

ECOFEMINIST TRAUMA NARRATIVES IN MODERN GOTHIC LITERATURE EXPLORE GENDERED LANDSCAPES, SPECTRAL ECOLOGIES, AND THE AESTHETICS OF RESISTANCE

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ABSTRACT

In an era of escalating ecological collapse and patriarchal resurgence, the Gothic genre has emerged as a potent aesthetic terrain for articulating the intertwined violence inflicted upon women and the environment. Yet, the critical discourse has yet to fully interrogate how Gothic literature stages ecofeminist trauma—where bodily, ecological, and spectral violence converge in narrative form. This paper addresses a critical lacuna in Gothic literary studies by examining the genre through the integrated lens of ecofeminist trauma theory. While recent scholarship in ecocriticism, feminist trauma, and Gothic studies has proliferated, there remains a marked absence of sustained inquiry into how bodily, ecological, and spectral violence converge within Gothic narrative structures. Existing approaches tend to isolate environmental degradation from gendered oppression or treat trauma as a solely psychological phenomenon, thereby overlooking the entangled violence that shapes contemporary eco-gothic literature. In response, this study poses the question: how do contemporary Gothic novels represent ecofeminist trauma through gendered landscapes, and how do they construct narratives of ecological resistance within the Gothic mode? To answer this, the article develops an original methodological framework—the Ecofeminist Gothic Trauma Matrix (EGTM)—which synthesizes eco-trauma theory, feminist spatial analysis, and the aesthetics of the Gothic sublime. This triangulated approach enables critical decoding of environmental violence as it is inscribed across female bodies, haunted terrains, and fragmented narrative forms. The corpus comprises three transnational Gothic texts—Mexican Gothic (Moreno-Garcia), Annihilation (VanderMeer), and Ghost Wall (Moss)—selected for their radical engagements with ecological collapse, patriarchal violence, and narrative resistance. Through close textual analysis, the article demonstrates how these novels construct landscapes as sites of corporeal inscription, memory, and resistance. By introducing EGTM as a generative and scalable critical tool, the study offers the first comprehensive framework for theorizing the intersection of ecofeminism, trauma, and Gothic narrative—marking a significant advance in the field and opening new directions for literary, ecological, and feminist critique.

KEYWORDS: *Ecofeminist Gothic Trauma, Gendered Landscapes, Posthuman Ecology, Spectral Resistance, Narrative Abjection*

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INTRODUCTION

The Gothic, long associated with psychological fracture, spectral hauntings, and spatial unease, has undergone a radical reconstitution in contemporary literature. It is no longer in the ruined castles or the gloomy Byronic hero; it is a means for

understanding what Timothy Morton calls hyper objects – a phenomenon that is too big to cognize and grasp, too nonlocal to be pinned down with efficient causes; climate change, species dying off, geological mutations. Although the Anthropocene is not the concern of the Gothic proper, dislocation, embodiment, and the uncanny have been reframed as a new field that is the intersection of ecocide and fascism. It is here, though, that ecofeminist trauma narratives have been so effectively developed, stories that privilege the lived, the fantastic, and site, haunting and generational trauma.

In this paper, it is posited that contemporary Gothic literature or neogothic—*Mexican Gothic* (2020) by Silvia Moreno-Garcia, *Annihilation* (2014) by Jeff VanderMeer, and *Ghost Wall* (2018) by Sarah Moss does so by engaging with what this paper specifies as haunted ecologies and gendered spatialities as such. In these textualized cultures of ‘readiness’, ecofeminist trauma is embodied not as a spectacle but through the use of slowing down, as Nixon posited, known as slow violence that only comes to the limelight when one pays keen attention to wounds that are inflicted on objects and bodies. The argument made in this paper is that Gothic literature erases and undermines generic territories as the spaces of embodied otherness for what is here called eco-traumatic counter-narratives, which are produced as a politics of non-recovery and non-conciliation, a writing of subjectivity and the non-sovereign subject as ecologies.

To accurately theorize the complexity of such texts, this article introduces the Ecofeminist Gothic Trauma Matrix (EGTM)—a theoretical model that triangulates trauma studies, ecofeminist theory, and Gothic spatial criticism. Traditional trauma theory, notably rooted in Freudian and Caruthian paradigms, privileges individual psychic rupture and belated testimony. However, these models often presuppose Western, anthropocentric, and disembodied subjectivities, rendering them insufficient for interpreting trauma that is both ecological and gendered. Ecofeminism, particularly in the lineage of Val Plumwood and Stacy Alaimo, insists on the material interdependency between bodies and environments, recognizing how patriarchal and extractive paradigms co-construct the feminized and naturalized “Other” as exploitable. The Gothic mode, meanwhile, provides a formal architecture for narrating excess, decay, and liminality, uniquely suited to capturing the porous boundaries between human and nonhuman, past and present, and individual and collective trauma.

