

## Fluid Resistance: The Oceanic Narrative and Political Agency of Water in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

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### Abstract

This article rereads Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) through the critical framework of the Blue Humanities, an emergent field within environmental humanities that foregrounds water as a formative ecological, historical, and political force. While existing scholarship on *Beloved* has productively engaged feminist, psychoanalytic, and postcolonial paradigms, it has largely privileged land-based spatialities such as plantations, houses, and burial grounds. This study addresses that critical gap by arguing that Morrison's pervasive aquatic imagery—oceans, rivers, rain, amniotic fluid, and spectral wetness—functions not merely as metaphor but as an active, agentive presence shaping memory, embodiment, and resistance. Drawing on Philip Steinberg's concept of "wet ontology" and Astrida Neimanis's theorization of relational, more-than-human embodiment, the article conceptualizes water in *Beloved* as a "blue archive": a living repository of diasporic trauma and generative possibility. Central to this reading is Morrison's invocation of the Atlantic Ocean as both abyssal graveyard and womb-like reservoir of Black diasporic history. The Middle Passage, figured through Édouard Glissant's notion of the "womb abyss," becomes a site of paradoxical destruction and rebirth. This aquatic liminality is mirrored in the Ohio River crossing, where Sethe's escape from slavery coincides with Denver's birth, staging water as a midwife of survival. *Beloved*'s wet, spectral emergence further embodies submerged histories that refuse erasure. By situating water as a politicized, militarized space of border-making and exclusion, the article connects Morrison's narrative to broader global discourses on dispossession and "wasted lives." Ultimately, *Beloved* articulates a blue ethics of remembrance and relation, positioning water as a historical force essential to both African American memory and contemporary ecological thought.

**Keywords:** Blue Humanities, Black Atlantic, Wet Ontology, Middle Passage, Oceanic Memory

### Introduction

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* stands as a seminal work in African American literature, weaving a haunting narrative centered on Sethe, a woman who escapes slavery but kills her daughter to spare

her from enslavement. The daughter returns as a ghost named Beloved, haunting Sethe's home at 124 Bluestone Road in post-Civil War Cincinnati. The novel *Beloved* highlights the perennial scars of slavery, thereby exploring themes of trauma, memory and community healing. Previous studies have analysed *Beloved* mainly through feminist lens, psychoanalytical framework and the theories of postcolonialism, critiquing the slave trade. However, these interpretations mainly focus on the land or the terrestrial realm, thereby overlooking the novel's vivid water imagery. For instance, the Ohio river, through which Sethe escapes from the plantation house and parallelly giving birth to Denver in the boat, where her bodily fluids like the amniotic water merge the river's water, are rarely examined as crucial aspects. To address this gap, Morrison's *Beloved* can be adequately analysed through the theoretical lens of Blue Humanities. Blue Humanities, as articulated by scholars like Steve Mentz and Elizabeth DeLoughrey, posits that water, (oceans, rivers, seas) is not a passive backdrop but a dynamic force shaping culture, history, and identity. In the Black diaspora, the ocean is described as a "womb abyss" (Glissant 1997), a site of death and rebirth tied to the slave trade. This framework reveals water in *Beloved* as a living archive of the Middle Passage's horrors, a liminal space for transformation, and a source of communal and ecological rebirth. The ocean, as a "womb abyss", embodies both the capacity to endure and the potential to renew, dilute, bury, and ultimately remember.

Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), a Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, exemplifies these watery dynamics through its rich imagery of rivers, oceans, rain, and streams. Set in the post-Civil War era, the narrative centers on Sethe, an escaped enslaved woman haunted by the ghost of her slain daughter, Beloved, and grapples with the intergenerational transmission of memory in the African diaspora. Water serves as a polyvalent symbol that intertwines life and death, bondage and liberation, illuminating the fluidity of Black identity and the potential for communal restoration in

the wake of systemic oppression. Set in post-Civil War Cincinnati, the novel grapples with slavery's lasting wounds, exploring themes of trauma, memory, and community. Inspired by the real-life story of Margaret Garner, who fled slavery in 1856, Morrison's narrative weaves personal and collective histories of African Americans. Scholars have analysed *Beloved* through various lenses: feminism highlights Sethe's maternal struggles, psychoanalysis probes the ghost's psychological weight, and postcolonialism critiques slavery's colonial roots. These approaches often center on terrestrial spaces- plantations, houses or communities, neglecting the novel's pervasive water imagery. The Atlantic Ocean, tied to the Middle Passage, the Ohio River, marking Sethe's escape, and bodily fluids like amniotic water are central to the story, yet rarely examined as active elements.

Blue Humanities, an emerging field within environmental humanities, shifts focus from "green" (land based) to blue (water based) ecologies. Scholars like Steve Mentz and Elizabeth DeLoughrey argue that water, oceans, rivers, seas are not passive backdrop but a dynamic force shaping culture, history, and identity. In the Black diaspora, the ocean is a "womb abyss" (Glissant 1997), a site of death and rebirth tied to the slave trade. Blue Humanities reveals water in *Beloved* as a living archive of the Middle Passage's horrors, a liminal space for transformation, and a source of communal and ecological rebirth. Blue Humanities sees the ocean as a "womb abyss" a site of death and potential rebirth. The sea or the ocean as the great mother of life presents a capacity for renewal and further capacities to endure, to survive, to dilute, to bury and ultimately to remember. The Blue Humanities, an emergent interdisciplinary field that interrogates the socio-cultural, historical, and ecological dimensions of aquatic environments, encompassing oceans, rivers, and other waterways has gained prominence as a framework for analyzing how water shapes human narratives, particularly in contexts of colonialism, migration, and environmental precarity. Coined

and elaborated by scholars such as Steve Mentz, this approach emphasizes the "capacious and fluid" nature of watery spaces, reconnecting disparate areas like coastal studies, the literature of the Middle Passage, and maritime ecocriticism to reveal the ocean's role as both a connective medium and a site of rupture in global histories. In this vein, water emerges not merely as a physical entity but as a metaphorical and material force that embodies fluidity, instability, and the legacies of colonial violence, critiquing desires for mastery over "blue" realms while addressing inheritances of dispossession and displacement.

This research paper will aim at highlighting the aquatic realms like the Atlantic Ocean and the Ohio river in the context of the novel *Beloved*, as well as the rain as fluid or an ambivalent space, thereby challenging the notion of linear progress and reiterating the circular notion of history through the concept of "wet ontology" and as such debunking anthropocentric narratives. The study situates these watery dynamics within the broader discourse of the Blue Humanities, drawing on key theoretical interventions. Steve Mentz's "poetics of planetary water" frames the ocean as a planetary medium whose fluidity destabilizes anthropocentric and terrestrial-centric modes of historiography. Neimanis' *Bodies of Water* expands this perspective by underscoring the body's transcorporeality its porous continuity with other bodies and with watery flows thereby refiguring the maternal body in *Beloved* as not simply human but planetary, implicated in cycles of renewal and loss that exceed the boundaries of self. Paul Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* provides an additional lens, situating water as both the route of enforced displacement and the medium of diasporic cultural creativity. The Middle Passage, in this reading, is not only a wound but also the site of emergent cultural forms, with water embodying both rupture and relation. Serpil Oppermann's theorization of storied seas and living metaphors further supports the claim that Morrison's aquatic imagery encodes narrative and memory in ways that resist closure, demanding

interpretive strategies attuned to fluidity, multiplicity, and entanglement.

