

Natural Landscapes as Sites of Women's Suffering Endurance and Regeneration in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*: An Ecofeminist Reading

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*Abstract: This research paper offers an ecofeminist reading of *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, arguing that natural landscapes in the novel function as emotionally charged sites where Black women's suffering is inscribed, where endurance is practiced, and where regeneration becomes imaginable. Drawing on ecofeminist theory, the study examines how Morrison connects the exploitation of land under slavery with the violation and control of women's bodies, particularly enslaved mothers. At the same time, Morrison depicts nonhuman spaces—trees, rivers, woods, gardens, weather, and open clearings—as alternative archives of memory that witness violence yet also offer shelter, spiritual communion, and possibilities for healing. Through close textual analysis of recurring landscapes (Sweet Home's fields, the chokecherry tree, the river crossing, the Clearing, and the natural atmosphere surrounding 124), this paper shows that nature in *Beloved* is neither a romantic refuge nor a neutral background. Instead, it becomes a living participant in trauma, survival, and renewal, enabling Morrison to imagine regeneration as collective, ecological, and embodied.*

Keywords: Ecofeminism; Slavery and landscape; Black motherhood; Trauma and ecology; Regeneration

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I. INTRODUCTION

In *Beloved*, Toni Morrison transforms the landscape into a charged narrative presence, where the natural world does not simply frame human action but absorbs, reflects, and reshapes it. Set in the afterlife of slavery, the novel portrays trauma as something that exceeds individual memory and enters spaces—fields that once demanded forced labor, woods that conceal flight, rivers that mark thresholds between bondage and uncertain freedom, and weather that seems to thicken around grief. This study argues that the natural landscapes in *Beloved* function as sites of women's suffering, endurance, and regeneration, and that an ecofeminist lens reveals the political logic behind

Morrison's environmental imagery. (Banerjee & Bell, 2007)

Ecofeminism examines how systems of domination link the exploitation of nature to the oppression of women. In the context of slavery, this relationship becomes historically specific and violently intensified: the plantation operates as an extractive ecology where land is engineered for profit and Black women's bodies are treated as productive properties. Morrison repeatedly draws parallels between these forms of control, showing how violence is "written" onto the body through scars, hunger, and exhaustion, while the land itself becomes an instrument of coercion. However, *Beloved* also complicates any

simple notion of nature as a pure refuge. The same woods that shelter fugitives can be terrifying, and the same water that enables escape can threaten life. Nature is therefore represented as ambivalent, capable of witnessing, concealing, harming, and protecting (Li, 2007).

By focusing on key landscapes such as Sweet Home's fields, the river crossing, and the Clearing, this study explores how Morrison uses nonhuman spaces as alternative archives of history that carry what cannot be fully spoken. This further suggests that regeneration in the novel is not a private cure but an ecological and communal process, emerging through renewed relationships among the body, place, and community. In doing so, this paper positions the landscape as central to Morrison's ethical project by insisting that the memory of slavery is not only remembered—it is inhabited (Poissant et al., 2005).

II. REVIEW OF RELATED IDEAS

Critical conversations around Toni Morrison's *Beloved* have long emphasized memory, haunting, slavery's afterlives, and the politics of storytelling—especially how trauma returns through fragmented narration, embodied recollection, and communal silence. Within this scholarship, the natural world is frequently noticed as more than a setting: trees, weather, water, fields, and open spaces appear repeatedly at moments of violence, escape, and spiritual confrontation. However, earlier readings often treat landscape primarily as a symbol or atmosphere rather than as a structural participant in power relations. An ecofeminist approach expands these discussions by asking how the environment and embodiment are co-produced under systems of domination and how land, labor, and gendered violence operate within the same historical ecology (Hill, 2013).