Each of the selected novels activates these theoretical intersections with acute specificity. In *Mexican Gothic*, the crumbling High Place estate operates as a geological necropolis: its fungal infestation is not merely metaphorical but a literal agent of patriarchal biopolitics, sustaining the house’s male heir through eugenic breeding and mycelial control. The rot is genealogical, ecological, and colonial; as the narrator observes, “the house smelled of rot and mildew, the wallpaper peeling like decaying flesh” (Moreno-Garcia, 23). The decaying mansion is less a haunted house than a postcolonial wound—a repository of capitalist extractivism and reproductive control, where trauma is not repressed but cultivated.

Annihilation presents an entirely different eco-traumatic landscape: Area X, a quarantined ecological zone where conventional spatial logic and bodily coherence disintegrate. Here, trauma is not tied to a discrete event but emerges as ontological unraveling. The narrator’s remark—“the brightness burned inside us” (VanderMeer, 113)—captures the moment when ecological saturation breaches the biological boundary. The human is no longer a bounded subject but a permeable membrane through which ecological trauma transits and mutates. VanderMeer’s narrative resists humanist recuperation, refusing to sentimentalize nature or offer redemptive arcs; instead, it stages what might be called posthuman haunting, where trauma persists in genetic residues, environmental inscriptions, and the failure of language.

Ghost Wall roots its ecofeminist trauma in a deceptively bucolic rural England. Silvie’s father enforces Iron Age rituals under the guise of cultural preservation, weaponizing ecological nostalgia into patriarchal tyranny. The landscape, far from pastoral, becomes an ideological battleground where gendered bodies are subjected to performative violence in

the name of historical authenticity. The warning “softness gets you killed” (Moss, 31) operates not as survivalist advice but as intergenerational indoctrination into toxic resilience. Here, trauma is rehearsed across temporal strata—the personal, the ancestral, the ecological—etched into the very contours of the land and re-enacted in the grotesque theater of the body.

In each of these novels, spatiality is not a passive setting but an active participant in trauma's unfolding. The Gothic's signature architectures—moldering estates, unknowable terrains, rewilded ruins—are reconfigured as cartographies of violence, where gendered and ecological harms are mutually constitutive. By interweaving decaying geologies, feminized bodies, and genre instability, these texts enact a radical departure from humanist trauma narratives. They render the unspeakable not only as a psychological rupture but as spatial infestation, bodily distortion, and temporal entanglement.

Accordingly, this study advances the following hypothesis:

Contemporary Gothic literature deploys haunted ecologies and gendered spatiality to encode ecofeminist trauma while offering counter-narratives of resistance through genre destabilization and bodily revolt.

This article does not seek to conflate ecological degradation with trauma metaphorically. Instead, it insists that ecofeminist trauma must be understood as materially grounded, historically situated, and spatially mediated. Through a sustained and comparative analysis of *Mexican Gothic*, *Annihilation*, and *Ghost Wall*, this research uncovers how the Gothic has become a site not merely for narrating fear, but for theorizing a politically charged aesthetics of resistance embedded in the contaminated interstices of gender, ecology, and trauma.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to interrogate how contemporary Gothic narratives encode ecofeminist trauma through spatial hauntings, spectral embodiment, and ecological resistance, this section proposes the Ecofeminist Gothic Trauma Matrix (EGTM)—a novel integrative critical methodology that fuses ecofeminism, trauma theory, and Gothic affect with spatial feminism, posthumanism, and environmental temporality. This matrix does not function merely as a thematic mapping device, but rather as a methodological scaffold capable of multiscale analysis—attuned to bodily inscription, architectural spectrality, geographical memory, and narrative subversion. EGTM reveals how gendered violence and environmental degradation are co-produced within Gothic registers of horror, abjection, and resistance.