The analysis proceeds by demonstrating how Morrison's narrative form itself mirrors the dynamics of water. The novel's stylistic fragmentation, cyclical repetitions, and polyvocal lyricism resist linear historiography, evoking instead the ebb and flow of waves, the layering of currents, and the saturation of memory. *Beloved's* voice, emerging in fragmented, fluid passages "I was there in the water; I drank your blood; I brought your milk" (Morrison 256) enacts the disorientation of submersion, destabilizing narrative authority and reflecting the oceanic archive of diasporic trauma. Morrison's language thereby performs what Steinberg calls "fluid spatiality" (Steinberg 246) creating narrative structures that blur boundaries between past and present, self and other, individual and collective. In doing so, the novel aligns with the poetics of the sea articulated by Derek Walcott, who famously declared that "the sea is history" (Walcott 364-67). Morrison extends this insight, demonstrating that the ocean not only contains history but also actively mediates its return. Water's agency in *Beloved* is not confined to symbolic representation but is materially entangled with bodies and histories. The bodily fluids in the novel milk, blood, amniotic water, are persistently interwoven with larger aqueous landscapes. Sethe's leaking breast milk, appropriated by the Schoolteacher's nephews, becomes a symbol of violated nurture and exploited fertility, its theft echoing the broader extraction of African bodies across the Middle Passage. Denver's birth by the Ohio River literalizes the mingling of maternal and riverine fluids, producing a hybrid scene of trauma and hope.

Methodologically, this research aligns literary close reading with interdisciplinary theoretical insights. Textual analysis of Morrison's imagery is enriched by the application of Neimanis's feminist materialism, Mentz's planetary poetics, Gilroy's diasporic theory, Glissant's poetics of relation, and Oppermann's oceanic metaphors. Ultimately, the study argues that

Morrison's *Beloved* envisions water as both abyss and womb, as both grave and cradle. The ocean encoded with the trauma of the Middle Passage, is simultaneously a site of mourning and a reservoir of submerged histories that demand to be heard. The Ohio River, a liminal threshold between enslavement and freedom, becomes the scene of new life and relational solidarity, echoing Foucault's notion of the ship as heterotopia. Rain and bodily fluids, similarly, blur boundaries between individual and planetary, human and nonhuman, trauma and renewal. Through these motifs, Morrison reveals water as the ultimate medium of survival, remembrance, and transformation. Water, in *Beloved*, is not a background but a protagonist, not a symbol but an agent. It embodies the paradox of diasporic memory: fragile yet enduring, elusive yet insistent, ephemeral yet eternal. Blue Humanities is an interdisciplinary field that explores the ways humans engage with water in various realms like socio-cultural, historical and ecological dimensions. Central to Blue Humanities is the notion of "wet ontologies" which suggests the idea of space and being as fluid and porous, thereby blurring the binarisms between land and sea, human and nonhuman.

Studying Toni Morrison's *Beloved* through the theoretical lens of Blue Humanities, one can perceive water within the realm of a multifaceted agency wherein water evokes both renewal and resistance. This aspect is strengthened through the notion of poetics of planetary water as articulated by Steve Mentz, wherein water as a dynamic medium is seen across various realms such as both human and nonhuman thereby focusing on its fluidity which suggests at both the creative potential as well as the destructive force. Scholars like Astrida Neimanis and Stacy Alaimo highlight the human body beyond the anthropocentric realm, by regarding the body as a porous entity, thereby suggesting at the notion of body's transcorporeality and as such blurring the boundaries between self and the other. Such frameworks portray water as a conduit for inherited

wounds and collective becomings. The Blue Humanities interrogates water's complicity in colonial histories, such as through the extraction of blue pigments like indigo, which fueled plantation economies and the transatlantic slave trade. Scholars like those in environmental humanities argue that Blue Humanities unmasks the racialized dimensions of colonialism, linking oceanic routes to diaspora, exploitation, and resistance. This includes examining the Middle Passage as a watery abyss of loss, where water symbolizes both erasure and survival, aligning with Black Atlantic theories by Paul Gilroy and Kamau Brathwaite. Influenced by New Materialism, this approach treats water as an agential force in assemblages of ruin and renewal, as in Sara Rich's "shipwreck hauntography", (Rich 178) which views submerged wrecks as sites of colonial disruption and spectral return. It extends to postcolonial ecocriticism, emphasizing water's role in decentering anthropocentric narratives and fostering multispecies ethics.

