially by her parents, intensifies her desire for blue eyes. This is symbolic of her desperate yearning to be seen, valued, and loved. Her mother, Pauline Breedlove, is one of the earliest figures who contributes to this erasure. Instead of nurturing her daughter, Pauline, a “mammy” figure bestows love on the white girl of the Fisher family, where she works. When Pecola accidentally spills hot pie in the kitchen of the white family, Pauline consoles the little white girl and directs violence towards Pecola. This act not only communicates her misdirected rage but also a refusal to see Pecola as worthy of protection or maternal love. This moment captures the brutal emotional fissure between mother and daughter and affirms for Pecola that even her mother cannot validate her presence in the world.

Maureen Peal, a mulatto in the novel, temporarily befriends Pecola, only to reject her later, reflects the damaging internal hierarchies within the Black community. Maureen weaponises her closeness to being white, flaunting her privilege while ridiculing Pecola's dark skin and “ugliness.” Her cruelty reinforces the social narrative that lighter skin is equal to superiority. Similarly, Geraldine, a middle-class Black woman consumed by self-hatred, projects her own racial prejudice onto children like Pecola.

Narrated in part by Claudia MacTeer, a more rebellious and self-aware Black girl, who dissects the white dolls given to her as a Christmas present wondering “what made people look at them and say, ‘Awww,’ but not for me?” (Morrison *The Bluest Eye*, 20). The novel demonstrates how systemic racism, sexism, classism, colourism, and community silence contribute to Pecola's descent into madness. Morrison uses a disjointed narrative, symbolism, and shifting perspectives to convey the collective impact of trauma. Pauline, Maureen, and Geraldine each serve as a lens

through which Pecola's invisibility is revealed. The novel offers her no refuge or affirmation only an unbroken sequence of rejections.

Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* is often read as a story of ingrained racism and the psychological crumbling of a young Black girl. However, scholars like Paola Nardi and Rob Nixon extend the interpretive field by entrenching the novel within eco-critical frameworks that attend to the intersection of trauma and the environment. Through this lens, the failure of marigolds to bloom, the barrenness of the soil, and the twistedness of spring are not incidental but symptomatic of a more profound ecological trauma that is tied to racism, community neglect, and historical erasure. By presenting the environment as both a witness to and participant in human suffering, Morrison situates trauma not only in bodies and psyches but also in spaces; natural, social, and symbolic.

Further, Paola Nardi and Anissa Wardi extend trauma studies into the environmental area, opining that trauma is not only psychic but also ecological. It affects and gets reflected in the world of nature. Nardi, in her analysis of *The Bluest Eye*, suggests that the failure of the marigolds to bloom, the infertility of the soil in the novel is not merely a metaphor for Pecola's descent into madness, the death of her child but an actualisation of eco-trauma, where the land becomes a witness to all the harrowing events in the novel. The environment is not only a witness to, but also a participant in human suffering.

"There were no marigolds in the fall of 1941" (Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* 5). The narrator opens the story with this stark declaration which links environmental infertility to emotional collapse, as Pecola Breedlove's psychological disintegration is echoed in the unyielding soil around her. Claudia and Frieda, who plant the seeds with hope that Pecola's baby might live, are forced to confront the possibility that it is not their effort but the land and the world itself that is barren and

sterile. Paola Nardi, in her eco-critical reading of *The Bluest Eye*, suggests that the novel “dramatises the death of natural cycles” and constructs an environment that “mirrors the rupture of social and psychic continuities” (Nardi 72).

Community occupies a central place in Morrison's fiction, and in *The Bluest Eye*, it functions as a non-nurturing force, making a young girl the scapegoat for its own self-hatred. The failure of the community to nurture Pecola shows that it is barren and life-negating. “It never occurred to either of us that the earth itself might have been unyielding” (Morrison *The Bluest Eye*, 5) This failure to bloom becomes a metaphor for the failure of a society that cannot and will not nurture its most vulnerable member, a young girl on the threshold of teenage hood.

In *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison powerfully inverts the symbolic meaning of seasons. Spring, a season typically associated with rebirth, fecundity and happiness is associated with extreme violence, treachery and emotional decay. Rather than signalling hope, spring in Pecola's world brings in acts of suffering that fragment bodies and psyches. Claudia MacTeer, introduces this reversal at the beginning of the novel: “The marigolds did not sprout. Their seeds shrivelled and died; her baby too” (Morrison 5).