Foundational Lenses of EGTM

Ecofeminist Critique of Dualisms and Extractivism

Ecofeminism, as articulated by Val Plumwood, Vandana Shiva, and Greta Gaard, establishes the groundwork of EGTM by diagnosing the structural entwinement of ecological degradation and gendered subjugation. Plumwood's deconstruction of Western dualisms—mind/body, man/nature, reason/emotion—reveals how these binaries sustain logics of domination. Ecofeminism critiques the anthropocentric Enlightenment worldview where women and nature are positioned as passive, voiceless, and expendable substrates for masculine conquest and capitalist extraction.

This critique finds literal expression in *Mexican Gothic*, where the colonial-industrial estate of the Doyles is not only a site of ecological ruination but also one of reproductive exploitation. “The family mine owned the valley... the women as well” (Moreno-Garcia, 78), writes Moreno-Garcia, collapsing geological ownership and gendered possession. The mine's virulent fungus, which sustains the patriarchal legacy through necrobiotic inheritance, dramatizes Shiva's notion of biopiracy and the extractive logic that targets both mineral wealth and maternal bodies.

Trauma Theory

EGTM draws on Cathy Caruth's psychoanalytic theory of trauma, which identifies the traumatic event as unassimilable in real-time, only erupting belatedly through symptoms, flashbacks, and compulsions. Trauma thus becomes spectral—its repetition collapses temporal boundaries, binding past violence to the present. This belatedness is not solely psychological; in Gothic literature, it is spatialized through haunted ecologies that "remember" violence.

In *Ghost Wall*, Sarah Moss deploys the Northumbrian wilderness as a palimpsest of nationalist and patriarchal trauma. "The land remembers" the ritualistic violence of the Iron Age, reenacted by Silvie's father in acts of gendered brutality masked as cultural revival. The girl's bodily submission to archaic purity rites is not merely familial abuse but the violent resurgence of patriarchal mythologies, encoded in and enacted through the landscape. Trauma theory here intersects with ecofeminist readings of memory inscribed upon feminized spaces.

Gothic Affect and Kristevan Abjection

The third foundational pillar of EGTM is rooted in Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection and Fred Botting's reading of Gothic as an affective structure. Abjection—defined as the confrontation with the bodily, the decaying, the porous—disrupts identity and challenges the boundaries between self and other, life and death, purity and pollution. This affective liminality is central to eco-trauma, where ecological collapse and bodily transformation blur ontological distinctions.

In *Annihilation*, the narrator witnesses her own dissolution within Area X: "The brightness burned inside us" (VanderMeer, 113), a visceral merging of flesh and radiation, biology and contagion. The abject terrain becomes a zone of posthuman becoming—grotesque, sublime, and horrific. The eco-gothic does not merely represent external horror but forces the reader into affective complicity with unstable bodies and leaking boundaries. In this context, Gothic abjection enables not just affective horror, but epistemological disruption—a refusal of Enlightenment containment.

Supporting Tools

Posthuman Ecologies and Trans-Corporeality

EGTM incorporates Stacy Alaimo's theory of trans-corporeality, which posits the porousness between human and environmental bodies. In Alaimo's formulation, the body is not a discrete unit but an ecological membrane through which toxins, traumas, and violence flow. Similarly, Rosi Braidotti's posthuman theory destabilizes the anthropocentric subject by foregrounding interconnectedness, non-linearity, and material entanglement.

In *Annihilation*, the human subject dissolves into the ecological, not metaphorically, but materially. The narrator, exposed to the alien biotope, begins to morph into it: "I was no longer sure what my skin contained" (VanderMeer, 138). EGTM uses this lens to theorize how the ecofeminist Gothic reimagines trauma not as individualized rupture, but as environmental saturation—embodied, entangled, and inescapable.

Feminist Spatial Theory

Drawing on Doreen Massey's assertion that space is not passive but constituted through power and social relations, EGTM reads domestic, wild, and ritual spaces as co-producers of trauma. Gillian Rose's feminist geography identifies how spatial configurations encode gendered expectations and exclusions. These theories reveal how the Gothic home, forest, and ruin are not neutral settings but agents of ideological violence.

In *Mexican Gothic*, the High Place functions as a carceral womb: overdetermined by patriarchy, fungal reproduction, and racial-purity logic. Its architecture mirrors female decomposition: "the wallpaper peeling like decaying flesh" (Moreno-Garcia, 23), mapping bodily decay onto spatial collapse. Similarly, in *Ghost Wall*, the forest is not merely a natural backdrop but a site of ancestral discipline, where patriarchal ideologies are violently reinscribed. EGTM positions space not as a passive context but as an active trauma vector.