Ecofeminist theory broadly argues that patriarchal power relies on linked logics of "mastery", where nature is framed as an inert resource and women as controllable bodies. Carolyn Merchant and Val Plumwood are often associated with critiques of dualisms (culture/nature, mind/body, male/female) that justify exploitation. When this lens is placed alongside slavery, the framework sharpens: the plantation is not merely an economic unit but an extractive landscape engineered to convert soil, crops, and human bodies into profit. In such an environment, Black women's suffering becomes both gendered and

ecological, situated at the intersection of forced labor, sexual coercion, reproduction under ownership, and the spatial control of movement. Thus, *Beloved* can be approached as a text in which domination organizes both land and life, making trauma inseparable from place (Cuomo, 2002).

Related work in African American studies and trauma studies also emphasizes that memory is spatial and material in nature. Landscapes "store" history through routes, borders, and sensory residues—mud, heat, cold, darkness, and the texture of trees and water. Ecofeminism complements these insights by treating the nonhuman world as an archive and witness while refusing to romanticize it. In *Beloved*, nature is ambivalent: woods can conceal fugitives but also terrify; rivers can promise passage yet threaten death. This aligns with ecofeminist arguments (for example, J. Warren and Gaard) that "care" and "harm" are not fixed properties of nature but arise from relationships shaped by social structures (Martin & Berthoz, 2002).

Finally, scholarship on Black motherhood and community healing intersects strongly with ecofeminism. The body is not only a site of injury but also a site of survival practices—feeding, sheltering, fleeing, grieving, and gathering. Landscapes such as clearings, yards, and gardens become places where endurance is performed and regeneration becomes thinkable, suggesting that healing after slavery is not purely psychological or individual in nature. Instead, it is relational and ecological: it requires a restored "environment" in the broad sense—community support, safer space, and a re-inhabitable world (Gaard, 2011).

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: ECOFEMINISM AND ENSLAVEMENT ECOLOGY

This study uses ecofeminism to examine how Toni Morrison's *Beloved* represents natural landscapes as spaces where women's suffering is produced, where endurance is practiced, and where regeneration becomes possible. Ecofeminism argues that patriarchal systems often rely on linked logics of domination that treat women's bodies and the natural world as resources—available for control, extraction, and "management." In the historical context of slavery, these logics are intensified through race and property: land is organized for profit through plantation agriculture, and enslaved women are reduced to laboring and reproductive property. These

pairings form what this paper calls an enslavement ecology—a social-environmental system in which human and nonhuman life are structured by ownership, surveillance, and forced productivity (Norton, 2011).

Three ecofeminist concepts guided the analysis. First, linked oppressions explain how control over land parallels control over women's bodies: the plantation disciplines soil through cultivation and enslaved women through labor, punishment, and reproductive coercion. Second, embodiment frames the body as an ecological archive. Trauma is stored in scars, hunger, and exhaustion, and Morrison often translates bodily experiences into natural imagery (trees, growth, weather), suggesting that injury becomes part of the material world. Third, relational regeneration rejects the romantic view of nature as automatically healing. Instead, it sees healing as emerging through new relationships among the body, community, and place (Harris, 1992).

By combining ecofeminism with the concept of enslaved plantation environments, the framework allows the paper to read the landscapes in *Beloved* as narrative agents—spaces that witness violence, enable survival, and host communal rituals of recovery—thereby revealing Morrison's ecological critique of slavery's gendered afterlives. Ecofeminism provides three concepts central to this analysis (Li, 2007):

Linked Oppressions

This section explains how ecofeminism links the oppression of nature and women under plantation slavery in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. Plantation ecology treats land as a resource to be measured, fenced, and exploited, while women's bodies are controlled as labor and reproductive property. Systems of "mastery" rely on violence, surveillance, restricted movement, and forced displacement, fracturing identity and belonging. Environmental harm—exhaustion, hunger, exposure—parallels bodily injury, making the body an archive of trauma and memories. Even domestic spaces function as containment, both as refuge and as prisons. However, women create counter-spaces (woods, routes, clearings) for survival, ritual, and communal healing, enabling relational regeneration and a renewed identity. Ecofeminism argues that patriarchal domination constructs women and nature as controllable, inferior, and available entities. During slavery, this domination became racialized and

intensified: Black women's bodies were treated as property, and land was treated as a machine for profit (Wajiran, 2024). The plantation system naturalizes exploitation—presenting violence as "order", "discipline", or "productivity" productivity.