The aridity of nature echoes the psychic numbness and ethical decay of the community, foreshadowing the disaster that awaits Pecola and those around her. In Claudia's experience, spring does not bring freedom but punishment. She recalls, “There was a time when you let the wind hurt your face... Now you held your breath, and tried to separate the noises from the wind” (Morrison 97). The natural world, rather than being a safe haven becomes culpable in the violence. Spring brings “beatings” not rejuvenation. “The newness of the season was always offset by the certainty

of punishment. Spring for me meant ‘beatings’” (Morrison 97). In Morrison’s narrative, spring becomes a ritual of suffering.

The discord deepens with the molestation of Frieda, Claudia’s sister. This event occurs in spring, the very season that should protect innocence and foster childhood. Instead, Frieda is assaulted by Henry Washington, an ostensibly harmless boarder. The violation is not merely physical but systemic, as adults fail to protect or even believe the children. “I had never heard my sister cry like that. She didn't scream, she didn't shout. She just let herself cry like someone who had given up” (Morrison 106). However, Frieda’s family is tough but nurturing as her father reacts with immediate and violent outrage against the culprit. Nevertheless, spring remains a season of betrayal.

Pecola’s own ruin ends in the most violent event of all: her rape by her father, Cholly, which impregnates her and pushes her outside the community literally and symbolically, on the fringes of life. This horrific act occurs during the supposed season of life, further sullyng any symbolic promise spring might hold. Morrison’s prose becomes disjointed and hallucinatory, mirroring Pecola’s own disassociation. “The blood of her wound left the toilet full” (Morrison 161). Cholly, inebriated and destroyed by his own history of shame and pain, becomes the agent of generational trauma. He is “dangerously free,” Morrison notes, having lost all regard for structure, time, and morality (Morrison *The Bluest Eye* 161). The rape is not an isolated event but a culmination of societal failure ,springs ultimate irony.

Meanwhile, autumn and winter are also distorted seasons, heightening the ecological trauma faced by characters, especially Pecola. Autumn is the season of ecological decay, when marigolds do not bloom and winter is the season of erasure, of Pecola’s invisibility to the community. The weather

is cold and the community is cold too. Pecola's encounter with the shopkeeper Mr. Yacobowski is a case in point. He simply refuses to "see" her despite her repeated attempts to speak to him, one of the first instances of "invisibility". "He does not see her, because for him there is nothing to see" (Morrison 48). The novel's twisted seasons reflect an ecological trauma in which the very rhythms of nature are distorted by human cruelty.

Twisted seasons, infertility of the soil and decay of flowers are all signs of ecological trauma reflecting the erasure of Black lives, rooted in racism. Nardi opines that land suffers a wound along with the characters. The marigolds, often dismissed by critics as a simple symbol of lost hope, are for Nardi "witnesses" to a larger pattern of violence. Their inability to bloom becomes an act of resistance or perhaps despair on the part of the earth itself. They are, in Nardi's words, "mute co-sufferers," not only reflecting the psychological damage of Pecola, but embodying a natural world rendered barren by social neglect (Nardi 72).

Anissa Janine Wardi, in *Toni Morrison and the Natural World: An Ecology of Color* (2011), expands the discourse on eco-trauma by examining how African American literature reclaims ecological spaces as sites of both memory and resistance. She argues that for African American writers, the natural world is not a neutral backdrop but a "repository of trauma and collective grief" (Wardi 48). In particular, she highlights how Morrison, Zora Neale Hurston, and other African American women writers look at land as a personified witness to slavery, separation, fragmentation and systemic dispossession.

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) set in post-Civil War Ohio, follows the story of Sethe, a formerly enslaved woman haunted psychologically by the trauma of slavery. The novel opens at 124 Bluestone Road, a house inhabited by Sethe, her daughter Denver, and the angry ghost of Sethe's

dead infant. Through a non-linear narrative, it is revealed that eighteen years earlier, Sethe escaped from the plantation known as Sweet Home, run by Mr. Garner, and found refuge at 124 Bluestone Road, the home of her mother-in-law, Baby Suggs. For twenty eight days she experienced freedom, love of her children and a close relationship with the community, until the arrival of the slave catchers. In a desperate attempt to keep her daughter from being returned to slavery, Sethe killed the child. This grotesque domestic equilibrium is disrupted by the arrival of Paul D, one of the Sweet Home men, revealing that despite Mr. Garner's ostensibly benevolent approach to slavery, Sweet Home, a plantation farm was neither truly "sweet" nor a "home." Paul D exorcises the ghost, after which a mysterious young woman named Beloved arrives, whose age and demeanor suggest that she is the reincarnation of Sethe's murdered daughter. Through Beloved's presence, Morrison forces Sethe, and the reader to face suppressed memories of violence, loss, and overpowering guilt. Told through shifting perspectives and musical prose, *Beloved* explores the lingering psychological and communal wounds of slavery. Wardi builds on trauma theory by linking historical violence and ecological space in *Beloved*.