These concepts collectively shift analysis from land-based paradigms to aquatic ones, prioritizing fluidity over stability and immersion over detachment, which is essential for unpacking *Beloved's* watery motifs. Applying Blue Humanities to *Beloved* reveals water as a multifaceted symbol that bridges individual psyches with broader historical and ecological currents, particularly in relation to slavery's traumas. Water's fluidity mirrors the uncontrollable resurgence of repressed memories, symbolizing the unconscious and the immortality of pain under slavery. In *Beloved*, streams and rivers evoke the Middle Passage's watery graves, where *Beloved* emerges from a stream as a spectral embodiment of diasporic loss, connecting personal hauntings to collective ancestral trauma. Morrison's *Beloved* in a way debunks the notion of water, in the context of the Rivers and the Oceans as a space belonging to the realm of the other, and as such in need of the colonizer's rule in taming its wildness as seen in the transatlantic slave trade; instead it posits water as a site of rupture in dismantling linear narratives and fostering hybrid identities which is

explicitly portrayed in *Beloved's* re-emergence from the water. This in a way hints at a fluid ontology for healing fragmented selves.

### **Analysis**

*Beloved* emerges from a stream, “fully dressed” (Morrison 58) and wet like fish scales. The character of *Beloved* embodies the ocean’s memory, flooding the narrative with the Middle Passage's trauma and resisting anthropocentric narratives. The poet John Keats asked a friend to carve onto his gravestone “Here Lies One Whose Name Was Writ in Water”. The famous inscription emphasizes water's incapacity to endure. The Blue Humanities foregrounds ephemerality and experimental writing practices.

You went in the water

I drank your blood

I brought your milk

You forgot to smile

I loved you

You hurt me

You came back to me

You left me (Morrison 256)

These lines from Toni Morrison's *Beloved*—short, repeating phrases like “You went in the water”, “I drank your blood”, and “You are mine”—through the lens of the Blue Humanities suggests how oceans and water shape human stories, culture, and history, often highlighting water's role in trauma and change.

I come out of blue water after the bottoms of my feet swim away from me I come up I need to find a place to be the air is heavy I am not dead I am not there is a house there is what

she whispered to me I am where she told me I am not dead I sit the sun closes my eyes when I open them I see the face I lost Sethe's is the face that left me Sethe sees me her and I see the smile her smiling face is the place for me it is the face I lost she is my face smiling at me doing it at last a hot thing now we can join a hot thing (Morrison 252)

The Blue Humanities treats water not just as a background but as an active force that carries memories, especially painful ones from events like the Middle Passage, the forced sea journeys of enslaved Africans across the Atlantic. Morrison uses water in *Beloved* to bring back these hidden histories, showing how the past refuses to stay buried. In Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*, when Sethe meets the mysterious young woman named Beloved, who appears soaked and fully clothed, emerging from a nearby stream which marks more than just an eerie encounter. Sethe is overwhelmed and suddenly cannot stop urinating, which she compares to her water breaking when giving birth to her daughter Denver years before. This isn't just a physical reaction; it's a deeply symbolic moment where Sethe's body re-enacts childbirth, showing Beloved's "rebirth" into the world not only as her lost child, but also as a symbol of all the forgotten dead from slavery's history. For instance, these lines from the novel

For some reason she could not immediately account for, the moment she got close enough to the face [Beloved's], Sethe's bladder filled to capacity. She said, 'Excuse me,' and ran to the outhouse. But there was no stopping water breaking from a breaking womb and there was no stopping now. She never made the outhouse; she never made it past the closer edge of the woods. ... Like flooding the boat when Denver was born. So much water Amy said, 'Hold on, Lu. You are going to sink us you keep that up (Morrison 61).