The Body as Environment

This section presents the body as an environment shaped by power, memory, and place in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. Women's bodies function as archives that store history through scars, pain, hunger, and exhaustion, revealing trauma as both material and ongoing. Morrison often maps injury with landscape imagery—trees, growth, weather—linking bodily damage to ecological exploitation. Bodies become a "worked terrain" under forced labor, sexual control, and reproductive coercion, while sensory triggers (heat, cold, dampness, air) reactivate the past. The body also marks the boundaries between captivity and freedom through flight and thresholds. Motherhood becomes a contested ecology of love and terror, and healing requires communal care, ritual, and safe spaces that allow reinhabiting the body with dignity. Ecofeminist thought often reads the body as a site where political control becomes a biological reality: pain, pregnancy, lactation, scars, hunger, and exhaustion. *Beloved* repeatedly merges body and landscape imagery, suggesting that trauma is ecological, stored in flesh like weathered soil stores history (O'Reilly, 2004).

Regeneration Beyond Romance

This framework explains "regeneration beyond romance" by rejecting the idea that nature automatically heals in *the novel*. Landscapes can both protect and endanger; therefore, healing begins with safety and supportive conditions rather than scenic comfort. Trauma is shown as ecological—embedded in bodies and places—meaning that recovery involves reshaping one's relationship to space and memory. Regeneration is slow, uneven, and ongoing, and haunting and relapse disrupt any neat closure. The community is essential, providing shared care through listening, feeding, witnessing, and ritual. Healing also requires revaluing the body through rest, warmth, nourishment, and consent. Spiritual practices in open spaces, along with ordinary yards, gardens, and seasonal rhythms, enable renewal that coexists with grief rather than erasing it from memory. Ecofeminism does not require nature to be a purely nurturing entity. Instead, it recognizes that "healing"

can occur through new relationships with land, community, and one's own body without idealizing nature. Morrison's natural spaces are complex; they simultaneously contain threats and possibilities (Walters et al., 2011).

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive methodology grounded in close reading to examine how natural landscapes function as sites of women's suffering, endurance, and regeneration in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. Close reading is appropriate because Morrison's landscape imagery is not decorative; it is structurally tied to characterization, memory, and power. The method focuses on how specific environmental details—such as trees, rivers, woods, gardens, open clearings, and seasonal atmosphere—recur across the narrative and gain layered meanings through repetition and context (Holtorf & Williams, 2006).

The analysis was conducted in three stages. First, the study selects key landscape scenes that directly intersect with women's embodied experiences and the novel's major conflicts (slavery's violence, escape, haunting, mothering, and community healing). Scenes are chosen for their narrative weight and for how they frame crucial turning points through spatial elements (e.g. spaces linked to forced labor, flight routes, communal gatherings, or domestic environments shaped by fear). Second, the study codes recurring natural motifs and classifies them into thematic clusters: (a) landscapes of harm (fields, controlled plantation space, hostile weather); (b) landscapes of survival (woods, paths, water crossings, hiding spaces); and (c) landscapes of recovery (clearings, yards, gardens, outdoor ritual spaces). This thematic coding helps trace patterns rather than treating each scene as an isolated description (Tveit et al., 2018).

Third, each motif cluster was interpreted using three ecofeminist concepts: domination (how power structures "manage" land and bodies through control, extraction, and surveillance), embodiment (how trauma is stored in the body and expressed through environmental imagery), and regeneration (how healing is represented as non-romantic, slow, and relational—emerging through community and re-inhabiting space). Throughout, the methodology treats the landscape as a narrative actor: it shapes what characters can do, what they fear, and what they remember. Rather than asking only what nature

"symbolizes" the study asks how environments actively condition women's choices and identities, making place central to the novel's ecofeminist meaning (Regus et al., 2024).

V. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In *Beloved*, landscapes function as active forces that record women's suffering (plantation space, scars-as-nature), enable endurance (woods and rivers as survival routes), and support regeneration (the Clearing, gardens, communal rituals). An ecofeminist lens shows slavery's domination shaping both land and body, while healing emerges relationally.

Landscapes of Women's Suffering: Nature as Archive of Violated Bodies

Slavery in *Beloved* is spatially organized: fields, barns, fences, and pathways encode ownership. The plantation environment is a managed ecology, built to extract maximum labor while limiting freedom. Women's suffering is marked by this spatial logic—where their bodies, like land, become controlled terrain.

A striking ecofeminist image is the "tree" on Sethe's back—scars that transform bodily damage into botanical form. Mentioning Sethe once here, we can see how Morrison fuses nature and injury to show that violence is not only physical; it is inscriptive. The scar-tree suggests forced cultivation: pain "grows" in patterns imposed by domination. Nature becomes the language through which the body records what history tries to erase. Similarly, the house at 124 is surrounded by atmosphere—seasonal heaviness, coldness, and air that feels saturated with grief. Even when the natural world is not directly described, Morrison's environments often feel weathered by trauma. The boundary between inside and outside blurs: haunting leaks into wind, silence, and light. An ecofeminist lens interprets this as the environment carrying emotional residue, implying that oppression alters not only people but the worlds they inhabit.

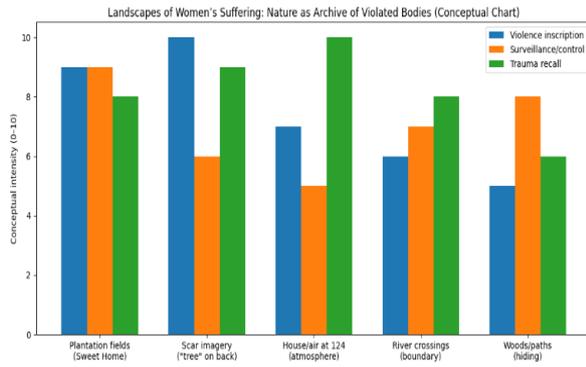


Figure 1: Landscapes of Women's Suffering: Nature as Archive of Violated Bodies

The chart compares five recurring landscapes in *Beloved* across three ecofeminist "archive" functions: violence inscription, surveillance/control, and trauma recall (0–10).

Plantation fields score highest for violence and control, showing how slavery's ecology disciplines both land and bodies. Scar imagery ("tree" on the back) peaks in violence inscription, turning the body into a readable landscape of harm. The house/air at 124 peaks in trauma recall, suggesting place stores memory. River crossings and woods/paths show moderate violence but notable control and recall, reflecting dangerous escape geographies.

Endurance and Escape: Woods, Roads, and Rivers as Survival Geographies

If plantations map domination, forests and rivers map possibility. Morrison portrays escape not merely as a heroic act but as an ecological negotiation—moving through land that can conceal, guide, or betray.

The woods function ambivalently. They can be frightening—unknown, shadowed, and full of risk. Yet they also protect, allowing fugitives to disappear from the surveillance of enslavers. The forest becomes a space where patriarchal property relations weaken: ownership cannot fully extend into dense, living terrain. Nature here provides what ecofeminism might call counter-space—not freedom guaranteed, but freedom imaginable.

Rivers, especially the crossing toward Ohio, symbolize transformation through natural boundary. Water divides legal regimes (enslavement vs. "free" territory), but it also divides states of being: hunted vs. survived. The river is not sentimental; it is dangerous, cold, and uncertain. Yet it is precisely this natural

threshold that enables endurance to become action. Survival in *Beloved* is therefore ecological: it depends on reading landscape, trusting movement, and enduring the body's limits.