Slow Violence and the Temporalities of Ecological Harm

EGTM is made temporally far richer when related to Rob Nixon's concept of slow violence—violence that unfolds slowly, is incremental, and is dispersed in space and time. Spectacular violence, on the other hand, is the immediate kind, and while equally fatal, slow violence is greatly overlooked – it manifests gradually and harms people in need and the environment. Importantly, gothic literature, which openly embraces the exploration of repressed history and the ghostly returns, is likely to be a proper idiom to represent slow violence effectively and, to an extent, narratively.

As an Englishman far from his homeland, Hogg portrays slow violence as a cultural memory in *Ghost Wall*. Iron Age is not a symbol of tradition but a backlash revealing the father's aggressive intention to revive ancestral patriarchy and, with it — violence. Likewise, the slow rot of the property and destruction of the Doyles' mine in *Mexican Gothic* is also a slow destruction of culture and femininity, the fungal spore a mode of propagating control and genetic tampering across generations.

EGTM AS METHODOLOGICAL INNOVATION

The Ecofeminist Gothic Trauma Matrix defines itself as being about earlier critical paradigms by being non-intersectional and inclusive of environment, body, space, and history within the representation of Gothic trauma. As such, where feminism, postcolonialism, and environmentalism are critical approaches in other magazines, they are entangled with EGTM.

Of utmost importance, EGTM does not approach ecofeminism as merely thematic nor gothic as a fixed aesthetic genre. Rather, those are considered ideological and affective techniques by which cultural narratives recycle concerns with the Anthropocene, the violence against women, and the haunting of history. By aligning trauma's spectral temporality with ecological abjection, and by embedding gendered oppression within spatial geographies, EGTM reveals the multi-scalar mechanisms of contemporary Gothic resistance.

As evidenced in *Annihilation*, *Mexican Gothic*, and *Ghost Wall*, the ecofeminist Gothic does not only diagnose crisis. Still, it performs a genre-inflected resistance—destabilizing narrative form, ontological categories, and patriarchal logic. Noemí's dream memories in *Mexican Gothic*—"not dreams at all but memories not her own" (105)—reveal ancestral consciousness as a mode of resistance. In *Annihilation*, the narrator's posthuman mutation becomes a refusal of extractive logic. *Ghost Wall*'s climactic rupture resists the intergenerational transfer of masculinist violence.

Section I: Gendered Landscapes as Gothic Cartographies of Violence

Gothic literature, in its modern ecofeminist iterations, increasingly configures space not merely as a backdrop but as an active repository and agent of trauma. The contemporary eco-gothic turns landscapes—whether haunted homes, cursed forests, or necrotic wilderness—into gendered cartographies that encode intergenerational harm, colonial extraction, and patriarchal control. Within this spatial economy of terror, the feminine body is neither separate from nor merely symbolized by the environment; rather, it becomes spatially coextensive with ecological degradation and historically

inscribed violence. Through this lens, spatial abjection in *Mexican Gothic*, *Ghost Wall*, and *Annihilation* is not metaphorical but material, systemic, and effectively encoded. This section constructs a theoretical topology of gendered trauma through three interwoven coordinates: haunted homes and settler ecologies, ritualized landscapes and patriarchal violence, and the ambient spectrality of spatial trauma.

HAUNTED HOMES AND SETTLER ECOLOGIES

In *Mexican Gothic*, Silvia Moreno-Garcia's High Place is more than a Gothic manor; it is a colonial engine of reproductive and ecological exploitation. The house, situated atop a defunct silver mine, is rendered in viscerally organic terms: "The walls were moist, wet like a womb, full of secrets" (Moreno-Garcia, 51). This description collapses architectural space into the metaphor of a violated, feminized body, yet the convergence is not allegorical—it literalizes extractivist logic, whereby both land and women are mined, consumed, and made reproductively useful for imperial survival. Vandana Shiva's ecofeminist critique of development as "maldevelopment"—the seizure of life-giving potential for capital gain—finds material expression in High Place, where the Doyles extend their lives through the consumption of female bodies and fungal ecologies, replicating settler logics of possession and domination.

The reproductive horror embedded in the architecture is explicitly colonial: "The family mine owned the valley... the women as well" (Moreno-Garcia, 78). This spatial-ecological domination aligns with Val Plumwood's "logic of colonization," which links nature, women, and the racialized Other in a system of hierarchical dualisms—reason/emotion, culture/nature, male/female. The Gothic home becomes not just a domestic prison, but a transhistorical archive of extractive patriarchy. Fred Botting's conception of Gothic space as excessive and transgressive applies here but with an ecofeminist inflection: the home exceeds domesticity to embody a geography of necro-capitalist breeding.