Blue humanities theory is a way of studying how people are connected with oceans, rivers, and watery places sometimes called "wet ontologies." Scholars like Steve Mentz use it to focus on

water's power and unpredictability, shifting attention away from land-based perspectives. This theory views water as something that shapes culture, memory, and the environment, serving as an "active agent" in our lives. In African diaspora literature, the blue humanities connect with Black studies to highlight how the Atlantic Ocean and other watery spaces hold the memories of slavery its traumas keep circulating through history, like currents in the sea.

Morrison has described water as having a "perfect memory"; it remembers and connects the past to the present. In this scene, Sethe's bodily fluids the urine that's like amniotic fluid mix symbolically with the water of the stream from which Beloved comes. This blurs the lines between Sethe's personal body and the vast, collective history of the ocean. The scene echoes the horrors of the Middle Passage, where enslaved Africans suffered on ships filled with bodily fluids, death, and seawater a terrifying, rootless realm. Beloved emerges as a figure literally saturated with water and haunted by fragments of memory from the crossing, for example, memories of "the sea which is the color of the bread" (Morrison 211) and confinement on a crowded ship.

Sethe's sudden "breaking" is a moment of watery connection it's as if her body, shaped by the violence of enslaved motherhood, welcomes Beloved through a flood-like release that resembles childbirth. This act represents both renewal and the enduring impact of trauma. It shows how water can act as a bridge between individual pain and communal, historical suffering. The event is not a mere coincidence; it's a performance of what blue humanities call "anachronic time" where tragedies from the past break through into the present, demanding recognition and reckoning.

This perspective shows that the scene is not just about psychology or the supernatural. It's also an ecological and cultural critique of slavery's lasting, "wet" legacy. Water here isn't just a background element; it actively dissolves fixed identities and allows for both rebirth and the

constant movement of pain and healing. In the context of Black and blue humanities, the narrative challenges land-based metaphors of stability (such as “standing your ground”) in favor of the unpredictable “swimming” through depths, where Black life rises from watery—amniotic, oceanic, traumatic—beginnings toward possible liberation. Ultimately, this scene highlights how relationships with water in diaspora stories reopen submerged histories and transform personal experience into a channel for collective memory.

A key idea in the Blue Humanities is ephemerality, meaning things that are short-lived or hard to hold onto, like waves that come and go. Water in the novel stands for this fleeting quality it erases and forgets easily, much like the poet John Keats' grave marking, which says his name was "writ in water" to show nothing lasts. In the lines, phrases like "You went in the water" (Morrison 256) and "You left me" (Morrison 256) evoke the loss during the Middle Passage, where millions of Africans died at sea, their bodies dissolving into the ocean as a "big wet graveyard". Yet Morrison flips this idea: water's temporary nature actually helps preserve trauma. Beloved, the ghost-child who rises from a stream with shiny, scale-like skin, represents the ocean's "perfect memory" that brings back the dead and the forgotten. The repetitions in the text, such as "You came back to me," show grief as waves that fade but return, mixing personal loss (a mother's pain) with collective history (slavery's wounds). This makes ephemerality not just about disappearance but about ongoing, unsteady presence, like coral reefs that build slowly over time despite constant change.

The Blue Humanities also values experimental writing, which means breaking from straight, orderly stories to capture water's wild, flowing ways. Morrison's style in these lines is a good example: the words overlap and repeat without clear breaks or punctuation, blending the voices of Sethe (the mother), Denver (her daughter), and Beloved (the spirit) into one fluid chorus.

This creates a rhythm like ocean tides or rain, pulling readers into a sense of disorientation, much like being lost at sea. Instead of a linear plot, it's a "semantic network" of images milk for nurturing, blood for violence, smiles for lost joy that swirl like water currents. Such experiments challenge old colonial views that ignore water's power, using magic realism and fragmented forms to reclaim stories from the Middle Passage. For instance, the line "You are my face; I am you" (Morrison 215) blurs who is speaking, mirroring how water dissolves boundaries between people, past and present, life and death. This approach aligns with other works in the field, like those drawing on Derek Walcott's idea that "the sea is history", where water holds untold traumas waiting to surface. By keeping the language simple yet layered, Morrison invites us to feel the pull of these watery memories in our own world.