Endurance also appears in domestic landscapes, including the possibility of gardens and gathered food. Even when scarcity dominates, acts of feeding and caring become ecological resistance—reclaiming life from a system designed to drain it.

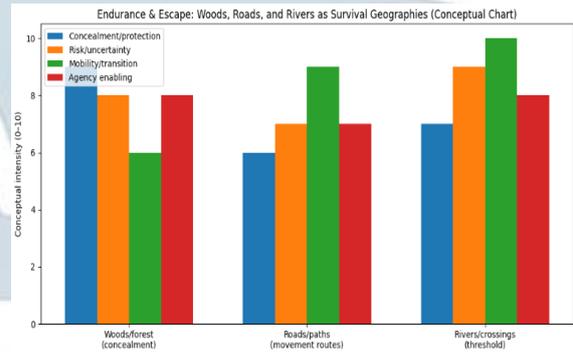


Figure 2: Endurance and Escape: Woods, Roads, and Rivers as Survival Geographies

The chart above maps "Endurance and Escape: Woods, Roads, and Rivers as Survival Geographies" in *Beloved* using conceptual intensity scores (0–10) across four functions:

- Woods/forest peak in concealment/protection and agency enabling: the forest hides fugitives from surveillance, creating a counter-space where survival becomes possible, though risk remains high.
- Roads/paths peak in mobility/transition: they provide direction and movement but are exposed routes—less protective, more vulnerable to capture.
- Rivers/crossings peak in mobility/transition and risk/uncertainty: they act as literal and symbolic thresholds from bondage toward freedom, but the crossing is dangerous, physically demanding, and unpredictable.

Overall, the chart shows Morrison's escape geography as ambivalent: the same landscapes that enable endurance also carry fear, exposure, and life-threatening risk.

The Clearing: Nature, Spirituality, and Collective Regeneration

One of Morrison’s most powerful landscape sites is the Clearing—associated with Baby Suggs. Here, nature becomes a ground for communal ritual: bodies gather, breathe, cry, dance, and speak love into existence. Ecofeminism is helpful because it reads this as a reordering of value: instead of productivity and extraction, the Clearing centers the body’s need for release and the community’s need for repair.

The Clearing is not “outside history.” It exists because history wounds. But it offers a radically different relationship to body and world: the natural space does not demand labor; it offers presence. Regeneration here is not instant healing—it is a practice of re-embodiment. The land becomes a partner in recovery by holding the community without the plantation’s violent gaze.

This scene also challenges the idea that nature is simply “pure” or “healing.” Rather, the Clearing shows that nature becomes regenerative when paired with collective meaning-making. It is an ecofeminist vision of healing as relational: person-to-person and person-to-environment.

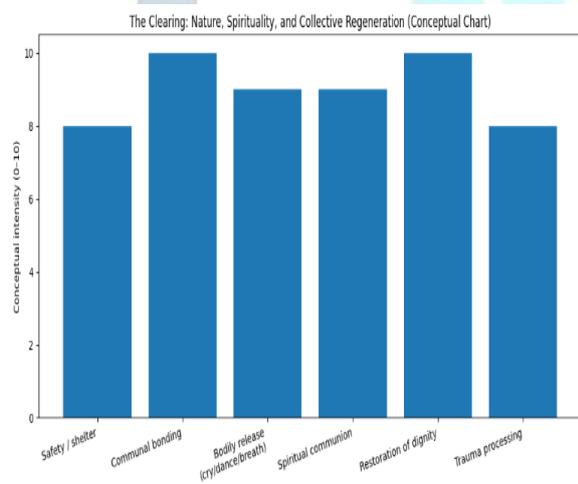


Figure 3: The Clearing: Nature, Spirituality, and Collective Regeneration

The chart above models “The Clearing” in *Beloved* as a site of collective regeneration using conceptual intensity (0–10):

- Communal bonding (10) is highest because the Clearing gathers people into a shared ritual space, rebuilding community after isolation and fear.
- Restoration of dignity (10) is equally high: the space affirms bodies as worthy of love,

breath, and care—opposite of plantation logic.