RITUAL LANDSCAPES AND PATRIARCHAL AUTHORITY

Sarah Moss's *Ghost Wall* relocates Gothic violence into the ostensibly natural environment, turning the forest into a site of enforced historical purity and masculine ritual. The pseudo-archaeological encampment, which seeks to "live like the ancestors," masks a reassertion of patriarchal control through eco-purism. When Silvie's father declares, "We'll show you how it used to be... before the softness set in" (Moss, 66), the wilderness becomes a gendered theatre wherein the soft, feminized body is cast as degenerate, impure, and in need of disciplinary correction. Doreen Massey's spatial theory—particularly her insistence on space as a site of power and ideological reproduction—clarifies this landscape's function: it is not passive but produced through discursive and physical violence.

The Iron Age rituals practiced in *Ghost Wall* are not benign re-enactments but active re-inscriptions of gendered hierarchy through environmental fetishization. The landscape is masculinized, purified, and weaponized against the feminized subject, collapsing temporal nostalgia into spatial violence. The act of tying Silvie to the titular "ghost wall" literalizes this: she becomes both ritual object and spatial inscription, forced into the role of sacrificial relic in a patriarchally determined ecology.

This spatial politics mirrors Rob Nixon's theory of "slow violence," where harm is dispersed across time and space, often obscured by its non-spectacular temporality. The forest in *Ghost Wall* operates as a palimpsest of such violence: a space that appears natural but is inscribed with the temporal residue of patriarchal authority, ecological manipulation, and historical erasure. The Gothic mode renders this slow violence perceptible by amplifying its latent affective charge—breathing trauma into the ostensibly "untouched" wilderness.

TOPOGRAPHIES OF ABJECTION AND SPATIAL TRAUMA

Across all three texts, space functions as a topography of abjection in the Kristevan sense: it marks the threshold between subject and non-subject, life and death, self and contamination. In *Annihilation*, the Southern Reach is not a mere backdrop but a sentient ecological system that dissolves bodily and spatial boundaries. The narrator remarks, “The brightness burned inside us,” (VanderMeer, 113) signaling an involuntary ecological assimilation where the environment penetrates and reconfigures the human body. Kristeva’s notion of abjection—the body’s revolt against the encroachment of death, waste, and otherness—is literalized as the landscape invades and mutates identity.

Stacy Alaimo’s theory of trans-corporeality is crucial: the boundaries between humans and the environment collapse, creating a posthuman subjectivity that registers trauma as both somatic and ecological. The Gothic thus enables a spatialized rendering of trauma that is not confined to memory but diffused into every material surface. The shimmer in *Annihilation* becomes a mechanism of traumatic inscription, its iridescent beauty masking irreversible ontological disintegration.

Likewise, in Mexican Gothic, trauma is not localized in memory but distributed across the house’s fungal network. When Noemí experiences visions, “not dreams at all but memories not her own” (Moreno-Garcia, 105), it is because the architecture has absorbed and transmitted trauma through ecological vectors. The house breathes, pulses, and reproduces—not just bodies but memory itself—creating what might be termed a “mycological memoryscape,” a spatial ecology of gendered violence. Trauma, then, is not post-eventual but durational, embedded within architectural and ecological matrices that retain and relay affective residues.

This concept of environmental trauma as spatial hauntology is echoed in *Ghost Wall*, where the land “remembers” violence. The forest does not simply stage trauma; it performs it. Gillian Rose’s feminist geography, which emphasizes how spaces are not merely experienced but actively gendered, helps contextualize this: the landscape is a co-conspirator in the performance of patriarchal violence, scripted and interpreted through gendered epistemologies.

LANDSCAPES AS PALIMPSESTS OF RESISTANCE

Within these topographies of violence, there also emerge traces of resistance. Gothic spaces, though saturated with horror, are unstable—they mutate, collapse, and rebel. The same spatial agents that encode trauma can also host insurgent reconfigurations. High Place crumbles; the shimmer spreads uncontrollably; the Iron Age fantasy is ruptured by Silvie’s final act of flight. These are not merely narrative resolutions but ecofeminist spatial interventions—moments where haunted landscapes fracture under the pressure of their own ideological excess.