Significantly, Morrison situates this trauma within natural and ecological imagery. The trees of Sweet Home, the Ohio River, across which Sethe escapes, the Clearing where Baby Suggs conducts healing rituals, and the haunted house that whimpers with unspoken memory of a "rebuked" ghost. Therefore, *Beloved* becomes a story not only about individual survival but about how landscapes absorb, reflect, and preserve historical violence, making it a powerful site for exploring eco-trauma. Sethe's trauma is not only social and psychological, but ecological. Her breast milk, intended to nourish her children, is stolen by white men through an act of mammary rape. Her body becomes a site where white men have inscribed their patriarchal discourse, most visibly in the form of scars on her back, named by Amy Denver as a chokecherry tree. Even trees,

typically symbols of growth, are distorted into instruments of control. "It's a tree Lu. A chokecherry tree. See here's the trunk-it's red and split wide open...You got a mighty lot of branches. Leaves too." (Morrison, *Beloved* 93). In Wardi's reading, Morrison's natural imagery becomes "a form of mnemonic scar tissue" (Wardi 51), signaling that nature is not neutral but encoded with violence. It fuses the ecological with the corporeal, suggesting that the body, like land, carries scars across generations. (Wardi 54). Thus, the tree on Sethe's back is also her family tree because it links three generations of scarred women together. Sethe rarely articulates the ghastly event that led to the scars, instead the chokecherry tree becomes a somatic inscription of her unprocessed trauma, reappearing each time her past is remembered or reinscribed.

If *The Bluest Eye* offers a portrait of ecological silence and abandonment, *Beloved* provides an inversion of a landscape that refuses to forget. To begin with, 124 Bluestone Road is not just a haunted house; it is a space of grief, where both personal and historical trauma live in the walls, the air, and the land itself. "124 was spiteful. Full of a baby's venom. The women in the house knew it and so did the children" (Morrison, *Beloved* 3) The house creaks and quivers and throws things and behaves not as a stagnant structure but as a character filled with past grief.

Wardi interprets the haunted quality of the house and its surrounding land as evidence of trauma that is not only remembered by people but also stored in a place (Wardi 48). This supports an understanding of eco-trauma where terrains and spaces carry the psychic remnants of past violence, and where both the human body and the environment function as archival sites of unspoken historical trauma. When Paul D asks Denver about the ghost, she responds by saying that it was "Rebuked. Lonely and rebuked". (Morrison, *Beloved*, 16). This suggests a shift in the ecological atmosphere of the house, from one of haunting to perturbed calm. Morrison suggests

that the “rebuking” of the ghost emerges as a powerful metaphor for the continual negotiation between space and memory, wherein the once “spiteful” house, steeped in grief, undergoes a gradual transformation.

The fact that such spiritual conflict is felt as a shift in the house’s physical and emotional climate buttresses Anissa Wardi’s argument that trauma is “stored in place,” turning domestic spaces into an archive of loss. The haunted environment of 124 thus becomes central to Morrison’s exploration of eco-trauma because the ghost does not merely haunt, it changes the vitality of the house.

Further, Morrison’s concept of rememory, wherein memories exist independently in places and can be stumbled upon by anyone, underscores the idea that trauma lives in landscapes.

“ I was talking about time. It’s so hard for me to believe in it. Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay. I used to think it was my rememory....But it’s not. Places. Places are still there....’Can other people see it?’ asked Denver. Oh yes...Where I was before I came here that place is real....The picture is still there and what’s more if you go there-you who never was there-if you go there and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again...Because even though it’s all over-over and done with it’s going to always be there waiting for you”. (Morrison *Beloved* 43-44)

This is in sync with Cathy Caruth’s trauma theory, which emphasises the belated, fragmented and disjointed nature of traumatic experience. Trauma, according to Caruth, “is not locatable in the simple violence of the event itself but in the way it is experienced belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it” (Caruth 4). In *Beloved*, this repetition is not merely psychic it is spatial. Sethe cannot leave 124 because 124 holds her. Her inability to see colours is

also a part of this ecological trauma. She looks at the dawn every day, yet fails to notice its colour. She is numb because of her ordeal. "Every day she saw the dawn but never acknowledged or remarked its colour" (Morrison *Beloved* 47)