I was there in the water.

In the quiet time, we played.

The clouds were noisy and in the way.

When I needed you, you came to be with me.

I needed her face to smile.

I could only hear breathing. (Morrison 255)

This spectral figure embodies the ghost of Sethe's murdered infant daughter, but also serves as a broader allegory for the uncounted victims of the transatlantic slave trade. Through the lens of Blue Humanities an interdisciplinary field that examines the cultural, historical, and ecological dimensions of oceans and water bodies in human narratives these lines evoke the Atlantic Ocean as a site of profound trauma, fluidity, and submerged memory. Blue Humanities, drawing on concepts from environmental studies, postcolonial theory, and oceanic poetics, treats water not merely as a setting but as an active agent that dissolves boundaries between past and present, self

and other, life and death. In *Beloved*, Morrison harnesses this "blue" perspective to "rememory" (a term she coins) the horrors of the Middle Passage, the forced voyage across the Atlantic that claimed millions of African lives during the slave trade. Here, the fragmented, poetic language mirrors the disorienting, immersive quality of oceanic experience, blending personal intimacy with collective historical atrocity.

The opening line, "I was there in the water", immediately immerses the speaker in an aquatic realm, positioning water as both literal and metaphorical. In Blue Humanities terms, this suggests a "wet ontology" where existence is fluid and unbounded, challenging terrestrial notions of stability and identity. In *Beloved*, "the water" conflates multiple layers: the amniotic fluid of the womb (evoking birth and maternal connection), the Ohio River that Sethe crosses in a desperate bid for freedom while pregnant, and, most crucially, the vast, violent Atlantic of the Middle Passage. Morrison's dedication of the novel to "Sixty Million and more"—an estimate of those who perished in the slave trade—frames *Beloved* as a vessel for these lost souls, her voice emerging from the depths like from a shipwreck. The ocean here is not a passive backdrop but a "blue archive" of erased histories, where the drowned persist in spectral form, refusing to be forgotten. Scholars in Blue Humanities often highlight how such watery motifs in African diaspora literature reclaim the sea from colonial narratives of exploration and conquest, recasting it as a graveyard of racial violence and a space of resistant memory.

The subsequent lines "In the quiet time, we played. The clouds were noisy and in the way" (Morrison 216) introduce a tension between serenity and disruption, reflecting the ocean's dual nature as a site of play and peril. Overall, these lines, viewed through Blue Humanities, transform personal lyricism into a profound critique of oceanic imperialism. Morrison uses water to fluidly merge individual grief (Sethe's infanticide) with collective catastrophe (the Atlantic slave trade),

insisting that submerged histories must surface to heal. This approach not only memorializes the drowned but also critiques ongoing environmental and racial injustices, as the "blue" lens reveals how waters continue to bear witness to human atrocity. The ship, with its interoceanic mobility and need for skilled, independent labor, becomes an idealized counter-representation of the slave system. Gilroy, who draws extensively on Equiano, emphasizes that "ships occupy a primary symbolic and political place" in his theory of the Black Atlantic. Michel Foucault's earlier celebration of the ship as "heterotopian par excellence" further connects ships to assertions of freedom. In *Blue Humanities*, the ocean and its extensions (like rivers) are not mere backdrops but active agents that embody fluidity, transformation, and submerged histories. The Ohio River, as a liminal water body separating enslavement in Kentucky from freedom in Ohio, becomes a site of rebirth, where the ocean's symbolic "womb abyss" facilitates Denver's emergence as a counter-narrative to the dehumanizing slave system, aligning with the ship's role as a space of agency and resistance.

In the context of Gilroy's Black Atlantic, ships are pivotal to the African diaspora's experience, embodying both the horrors of the Middle Passage and the potential for subversive mobility. Unlike the slave ships that forcibly transported millions across the Atlantic, the small boat carrying Sethe rowed by a white abolitionist, Amy Denver, after whom the baby is named represents a microcosm of interoceanic possibility. This vessel, though modest, inherits the ship's symbolic weight as a site of "interoceanic mobility" and "skilled, independent labor" Sethe's labor (both physical childbirth and her labor as a fugitive claiming autonomy) and Amy's skilled assistance in the boat disrupt the slave system's control over Black bodies. The Ohio River, as an extension of oceanic waters, becomes a fluid space of agency, enabling Sethe's escape and Denver's birth. The ship becomes an idealized counter-representation of the slave system. Michel

Foucault in his work “*Of Other Spaces*” highlights the notion of “heterotopia par excellence” (Foucault 46-48) which suggests often incompatible realities disrupting normal social order yet existing alongside. In this context, water as in the case of the Ohio River, posits a multifaceted agency in the echoing of the Middle Passage’s trauma and at the same time acting as a site of creation. The “womb abyss” here is both literal (Sethe’s body in labor) and metaphorical (the river as a primal, generative void), with water acting as an agent that facilitates Denver’s emergence as a symbol of hope and futurity.

The ocean’s agency, central to Blue Humanities, is critical in this scene. Water, in its fluidity and unpredictability, resists the fixity of enslavement’s terrestrial logic. The river, like the ocean, is a paradox: it is both a graveyard of history and a womb for new possibilities. Denver’s naming after Amy, a white woman who aids Sethe, further underscores this rebirth as a creolized act, echoing Edouard Glissant’s poetics of relation, where water fosters hybrid identities born from shared struggle. The river’s agency lies in its ability to hold these contradictions death and life, trauma and hope allowing Denver to emerge as a living testament to resistance against the slave system. The river, as an extension of the oceanic, becomes a co-creator in Denver’s birth, its currents facilitating Sethe’s passage and protecting the fragile moment of delivery. This aligns with Blue Humanities’ view of water as a non-human actor that shapes human narratives, particularly in African diaspora literature, where oceans and rivers bear witness to both loss and survival.

## **Conclusion**

Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, when approached through the Blue Humanities framework, emerges not only as a monumental exploration of African American trauma and memory, but also as a radical reimagining of aquatic ecologies as agents of history, culture, and identity. This research has

demonstrated how water appearing as ocean, river, rain, and bodily fluids is far more than symbolic backdrop in *Beloved*: it is a living participant in the drama of the African diaspora. Morrison's deployment of pervasive aquatic imagery positions water as an active "blue archive" of collective pain, survival, and healing, one that contests the erasures of the terrestrial, colonial record. Through the Blue Humanities, this paper has shown that Morrison's waters remember: the Atlantic's "womb abyss" enfolds the unburied dead of the Middle Passage, while the Ohio River acts as the site of both birth and re-birth, offering a passage to freedom yet haunted by the spectral traces of slavery's violence. The watery motifs not only evoke the ruptures of enslavement, but also the continuity of ancestral presence, the ghostly Beloved rising from a stream makes personal grief inseparable from a historical, trans-generational wounding. In this way, water's ephemerality in *Beloved* is reversed the fluid medium becomes a paradoxical preserver of memory, flooding the present with what history tries to suppress.

In an era of ecological precarity and ongoing racial injustices, *Beloved's* aquatic politics resonate profoundly. By reimagining water as a living, political force, Morrison critiques systems that marginalize Black and third-world lives, offering a fluid ontology that embraces relationality and interconnectedness. The novel invites readers to engage with watery archives, acknowledging histories of violence while envisioning a politics of survival and renewal. In doing so, *Beloved* not only redefines African American literature but also contributes to an ethics of remembrance, resistance, and ecological justice, where water's agency demands a reckoning with the past and a reimagining of the future. The conclusion is therefore not an end but an invitation, to inhabit watery archives, to acknowledge histories long submerged, and to embrace a relational, fluid ontology that insists on survival, renewal, and interconnectedness across human and nonhuman worlds.

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