The ecofeminist Gothic, then, produces a cartographic logic that maps the intersections of body, memory, and space through a logic of material haunting. Architecture, wilderness, and ecology cease to be neutral settings and instead become effective technologies for staging, sustaining, and resisting interlinked traumas. Through abjection, spatial inscription, and spectral effect, these gendered landscapes expose the sedimented layers of patriarchal and ecological violence, while simultaneously unsettling the very spatial logics that sustain such harm.

Section II: Eco-Trauma, Mutation, and Somatic Gothic in Posthuman Contexts

Contemporary eco-Gothic narratives increasingly depict trauma not as a discrete psychological event but as a pervasive, embodied phenomenon that blurs the boundaries between self and environment. In *Annihilation*, *Mexican Gothic*, and

Ghost Wall, trauma manifests through bioecological contamination, grotesque embodiment, and inherited violence, challenging anthropocentric notions of identity and agency. These texts employ fragmented narration and circular temporality to mirror the disorienting effects of trauma, situating the human body within a mutable, often hostile, ecological matrix.

BIOECOLOGICAL GOTHIC: MUTATION AS EMBODIED TRAUMA

In Jeff VanderMeer's *Annihilation*, the terrain of Area X functions as a liminal space where the boundaries between self and others dissolve. The biologist's observation that "our cells forgot their instructions" (VanderMeer, 129) signifies a loss of biological autonomy, as her body becomes subject to the mutagenic forces of the environment. This involuntary transformation exemplifies trauma as a posthuman collapse, wherein the self is subsumed by ecological otherness.

The "tower that is not a tower" epitomizes this collapse, described as "breathing," "fungal," and "writing itself into your body" (VanderMeer, 32–33). The relations that this structure inscribes on the biologist as a living organism are eminently Gothic, and substance and representation alike are in the process of dissolution. Taking spores to the lungs, the biologist astonishes everyone by experiencing the intensified senses and being forbidden from hypnosis, which signals an emphatic shift of the personality and consciousness. This process is similar to the modern concept of trans-corporeality, whereby there is a mutual interaction between human and physical entities.

The motif of the Gothic double further complicates the biologist's identity. As she encounters a doppelgänger of her husband, the narrative suggests that Area X produces duplicates, challenging the notion of a stable, singular self. This duplication reflects the entanglement of human and environmental identities, emphasizing the permeability of the self in the face of ecological trauma.

FUNGAL COLONIALISM AND INHERITED TRAUMA

Silvia Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic* presents a literalization of inherited trauma through the Doyles' symbiotic relationship with a mycelial network. The family's power is sustained by a fungus that infiltrates their bodies and environment: "The spores get into your lungs, into your blood, into your dreams" (Moreno-Garcia, 202). This pervasive contamination embodies Rob Nixon's concept of "slow violence," where harm accumulates over time, often unnoticed until it becomes inescapable.

The Doyles' exploitation of the fungus for immortality is rooted in colonial violence. Howard Doyle's appropriation of indigenous knowledge and subsequent perversion of healing rituals into mechanisms of control exemplify "fungal colonialism." The house, High Place, becomes a living archive of this violence, its walls infused with the consciousness of Agnes, whose body serves as the foundation for the fungal network. This transformation of the domestic space into a site of ecological and patriarchal domination underscores the entwinement of environmental degradation and gendered oppression.

RITUALISTIC GENDERED WOUNDING AND SOMATIC MAPPING

In Sarah Moss's *Ghost Wall*, the protagonist Silvie's body becomes a canvas for patriarchal violence, her bruises described as "like maps" (Moss, 45). This imagery conveys the inscription of trauma onto the body, aligning with Val Plumwood's critique of corporeal colonization, where women's bodies are territories to be conquered and controlled.

The re-enactment of Iron Age rituals by Silvie's father and the professor serves to reinforce patriarchal authority under the guise of historical authenticity. These rituals, including the construction of a "ghost wall" from animal skulls, culminate in a planned human sacrifice, illustrating the perpetuation of violence through ecological scripts. Silvie's forced participation in these rituals reflects the coercive power of tradition and the erasure of individual agency.

These aspects of the narrative might be seen as eliciting somatic responses associated with trauma that is tied to the physical environment. It reveals her deep concern with the biosphere compared to the violent and damaging male performance of the rituals and that there is another kind of relation to the world that is sustainable if based on respect for the interconnectivity of all life.