- Bodily release (9) and spiritual communion (9) show how healing happens through embodied practices (crying, dancing, singing, breathing) tied to a sacred relationship with nature.
- Safety/shelter (8) and trauma processing (8) indicate that the Clearing is protective and healing, but not a complete escape from pain—trauma is worked through gradually, not erased.

Sweet Home and the Plantation Ecology: Controlled Nature and Gendered Domination

Sweet Home’s “natural beauty” can appear deceptive: trees, fields, animals, and open land may look pastoral, but they are structured by ownership. The plantation system turns nature into a managed instrument and turns women’s fertility into another resource. Morrison exposes how the seeming calm of plantation landscapes is produced by coercion.

Ecofeminism clarifies this contradiction: a landscape can be green and still be violent if its order relies on domination. Enslaved women’s suffering is intensified because their bodies are treated as sites of both labor and reproduction. Plantation ecology depends on cycles—planting, harvesting, breeding—that mirror the systemic control of women’s bodies. Therefore, the “natural” cycles of land are corrupted into tools of economic extraction, and women’s biological capacities are similarly commodified.

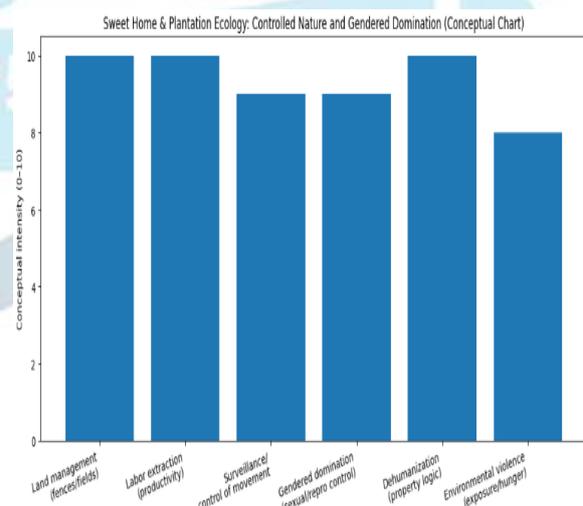


Figure 4: Sweet Home and the Plantation Ecology: Controlled Nature and Gendered Domination

The chart above frames Sweet Home’s plantation ecology in Beloved as a system where nature is controlled and women are dominated through the same property logic (conceptual intensity 0–10).

- Land management (10) and labor extraction (10) are highest, showing the plantation as an engineered environment—fields, boundaries, and work rhythms designed for profit.
- Dehumanization (10) matches them, emphasizing that people (and land) are treated as property, not as living subjects.
- Surveillance/control of movement (9) highlights spatial power: who can move, where, and under what risk.
- Gendered domination (9) captures the specific targeting of women through sexual threat and reproductive control, linking bodily ownership to agricultural ownership.
- Environmental violence (8) reflects how hunger, exposure, and physical depletion are built into the plantation’s ecology—harm delivered through conditions as much as through direct punishment.

Overall, the chart shows Sweet Home as an extractive landscape where controlling land and controlling women’s bodies operate as one interconnected system.

Beloved and Nature as the Medium of Memory

The figure of Beloved arrives as more than a character; she is an embodied return of what has been repressed. The natural world in Beloved often behaves like memory: it resurfaces, insists, and refuses closure. Water imagery, seasonal shifts, and the material textures of the world (mud, leaves, heat) repeatedly echo the novel’s insistence that the past is not past.

Ecofeminism highlights how memory is environmental: trauma is carried not only in minds but in places and bodily sensations. The natural world becomes a medium through which the unspeakable becomes perceptible. Even when characters avoid naming their pain, the environment “speaks” through atmosphere and recurring natural symbols.

