

1 Dec. 2: *Beloved*, Part III

2 >In my reading of the end of *Beloved*, I was most surprised by the section in which *Beloved*
3 becomes pregnant. That really shocked and confused me. Until that point I had considered
4 *Beloved* to simply be a reincarnated child, but when she was suddenly pregnant, it gave a new
5 definition to the concept of babies having babies. It really scared me. It also brought a striking
6 similarity to Sethe's pregnancy with Denver when she reached 124. It also was a striking parallel
7 to Paul D's want to have a child with Sethe, but instead it was with someone that wanted to be
8 and possess sethe. Like I said, I was a little terrified.

9
10 >I think a really important theme of this novel is stated in the quote "outhurt the hurter." It's
11 important to think about is this a character's intention, or is it more of survival and doing things
12 you don't necessarily want to do but have to out of protection. Consider which one Sethe fits
13 under? Yes what she says may place her easily in one category initially, but perhaps on a deeper
14 level she can fit into both.

15 ¶Also, what is the significance that when *Beloved* runs off into the woods her hair is made of fish?

16

17 >Stamp Paid brings up the idea that *Beloved* might be a different girl. He suggests "a girl locked
18 up by a white man over by Deer Creek. Found him dead last summer and the girl gone. Maybe
19 that's her." It seems as though *Beloved* can't be pinned to one character, she basically isn't a
20 character she's a presence. Morrison makes it seem likely that *Beloved* is in fact Sethe's daughter
21 reincarnated and seeking love and revenge. But, Morrison also throws in twists so at the end you
22 never really know if *Beloved* even existed and if she did you don't know exactly who or what she
23 was. Everyone even Paul D, Sethe and Denver eventually forget about her. So in the end who is
24 *Beloved* and what happens to her baby if it even existed?

25

26 >Chapter 26: In response to your question "How can thirty women break the spell?": I thought
27 this was particularly interesting - Lately, it seems that we've been talking a lot about the identity
28 of *Beloved*, and how she may represent the 'haunting presence' of slavery as well as the
29 reincarnation of Sethe's deceased daughter. This may explain why it takes a large portion of the
30 town's community to exorcise the ghost: the residents of 124 aren't the only characters in
31 '*Beloved*' that feel the ghosts haunting presence; the consequences of slavery are capable of
32 haunting large groups of people, including the citizens of the community portrayed in '*Beloved*'.
33 Is this sort-of on the right track?

34

35 ¶Chapter 27: In response to your question "How is the end of the reunion between Sethe and
36 Paul D different from the choral section 'You are mine/You are mine/You are mine'?" To me,
37 these lines ("Me? Me?") mark the foundation of Sethe's new and possibly 'to-be-found' identity.
38 That is, one that focuses on the importance of her (Sethe's) own well being. Up until now, I think
39 I'm pretty safe in saying that Sethe based the bulk of her self-worth on her children (hence the
40 extreme feelings of guilt following *Beloved*'s death). "You are mine" not only implies that Sethe

41 considers Beloved an extension of herself (assuming it is Sethe who is speaking), but its repetition
42 may shed some light on the urgency/importance of the statement.

43
44 ¶[Chapter 28: In response to question "what are the multiple senses of "It was not a story to pass
45 on"?: A loaded quote - I found it intriguing that it seems to permeate the 'forgetting of' Beloved.
46 At first, it seemed to serve as sort of a warning. However, the novel 'Beloved' itself actually DOES
47 pass that story on: in fact, I would argue that the novel itself serves to remind its audience of a
48 history (namely that of slavery...wasn't this book written in the 1980's?) that's cruelty and
49 luridness has been dulled by the passing of time. Of course, this interpretation brings into
50 question the motives behind the narrator's statement of 'not passing on the story' in the first
51 place: could it serve to remind us that retaining the horrors of our past is easier said than done?
52

53 >I can say with certainty that Beloved is the kind of book that in order to semi-understand must
54 be read more than once. After the first read I find myself still asking many questions. What was
55 Beloved, really? As we have discussed, she may represent the baby or slavery, et cetera, but in
56 my eyes she just seemed like a devil in disguise. Sethe may or may not have been in the wrong,
57 but that does not mean that revenge should be the answer or the punishment. On page 323 and
58 324 I couldn't help to think that, thank goodness they forgot her, she didn't deserve to be
59 remembered. Scarily enough, Beloved's presence still seems to have a grasp on the place. On the
60 positive side, I did enjoy the fact that the community had enough courage to come together and
61 pray. That was a very special moment. Last of all, Paul D was so kind to Sethe at the end, it broke
62 my heart, in a manner of speaking. All in all, a nice ending to an interesting novel.