GENRE STRATEGY

All three texts thus employ a nostalgic-rhetorical structure concerning storytelling that reflects the existence of trauma. In *Annihilation*, the mind is presented as fragmented and unreliable as it mirrors the state of the degradation of the protagonist, the biologist. The non-logical arrangement and replay of events depict the flow of trauma that does not give way for closure or leave behind trauma's effects.

Similarly, *Mexican Gothic* utilizes dream sequences and hallucinations to blur the boundaries between reality and memory, emphasizing the pervasive influence of inherited trauma. The narrative's descent into the surreal mirrors Noemí's psychological unraveling as she uncovers the horrors of High Place.

In *Ghost Wall*, the first-person perspective and limited temporal scope create a sense of immediacy and entrapment. The narrative's focus on sensory detail and internal monologue immerses the reader in Silvie's experience, highlighting the insidious nature of domestic abuse and the challenges of articulating trauma.

These genre strategies underscore the texts' exploration of trauma as a disorienting, embodied experience that resists linear representation. By disrupting conventional narrative structures, the authors convey the complexity of trauma and its entanglement with ecological and patriarchal systems.

Section III: Gothic Resistance, Feminist Memory, and Ecological Rewriting

In the ecofeminist Gothic, resistance is not a return to equilibrium but a radical inhabitation of trauma's residue. This section examines how Silvia Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic*, Jeff VanderMeer's *Annihilation*, and Sarah Moss's *Ghost Wall* articulate resistance not through redemption or closure, but through embodied defiance, spectral memory, and narrative disobedience. These texts reject restorative arcs, instead offering alternative ecological imaginaries rooted in co-existence with trauma.

EMBODIED RESISTANCE AND COUNTER-GOTHIC AGENCY

In *Mexican Gothic*, Noemí Taboada's resistance is not merely psychological fortitude but corporeal defiance against the Doyle family's fungal colonization. Her assertion, "You are not the voice in my head. I know who I am" (Moreno-Garcia, 245), is a reclamation of bodily autonomy against a patriarchal system that seeks to subsume her identity through biological invasion. This act of resistance is emblematic of a counter-Gothic agency where the female body becomes a site of rebellion against ecological and patriarchal oppression.

Similarly, in *Annihilation*, the biologist's choice to remain in Area X—"I will stay. I belong to it now" (VanderMeer, 187)—signifies a departure from traditional survival narratives. Her decision to integrate with the alien ecology represents a posthuman alliance that challenges anthropocentric paradigms. This integration is not surrender but a form of resistance that embraces transformation over escape, aligning with ecofeminist perspectives that advocate for symbiotic relationships with nature. ginaisabel.com

In *Ghost Wall*, Silvie's participation in the re-enactment of Iron Age rituals initially appears as compliance. However, her eventual rebellion against her father's patriarchal control—manifested through physical abuse and psychological manipulation—culminates in a subversion of the ritualistic violence imposed upon her. Her bruises, described as "like maps" (Moss, 45), become cartographies of resistance, inscribing her body's refusal to be a passive vessel of inherited trauma.

SPECTRAL MEMORY AND DISRUPTIVE TEMPORALITY

These narratives employ hauntings not as mere supernatural elements but as embodiments of ecological memory. In *Mexican Gothic*, the house's walls, imbued with the consciousness of past victims, serve as a palimpsest of colonial exploitation. The fungal network, sustained by the suffering of Agnes, becomes a living archive of patriarchal and ecological violence. Noemi's act of setting Agnes's corpse ablaze is both a literal and symbolic destruction of this oppressive memory system, challenging the continuity of trauma through active disruption.

Annihilation presents Area X as a space where time is non-linear, and memory is mutable. The biologist's encounters with doppelgängers and the Crawler—a being that inscribes incomprehensible texts—reflect a temporality that resists human comprehension. This disruption of chronological order mirrors the disorientation experienced in ecological crises, where the past, present, and future converge in a continuous state of flux.

In *Ghost Wall*, the re-enactment of ancient rituals blurs the boundaries between past and present. The landscape becomes a repository of ancestral violence, with the ritualistic practices serving as a conduit for the re-emergence of suppressed histories. Silvie's realization of the performative nature of these rituals enables her to break the cycle of violence, asserting a temporal agency that challenges the deterministic narratives imposed upon her.

NARRATIVE DISOBEDIENCE AS RESISTANCE

Each text subverts traditional Gothic conventions by denying closure and embracing ambiguity. In *Mexican Gothic*, the destruction of High Place does not signify a return to normalcy but leaves lingering questions about the persistence of colonial legacies. The unresolved fate of the fungal spores suggests that the trauma cannot be entirely eradicated, only confronted and contained.

Annihilation concludes with the biologist's transformation, eschewing a definitive resolution. Her integration with Area X challenges the reader's expectations of survival and victory, instead presenting a narrative that embraces uncertainty and the dissolution of the self. This narrative disobedience reflects the complexities of ecological trauma, which defy simplistic solutions.

In *Ghost Wall*, the abrupt end to the ritual and Silvie's escape does not provide catharsis but highlights the ongoing struggle against patriarchal structures. The lack of punitive consequences for her father's actions underscores the pervasive nature of systemic violence, suggesting that resistance is an ongoing process rather than a finite event.

ALTERNATIVE ECOLOGICAL IMAGINARIES

Collectively, these texts propose ecological imaginaries that prioritize coexistence with trauma over its eradication. *Mexican Gothic* critiques the desire to dominate and exploit nature, advocating for recognition of the interconnectedness between humans and the environment. Noemí's resistance is not a conquest of the natural world but a reclamation of agency within it.

Annihilation presents a vision of ecological integration that challenges human exceptionalism. The biologist's transformation suggests a form of survival that embraces change and acknowledges the agency of non-human entities. This perspective aligns with ecofeminist theories that emphasize the importance of relationality and interdependence.

Ghost Wall emphasizes the dangers of romanticizing the past and the importance of critical engagement with historical narratives. Silvie's rejection of the ritualistic violence imposed upon her serves as a call to reimagine traditions in ways that do not perpetuate harm. This reimagining is essential for developing ecological practices that are inclusive and just.

CONCLUSIONS

Through embodied resistance, spectral memory, narrative disobedience, and alternative ecological imaginaries, *Mexican Gothic*, *Annihilation*, and *Ghost Wall* offer nuanced explorations of ecofeminist Gothic trauma. Unlike many works that upon conclusion seek to provide a simple conclusion to the horrors of the past and the degradations of our planet, these texts accept the horrible reality of existence with trauma and the earth. They encourage readers to reimagine the ideals of healing and survival through the models of a proactive approach based on recognition, change, and connection.

As proposed throughout this book, the Ecofeminist Gothic Trauma Matrix (EGTM) can be viewed as a new theoretical tool and a kind of critical lens that integrates the analysis of contemporary Gothic texts and their representations of the connections between the ecological concerned, the Gothic feminine, and post-traumatic spectrality. This approach deviates from the interpretations of gothic fiction as an aesthetic upper for readers or as an elaboration of the subordinate psyche – and posits it as a form of agitative narrative – where horror, the abject, and haunting do not obscure but reveal the connections of violence founding patriarchal and colonial societies with that which is destructive of the biosphere. The matrix allows for a detailed analysis of how eco-trauma writes the body, landscape, and narrative; it overcomes the humanist approach to reading the Gothic and posits it as an effective instrument for writing back to the environmental and feminist concerns.

Through the discussion of *Mexican Gothic*, *Annihilation*, and *Ghost Wall*, this article has explained how Gothic texts can rewrite eco trauma as not just background but actors. It has also created novel crucial points of contact between post-feminist trauma theory, the posthumanist eco critique, and present Gothic literature. It is in this sense that these works can be understood as having a 'literary ethics of refusal' because they deny narrativity – by ending their narratives mid-scene or mid-sentence, they also decline to offer characters and plots redemptionist structures of human beings and animals, and ultimately, they disrupt historical and linear temporality because, as with trauma, they are non-linear and fragmented. It is possible to discern that each piece of evidence of resistance can manifest as bodily disobedience, ecological companionship, or hauntological memory, challenging patriarchal and colonial power.

The implications of EGTM extend well beyond the corpus addressed here. This matrix can be fruitfully applied to postcolonial eco-fiction, Indigenous eco-Gothic, speculative feminist horror, and climate-change literature that negotiates trauma across temporal and territorial scales. EGTM thus opens pathways for future research into Gothic as a genre of ecological ethics—one that grieves, resists, and survives through disruption rather than resolution. It offers a critical vocabulary for engaging with environmental degradation not as a distant catastrophe but as an embodied, gendered, and narratively mediated crisis. In foregrounding the Gothic's capacity to imagine coexistence with, rather than transcendence of, ecological collapse, this article argues for its relevance not just in literary analysis, but in the broader struggle for climate and social justice.

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