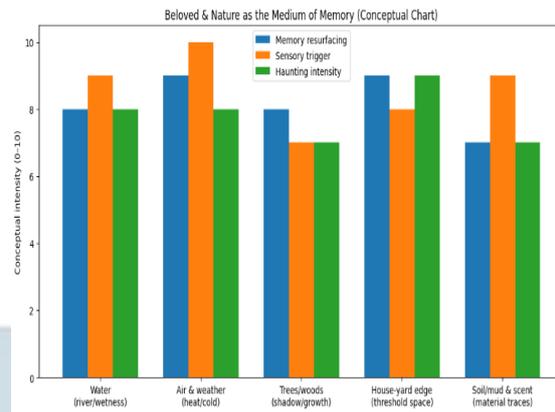


Figure 5: Beloved and Nature as the Medium of Memory

The chart above represents “Beloved and Nature as the Medium of Memory” in Beloved using conceptual intensity (0–10) across three functions: memory resurfacing, sensory trigger, and haunting intensity.

- Air & weather score highest for sensory trigger (10) and high for memory resurfacing (9), showing how heat/cold and atmosphere reactivate trauma—memory returns through the body’s sensations.
- House-yard edge ranks high for memory resurfacing (9) and peaks in haunting intensity (9), emphasizing threshold spaces where past and present collide and the home becomes a site of return.
- Water stays consistently high, linking rivers/wetness to forced crossings, survival, and recurring remembrance.
- Soil/mud & scent score high on sensory trigger, suggesting material traces (smell, texture) carry history without needing words.
- Trees/woods are moderate across categories, functioning more as a quiet witness—holding shadowed memory rather than producing the most intense haunting.

From Suffering to Regeneration: What Healing Looks Like in an Ecofeminist Frame

Regeneration in Beloved is not a clean redemption arc. It is partial, fragile, and contested. Yet Morrison offers ecological images of “life continuing” that matter: community gathering, shared labor that is not forced, small domestic rituals, and the possibility of choosing relationships rather than being assigned them.

For Denver, stepping outward into community is a form of regeneration that changes her relationship to

space. The world outside 124 is initially frightening, but it becomes a landscape of possibility through human connection. Ecofeminism reads this as an expansion of ecology: the “environment” is not only trees and rivers but also the social world that sustains life. Regeneration requires an ecosystem—people, place, and support.

Even the return to ordinary natural rhythms—daylight, work that feeds rather than exploits, seasons that turn without punishment—signals a movement toward repair. Morrison’s novel implies that healing after systemic violence must involve rebuilding relationships to body, community, and the material world.

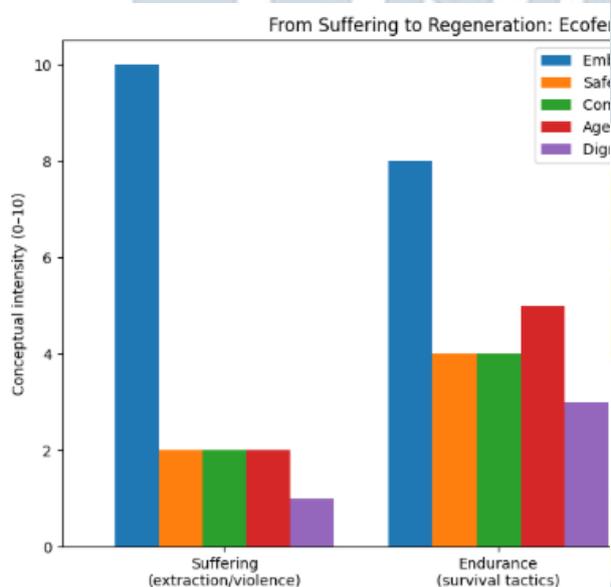


Figure 6: From Suffering to Regeneration: What Healing Looks Like in an Ecofeminist Frame

The chart above models “From Suffering to Regeneration: What Healing Looks Like in an Ecofeminist Frame” (conceptual intensity 0–10) as a trajectory across four stages:

- Suffering peaks in embodied pain (10) while safety, community, agency, and dignity remain very low—showing slavery as extractive ecology that breaks bodies and social support.
- Endurance still shows high pain (8) but rising agency/voice (5) and modest increases in safety/community, reflecting survival strategies (hiding, fleeing, coping).
- Transition equalizes around mid-level (6) across all dimensions, marking the difficult

process of re-inhabiting space—learning to live in the body and world again.