63 >The lines, " Down by the stream in the back of 124 her footprints come and go, come and go.
64 They are so familiar. Should a child, an adult place his feet on them, they will fit. Take them out
65 and they disappear again as though nobody walked there," on the final page seem to allude to
66 slavery and racism and the pain that it has cost. The whole novel is an allusion of how to deal
67 with it. Even though Beloved is 'disremembered', I think she played a role in helping many
68 people acknowledge their loss in their lives and when they faced it they found their healing. For
69 example, the whole community and Sethe's family was restored as a result of her coming back.
70 For me, this is a good picture of people finding healing by facing the pains of the past.

71
72 >I was surprised that Part 3 was so short. It seems like the book took a long time to lead up to the
73 point where Beloved is basically killing Sethe, and then didn't discuss it as much as other parts.
74 Denver notices that "the bigger Beloved [gets], the smaller Sethe [becomes]; the brighter
75 Beloved's eyes, the more those eyes that never used to look away became slits of sleeplessness.
76 ...She sat in the chair licking her lips like a chastised child while Beloved ate up her life" (295).
77 Sethe is compared to a child, showing that the mother-daughter roles have switched. Also,
78 Beloved appears pregnant, further depicting this switch; however, Beloved is consuming Sethe
79 instead of giving birth. Beloved "gets bigger" while Sethe gets "smaller," implying an increase in
80 Beloved's power while Sethe appears to worsen.

81 The imagery of the “exorcism” is interesting because it is “spiritual,” if not biblical—the mentions
82 of the devil, prayer, and baptism seem contrary to most of the novel, which uses Biblical allusions
83 but doesn’t actively employ Christian rituals.

84 In the end, “by and by all trace is gone, and what is forgotten is not only the footprints but the
85 water too and what is down there. The rest is weather. Not the breath of the disremembered and
86 unaccounted for, but wind in the eaves, or spring ice thawing too quickly. Just weather. Certainly
87 no clamor for a kiss. Beloved.” In forgetting “the water and what is down there,” Sethe must
88 discard the paradoxical motherhood of love and violence that water represents. All “trace” of
89 motherhood is “gone,” leaving Sethe with “weather.” Paul D tells Sethe, ““You your best thing,
90 Sethe. You are’” (332). Sethe has to stop defining herself by Beloved, “my best thing,” who
91 represents not only her violent motherhood but slavery in general. In obtaining ownership of self,
92 Sethe is able to free herself and choose love, thereby possessing mother love in its truest form.
93 I love the last chapter. It is so completely beautifully written, and emphasizes Beloved’s identity
94 as a representation of slavery—she is “deliberately forgotten” and “has claim but is not
95 claimed”—sometimes they remember her but they try not to.

96 A favorite quote: "She is a friend of my mind. She gather me, man. The pieces I am, she gather
97 them and give them back to me in all the right order. It's good, you know, when you got a
98 woman who is a friend of your mind."
99

100 >I read the essay prompt that says freedom is basically something that is a normally a positive
101 influence in people's lives. We see in the context of this book is something unfair, perverted or
102 altered, and generally unobtainable even. After reading this, I think motherhood, its importance,
103 and role in shaping the stories characters should be considered in a light similar to this.
104 Throughout the novel, we how bad having a mother can be for the children and the mothers
105 themselves. Halle's actions to sacrifice himself for his mother had detrimental effects on Baby
106 Suggs, along with the loss of her children. Sethe ties in with a mother's love being too thick. Her
107 mothering caused her to kill one child and drive an inseparable wedge between that family. For
108 the longest time, I felt terribly sorry for Denver because she was without a mother figure and
109 played second banana to Beloved as babies and young adults in Sethe's mind. But in the end,
110 look at what this isolation gives Denver. A chance to obtain perspective on her mother's state and
111 finally allows her to grow.

112 >Baby Suggs and her influence on Denver's social efficacy in chapter 26 would suggest a taking
113 up of her grandmother's legacy. In Denver's ability to mobilize the black community, as if to
114 unify it as Baby Suggs once did, she demonstrates her own ability to gain public sentiment. This
115 is likely because Suggs has a blood relation to Denver, Sethe does not share in this capacity
116 because she is not related to Suggs. Seeing as this is a matter of lineage, then the provocative
117 question may be: does Beloved possess this same quality and, if so, to what extent?
118 ¶In chapter 27, Paul D claims that his past is made less shameful by Sethe's yearning for her own.
119 While Paul ran from his past and its dehumanizing effects, Sethe embraced her past and was so
120 caught up in it that she could barely exist in the present, hence the vacant eyes and her deficient
121 humanity. In Paul's conviction to live in the future his past is reconciled. His hope in advising
122 Sethe to do so as well is that it will do the same for her.

123 ¶Also so chapter 27, Sethe claims that Beloved was her best thing which suggests that her life has
124 lost something essential to it. In class we've discussed the shared personality dynamic between
125 mother and child. In most mother's lifetimes, they will have to give up this dynamic as the child
126 grows to maturity. Sethe's woes in chapter 27 are akin to that of any mother who is forced to
127 depart with their matured child. Their children serve as mere extensions of themselves and, once
128 they are divorced from that part of themselves, they find it difficult to live without. It is
129 important for Paul D to tell Sethe that she must now live for herself, because to make apparent
130 the reality of the situation is to further help the one dealing with it to accept it.

131
132 >There are two prominent dynamic characters in *Beloved*, Sethe and Denver. Denver develops
133 into a matured woman while Sethe deteriorates and becomes childlike. Denver's role as a
134 mediator is also important to the novel.

135 ¶I was proud of Denver assuming her role because, honestly, she is the only person aware of
136 everything. She has her naive days in the beginning, but she finally realizes the situation and acts
137 on it. Leaving 124 to reconnect with the community is the best thought she has.

138
139 >The first thing I noticed in this reading is Sethe's devotion to Beloved. Once she finally figures
140 out that Beloved is her daughter returned, she devotes everything to her. Beloved tortures and
141 manipulates her mother into getting more and more out of her. It is very reminiscent of the
142 trickster ways in which Odysseus used hints and slowly gained more money out of the
143 Phaeacians. Beloved embodies the trickster Idea that we discussed with Odysseus. Beloved sucks
144 the life out of her mother, and seemingly out of 124 as well. I am confused on who lady jones is
145 exactly. I see that she somehow knows Denver but I thought Denver never really left Sweet
146 Home. I didn't originally think that she knew what was going on. The exorcism at the very end
147 was also surprising, though expected. The fact that so many would come out, when the town that
148 had abandoned and betrayed Sethe in a way that caused Beloved's death and the subsequent
149 haunting by her, would come out to reverse the thing that they had caused, even unknowingly, is
150 a sign of redemption in a way for the townspeople.

151
152
153 >One passage from this reading was especially noteworthy for me: the exorcism.

154 ¶"Vines of hair twisted all over her head. Jesus. Her smile was dazzling". I thought it was
155 interesting how "Jesus" is its own sentence. Put this way, it doesn't seem to be statement of
156 exclamation (like "Wow, she's so pretty!"), but it's as if Beloved actually IS Jesus. It's almost like
157 Jesus' coming of the dead, with the difference here being that although people believe in her,
158 none of her believers wish for her to stay.

159 ¶The dazzling smile that she's described with also gives her the illusion of an innocent, beautiful
160 angel. Beloved (to me, at least) is the complete anti-angel, and yet here she is being described as if
161 she were God's own kin. This makes the situation extremely creepy.

162 ¶I have a question about her being pregnant, though. At first I thought she was almost in a
163 mother Mary-like situation, impregnated without having a mate. However, then I realized that
164 she had had sex with Paul D. Could that mean that Paul D would have been Beloved's baby's
165 father? Or was the baby just symbolism for Sethe's regression and not an actual being?