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

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

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

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

—Beloved is taking over Denver. It seems as if Denver lives off of Beloved and wouldn't know what to do with herself if Beloved wasn't there.
—Why doesn't Sethe go with her instincts and believe that Beloved is a reincarnation and instead believes that she escaped from captivity?
—In a way Beloved did escape from captivity, from the Dark place
—Denver doesn't care about the past like Beloved does. Beloved always wants to talk about the past and she becomes very mysterious as we keep reading.
- Why does Paul D keep questioning his masculinity? And why does he result to asking Sethe to have a baby when he was going to tell her about Beloved?
- Baby Suggs gets told that her name is no name for a freed negro yet she still keeps it, why?
- Sethe shows her cruel motherly love by killing her children to protect them from slavery. Scary that she goes to jail with Denver in her arms.
- Why didn't anyone warn Sethe that the schoolteacher was coming to get her? This is like betrayal from her community, the people who are supposed to take care of her, because they are jealous. This made me think of Judas from the bible.
- Paul D says to Sethe "you got two feet not four". This goes on to what we were saying about animal like characteristics.
- Why does Sethe just let Paul D go? Beloved wins.

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

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

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

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

Chapter 15: The act of Baby Suggs keeping her old name regardless of Mr. Garner's protests proves that she's a woman who practices what she preaches: in earlier chapters we learn that she devotes much time to spreading the message of 'self-love' and independence. Here, I think she is doing just that.
Chapter 16: "Sethe was aiming a bloody nipple into the baby's mouth". This sort of goes along with the 'cannibalism' you mentioned in your notes. This doesn't have any effect on/parallels with the relationship between Beloved and Denver?

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

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

**Beloved**

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

**Sethe**

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

**Denver**

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

**In General**

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

>For much of the novel up to this point, nature and representations or images of nature have been given a positive tone. That as long as the nature was not imposed, the animalistic identity not forced upon the individual, that nature and animals were received in a more positive light.
Toward the end of part one, this tone takes a turn for the negative as we see images of thorn bushes behind the blackberry bushes. The scene with stamp paid is very sad to me despite the positive outcome and the humorous effect it has on those who see him. There is something truly pitiful about the man who gets torn up figuratively and literally over blackberries. And also, the image of the forest does not have a positive connotation either at the very end of part one. It represents a division growing and thickening between Sethe and Paul D. I find it very mysterious that this turn for the worse in regard to nature should occur at the end of part one.>Again, the novel explores love and freedom. In the case of Baby Suggs, she realized she had a heartbeat when she reached Bluestone Road and claimed her freedom. At that moment, she began to love her body and soon she would preach about loving yourself. Sethe tells Paul D that when she jumped off the wagon there was no one that she couldn’t love if she wanted to. Paul D even ponders, "to get to a place where you could love anything you chose--not to need permission for desire--well now, that was freedom," (191). Sethe’s love for her children was so 'thick' that she would rather kill them than have the schoolteacher bring them back to Sweet Home. She wanted to preserve their freedom and she justifies this saying, "I took and put my babies where they’d be safe," (193). Her idea of safety was considered animalistic to Paul D.>I did not quite understand this phrase 'knocked down or knocked up' which was in reference to Baby Sug pg 165. What is its significance? It seems like there is a meaning attached to it because it is repeated over and over. I also could not figure out what 'the dark and coming thing' was. Thinking about it, it could be an imagery for the day of judgement in the Bible but I could not see it flows with the rest of the story.>At last we have learned the story behind all of Morrison’s cryptic clues—no more spoiler alerts necessary! However, even in telling the story, Morrison chooses to tell it through several characters and several chapters: schoolteacher, Baby Suggs, Stamp Paid, and finally Sethe. Just as Sethe tells her side of the story with tangents and unnecessary details, rambling on and on and pacing back and forth, