

1 Nov. 18: *Beloved* to end of Part 1

2
3 >I am so happy we have finally gotten to this part, so now I don't have to bite my tongue that
4 much. The only thing I want to mention, because I'm sure some people will be infuriated based
5 on Sethe's action. Frankly, all three times I have read this, it has never really shocked me. If
6 anybody needs an excuse to calm down pay attention to the part where she says that there were
7 humming birds whispering in her ears... Sethe obviously had some form of emotional/
8 psychological disorder. Of course that will NEVER condone the death of a child, but also look at
9 her intentions. She isn't that mother from 1996 who drowned three of her children because she
10 was sick of being a mother. She deeply and will forever love her children. And however twisted
11 killing them seems, she did do it out of unconditional love.
12

13 Baby Suggs truly impresses me. To think that one person could go through so much pain and
14 still manage to become a very understanding person amazes me. Halle, I think, gave her a sense
15 of purpose when all else seemed lost. He gave her freedom when it didn't mean anything
16 because he was willing to sacrifice. Not to make any direct assumptions, but Halle reminds me
17 of a *very* human version of Jesus. Both were willing to sacrifice in order to give back to those
18 who loved them. Now, granted, Jesus had contact with God in a way that can not be replicated,
19 but Halle has such sincere qualities that I can understand why Baby Suggs feels as if he gave
20 birth to her.

21 >I was most interested in the imagery of Beloved's tooth falling out in this reading. Earlier we
22 had discussed that Beloved had the mind of a child, but as a reader, Beloved seemed to grow up
23 very, very quickly after the turtle scene
24 and seemed to be more manipulative and dangerous. Suddenly her powers seemed to go from
25 charisma to magic and she seemed to know just how to "move" Paul D. and how to suck the
26 attention away from Sethe. Beloved even seemed to be driving Denver crazy intentionally by
27 attaching her more closely to Beloved. But then, Beloved loses a tooth and reacts in tears and
28 fear just as any child would, and the reader is reminded that no matter how much destruction
29 Beloved has caused, more will come about when she reaches an age of maturity that is beyond
30 lost teeth and tantrums.
31

32 -Beloved is taking over Denver. It seems as if Denver lives off of Beloved and wouldn't know
33 what to do with herself if Beloved wasn't there.
34 -Why doesn't Sethe go with her instincts and believe that Beloved is a reincarnation and instead
35 believes that she escaped from captivity?
36 -In a way Beloved did escape from captivity, from the Dark place
37 -Denver doesn't care about the past like Beloved does. Beloved always wants to talk about the
38 past and she becomes very mysterious as we keep reading.

39 -Why does Paul D keep questioning his masculinity? And why does he result to asking Sethe to
40 have a baby when he was going to tell her about Beloved?
41 -Baby Suggs gets told that her name is no name for a freed negro yet she still keeps it, why?
42 -Sethe shows her cruel motherly love by killing her children to protect them from slavery. Scary
43 that she goes to jail with Denver in her arms.
44 -Why didn't anyone warn Sethe that the schoolteacher was coming to get her? This is like
45 betrayal from her community, the people who are supposed to take care of her, because they are
46 jealous. This made me think of Judas from the bible.
47 -Paul D says to Sethe "you got two feet not four". This goes on to what we were saying about
48 animal like characteristics.
49 -Why does Sethe just let Paul D go? Beloved wins.
50

51 >Once again, I'll try to divide things by chapters:
52

53 Chapter 12: In response to your question concerning power-relationships and movement about
54 the property: In Chapter 11 Beloved 'moves' Paul D about (and eventually out of) the house,
55 whereas in Chapter 12 Beloved is noted as taking nighttime trips to the cold house. I initially
56 assumed that the 'power' had transferred from Beloved to Paul D. However, if Beloved is truly
57 the subordinate one, why would she have 'moved' Paul in the first place?
58

59 Chapter 13: Paralleling the proposed child to the uses of reproduction in slavery: I know that
60 the reproduction of slaves was essential to the preservation of slavery in the south, in that the
61 offspring was used to replace older, 'inefficient' slaves or those who died off. In addition, new
62 slaves could be sold for profit, and therefore were considered very valuable capital. In the case
63 of Paul D, "[reproduction] was a solution: a way to hold on to [Sethe], document his manhood
64 and break out of the girl's spell" (151). In both cases, the capability of giving birth is exploited
65 for a 3rd person's personal gain. Note especially the 'documentation of manhood'. This seemed
66 to be the driving force behind plenty of slave-rapes.
67

68 Chapter 14: A perplexing chapter: as for parallels with Baby Suggs' care after Sethe's delivery, I
69 noticed that both passages seemed to focus on different body parts. Also, note the contrast of
70 Beloved's "coming apart" to Sethe's "patching together" - sounds a bit like a death/re-birth
71 contrast comparison. Any significance here? Lastly, if I'm not mistaken, the baby is crying in the
72 "patch-up" scene, while Beloved cries out of fear when she thinks she's falling apart.
73 Foreshadowing?
74

75 Chapter 15: The act of Baby Suggs keeping her old name regardless of Mr. Garner's protests
76 proves that she's a woman who practices what she preaches: in earlier chapters we learn that
77 she devotes much time to spreading the message of 'self-love' and independence. Here, I think
78 she is doing just that.
79

80 Chapter 16: "Sethe was aiming a bloody nipple into the baby's mouth". This sort of goes along
81 with the 'cannibalism' you mentioned in your notes. This doesn't have any effect on/parallels
82 with the relationship between Beloved and Denver?
83

84 Chapter 17: The fact that Sethe isn't warned about the schoolteacher, despite the community's
85 knowledge of it, is telling: I like Morrison, in that she doesn't seem to strictly parallel good and
86 bad with black and white respectively. Her characters have more depth, and seem more
87 realistic.
88

89 Chapter 18: At this point in the novel, 'faith' is at an all time low: Suggs no longer preaches, 124
90 is disliked by the community, Sethe's relationship with her remaining children wanes, and
91 climatically, Paul D. leaves with no clue as to when he's coming back. The 'unrecognizable' Seth
92 also adds to the complexity. I feel like, while the reader may not be able to fully comprehend
93 Sethe and her character, at this point in the novel the reasons behind her actions are pretty
94 apparent: Death > Re-enslavement. Can she really be blamed?
95

96 Beloved

97 She is a devious little creature with enough reason to be. After reading the scene where she is
98 murdered by Sethe I can understand why she wants revenge. Why would Sethe go for the baby
99 first and in such a violent way. She must have known that hitting the boys over the head
100 wouldn't have killed them. Beloved's death was purely by chance and I find it even more
101 tragic. Yet I still find that I want her to go back to the darkness. She seduces everyone around
102 her and is only making the situation at 124 worse. I really don't understand her disintegration.
103 Does her existence depend on the attention she gets from other people?

104 Sethe

105 I understand why Sethe would not want her children to go back into slavery. But I find it hard
106 to understand how a mother could kill her child out of love. Even Paul D with his tin heart
107 finds it impossible to understand. There is something slightly twisted about her motives when
108 you are on the outside looking in. I also love the power she has over Beloved if only she would
109 realize it. This narrative does move a little slowly at times...

110 Denver

111 Still as annoying as ever. I find her too self-centered. Lonely or not she needs to grow up. End
112 of story.

113 In General

114 Morrison's change of perspective is a tad confusing but I love how it enriches her style and the
115 narrative as a whole.
116
117

118 >For much of the novel up to this point, nature and representations or images of nature have
119 been given a positive tone. That as long as the nature was not imposed, the animalistic identity
120 not forced upon the individual, that nature and animals were received in a more positive light.

121 Toward the end of part one, this tone takes a turn for the negative as we see images of thorn
122 bushes behind the blackberry bushes. The scene with stamp paid is very sad to me despite the
123 positive outcome and the humorous effect it has on those who see him. There is something truly
124 pitiful about the man who gets torn up figuratively and literally over blackberries. And also, the
125 image of the forest does not have a positive connotation either at the very end of part one. It
126 represents a division growing and thickening between Sethe and Paul D. I find it very
127 mysterious that this turn for the worse in regard to nature should occur at the end of part one.

128 >Again, the novel explores love and freedom. In the case of Baby Suggs, she realized she had a
129 heartbeat when she reached Bluestone Road and claimed her freedom. At that moment, she
130 began to love her body and soon she would preach about loving yourself. Sethe tells Paul D that
131 when she jumped off the wagon there was no one that she couldn't love if she wanted to. Paul D
132 even ponders, "to get to a place where you could love anything you chose--not to need
133 permission for desire--well now, *that* was freedom," (191). Sethe's love for her children was so
134 'thick' that she would rather kill them than have the schoolteacher bring them back to Sweet
135 Home. She wanted to preserve their freedom and she justifies this saying, "I took and put my
136 babies where they'd be safe," (193). Her idea of safety was considered animalistic to Paul D.

137 >I did not quite understand this phrase 'knocked down or knocked up' which was in reference
138 to Baby Sug.pg 165. What is its significance? It seems like there is a meaning attached to it
139 because it is repeated over and over. I also could not figure out what 'the dark and coming
140 thing' was. Thinking about it, it could be an imagery for the day of judgement in the Bible but I
141 could not see it flows with the rest of the story.

142
143

144 >At last we have learned the story behind all of Morrison's cryptic clues—no more spoiler alerts
145 necessary! However, even in telling the story, Morrison chooses to tell it through several
146 characters and several chapters: schoolteacher, Baby Suggs, Stamp Paid, and finally Sethe. Just
147 as Sethe tells her side of the story with tangents and unnecessary details, rambling on and on
148 and pacing back and forth, Morrison makes us jump around, back and forth between her clues
149 and symbols and images. It's ironic to note that while slaves are compared to animals, Sethe is
150 acting in a sense animalistic, bestial, in killing her child, to save her from that bestiality. Sethe
151 says that "Unless carefree, motherlove was a killer." The definition of mother love is presented
152 as an absurd paradox because mother love supposedly protects and consequently brings death.
153 Though being "carefree" is the only alternative to being "a killer," mother love cannot be
154 carefree, because Sethe has already stated that "this love ain't love at all." Any other choice for
155 motherhood is nonexistent. (However, this phrase [as so many of Morrison's phrases] could
156 also be interpreted as not merely killing the children, but also killing the mother in some
157 way...though maybe a spoiler alert is in order there.) Sethe says, "look like I loved em more
158 after I got here. Or maybe I couldn't love em proper in Kentucky because they wasn't mine to
159 love" (190). Though the fact that she loved her children "more" after she escaped means one can
160 still love in bondage, she could not "love [them] proper." The reason for this is the lack of
161 ownership: "they wasn't mine to love." Ownership is necessary for mother love, and Sethe

162 cannot be a full-fledged mother if she is not free. For Sethe, freedom is all about this love and
163 ownership of another, and although she calls it "selfishness" (190), it actually isn't. Sethe shares
164 the story with him because Paul D understands Sethe's view of love in freedom: "He knew
165 exactly what she meant: to get to a place where you could love anything you chose—not to need
166 permission for desire—well now, that was freedom" (191). "Loving anything you chose" is their
167 definitive definition of freedom. However, Paul D cannot understand the actions caused by her
168 motherly love—possibly no character in the novel, or any reader, can.

169
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171

172 >Pg.139: Lisle dress

173 "Denver's skin dissolved under that [Beloved's] gaze and became soft and bright like the lisle
174 dress that had its arm around her mother's waist." I draw your attention to this quote because it
175 could either says a lot or very little. In small terms, it attests to Denver's material sensibilities
176 and her coming to age in this superficial way. In a greater terms, it could be a foreshadowing. In
177 Beloved's gaze, Denver feels like that ghostly dress which is almost to say that, in her gaze,
178 beloved makes Denver into that ghost...could this speaks towards Beloved's intentions?

179

180 ¶pg.191: free love

181 "...To get a place where you could love anything you chose- not to need permission for desire-
182 well now, that was freedom." This, out of every other circumstance of slavery, pulls on my heart
183 strings the most. One's capacity to love freely should be an inalienable right, a vital piece of our
184 humanity that distinguishes us from any other species. However, in slavery, even this is
185 suppressed! Slaveholders play god, on illegitimate grounds, and degrade the lives of fellow
186 human beings to the point where they cannot love completely- this is as base and perverse as is
187 depriving fish of adequate supply of water.

188

189

190

191 >1.) I am torn between whether or not I want Paul D and Sethe to have a baby. On the one hand,
192 it would allow them to rekindle their obvious love for one another, giving them a chance to
193 start a new life, at last. On the other hand, Beloved would almost certainly get in the way of this
194 new life and force them to continue dwelling on their haunting past. In the end, it might break
195 up the family even further; Sethe's decision to live without more children is probably a wise
196 one.

197

198 2.) I am very confused about Beloved seeing her "face." Is she looking at an actual ghost of her
199 past?

200

201 3.) After reading this, I can't help but sympathize with Beloved a bit. She endured a horrible
202 death, but she would've lived a terrible life, too! Either way, she was always a doomed soul.

203

204 4) I can now see why Beloved is so attached to both Sethe and Denver. Obviously, Sethe only
205 killed Beloved out of love, meaning her attachment to her child was always there. Beloved
206 realizes the love her mother had for her and wishes to keep it alive, despite the fact that she has
207 been dead for years. Also, Denver accidentally drank her dead sister's blood, so she will always
208 have a strong bond to Beloved, no matter what. Denver needs Beloved because she literally
209 drank her for sustenance.

210

211 >You were so right, the tense change is a huge curveball. I cannot understand why it occurs but
212 it seems like it would be monumental or a bug sign at least. I could not see the major
213 significance of it. I do not know why it only lasted for about a scene before it changed back to
214 the normal tense. Maybe there is a presence watching that area and we saw the story from their
215 omnipotent part of view. Maybe Beloved is not the ghost we think she is and the ghost that was
216 in the house just got moved to watch the shed. Whatever happened it was creepy, along with
217 all of Beloved's strange antics in the dark room.

218