- Regeneration reverses the pattern: community support (10) and dignity restoration (10) dominate, with high agency (9) and safety (8), while pain drops (4).

Overall, the chart shows ecofeminist healing as relational and ecological: recovery depends less on “forgetting trauma” and more on rebuilding supportive environments—people, spaces, and practices that restore bodily worth and collective life.

VI. FINDINGS

This ecofeminist analysis shows that:

- Landscape functions as a narrative presence (not a backdrop): the natural world absorbs, reflects, and reshapes human trauma, so memory becomes something “inhabited” through spaces (fields, woods, rivers, weather).
- Slavery is framed as an “enslavement ecology”: domination operates through the same logic that controls land and controls women’s bodies—ownership, surveillance, and forced productivity.
- Women’s suffering is spatially organized: plantation space encodes ownership (fields/barns/fences/pathways), making women’s bodies “controlled terrain” within a managed extractive environment.
- The body becomes an ecological archive of violence: injuries are rendered through natural imagery (e.g., scars figured as botanical form), showing that violence is inscriptive—written into flesh as history.
- Nature is ambivalent, not romantic refuge: woods and water can shelter escape but also terrify and threaten life; survival depends on negotiating risk, movement, and bodily limits.
- Endurance appears as ecological resistance: survival includes not only flight routes (woods/rivers) but also domestic/ecological acts like feeding and caring, reclaiming life from an extractive system.
- The Clearing models collective regeneration: in this outdoor ritual space, bodies gather to breathe/cry/dance/speak love—healing is

relational, embodied, and spiritual rather than individual “closure.”

- Sweet Home’s “beauty” is exposed as controlled violence: pastoral nature is structured by coercion; plantation cycles (plant/harvest) parallel gendered exploitation (labor + reproduction) under property logic.
- Nature becomes a medium of memory (haunting): atmosphere, weather, and material textures act like memory—resurfacing, insisting, and making the “unspeakable” perceptible through sensation and place.
- Healing is ecological and communal: regeneration is “partial, fragile, and contested,” but becomes imaginable through community gathering, non-forced labor, daily rituals, and rebuilt relationships among body–place–people.

VII. CONCLUSION

This ecofeminist reading of *Beloved* demonstrates that Morrison constructs landscape as a charged narrative force through which Black women’s suffering, endurance, and regeneration become legible. Rather than serving as passive scenery, natural spaces—fields, woods, rivers, weather, and clearings “absorb, reflect, and reshape” trauma, showing that slavery’s afterlife is not only remembered but spatially inhabited. The plantation emerges as an “extractive ecology” where land is engineered for profit and women’s bodies are treated as productive property, linking environmental domination to gendered violence through the same logic of ownership and control.

At the same time, Morrison refuses any romantic idea of nature as automatic refuge. The novel portrays escape geographies as ambivalent: woods may shelter fugitives yet remain terrifying, and water may enable passage while threatening life. This ambivalence is essential to the ecofeminist claim that healing cannot be reduced to “returning to nature”; regeneration requires conditions of safety, care, and relational support. The analysis also shows how the environment functions as a medium of memory: nature “behaves like memory,” resurfacing through water imagery, seasonal shifts, and material textures that make the unspeakable perceptible.

Ultimately, the novel imagines regeneration as collective and ecological. Through communal

practices—especially the Clearing’s rituals of breath, movement, and affirmation—Morrison reorders value away from extraction toward dignity and repair, suggesting that survival becomes healing only when body, place, and community are reconnected.

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