One of the most graphic images of eco-trauma in *Beloved*, aligned with Wardi's theory, is seen through Paul D's metaphor of the "tobacco tin" a closed, rusted, container lodged in his chest, where he has buried memories of the past that are too painful to confront. His heart is not described as a living, beating organ, but rather as a tobacco tin lodged in his chest. When Beloved moves him from Sethe's bed, finally throwing him outside the house, the landscape parallels his trauma. After Beloved's arrival, Paul D begins to confront suppressed memories, including the traumatic image of himself chained with a bit in his mouth, watching a rooster named Mister walk free; "Mister was allowed to be and stay what he was. But I wasn't allowed to be and stay what I was" (Morrison *Beloved* 86) At this moment, Sweet Home the plantation farm itself becomes an ecology of humiliation, where even the natural world seems to support human bondage .

While *Beloved* is brimming with trauma and loss, it also presents momentary glimpses of ecological healing most significantly in Baby Suggs' rituals in the Clearing. This patch of forest becomes a rare sacred space where Black bodies, so often brutalized by the slavery, can reclaim momentary agency. Baby Suggs uses the call and response pattern and invites the community to come together to dance, laugh and cry in this open space. She invites the community to "love their flesh," because "it was the only thing they owned" (Morrison *Beloved* 103). Baby Suggs earns the title, Baby Suggs Holy, an unlicensed preacher who rejects rigid Church definitions. The Clearing briefly halts the harshness of the outside world and retrieves the natural environment as a site of

collective healing. Wardi's opines "this is a counter-ecology, a space where memory and embodiment are not sites of pain alone but also of radical Black self-recognition." (Wardi 49)

However, even this landscape is not safe from eco-trauma. After the horrific act of at 124, Baby Suggs takes to her bed and becomes a recluse, retreating from the world and abandoning the Clearing. The space that once offered ecological and emotional empathy becomes another spectral absence in the landscape. This reinforces Wardi's argument that trauma is spatially embedded and that environments once filled with life can become haunted by their own lost potential (Wardi 47). The Clearing, once a ritual space of ecological healing, thus becomes a symbol of ecological withdrawal. As Wardi notes, "the environment in *Beloved* does not simply reflect trauma; it embodies, enforces, and eventually succumbs to it" (Wardi 50)

Environmental isolation further increases as seasonal cycles break down. Snow becomes a barrier which cuts off the women from the outside world after Paul D leaves: "When Sethe locked the door, the women inside were free at last to be what they liked, see whatever they saw and say whatever was in their minds" (Morrison *Beloved* 155) During the long, harsh winter, 124 is enveloped, cut off from the rest of the world. This geographical severance forces the inmates Sethe, Denver, and Beloved into further isolation.. Within this frozen world, Beloved's presence grows stronger, her needs more demanding. The wintry setting becomes a metaphor for psychic stasis, echoing Caruth's argument that trauma causes a rupture in time, leaving the victim unable to move forward.

Conclusion

Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and *Beloved* present two conflicting, yet thematically, interlinked depictions of eco-trauma. One defined by environmental infertility and indifference, and the other by a haunting landscape suffused with grief. In *The Bluest Eye*, the natural world is mainly passive and unmoved. The flowers fail to bloom, seasons are awry and the earth is portrayed as stubbornly unresponsive. This lifeless environment reflects the community's apathy and scapegoating tendency toward Pecola's suffering, forcing her psychological disintegration. Conversely, in *Beloved*, nature is anything but silent. 124 Bluestone Road is "spiteful," a house so saturated with memory that it reacts to Sethe's unspoken grief. The environment is alive with repressed trauma Sethe's scarred back, shaped like a "chokecherry tree," and her use of the term "rememory" suggest that the land and body share a mutual capacity to record and react to trauma. These eco-traumas mirror Rob Nixon's concept of "slow violence," which he defines as "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight... dispersed across time and space" (Nixon 2). Pecola's psychological collapse and Sethe's ghostly encounters are both slow, collective consequences of systemic racial and gendered violence so entrenched in the landscape that it becomes part of its ecological fabric.

Yet, despite the overwhelming weight of eco-trauma, Morrison offers faint traces of ecological and communal healing. In *The Bluest Eye*, Claudia's retrospective narration reveals a level of awareness that challenges the community's silence. She tries to remember Pecola with clarity and compassion, implying that the very act of witnessing is an act of defiance. In *Beloved*, Denver's decision to step out of the house, reconnect with the community, and reassert and reclaim her own voice illustrates a small, though meaningful, reclamation of space and identity. These characters

suggest that while eco-trauma may seem inexorable, conscious remembrance and connection to land and people might offer a path forward.

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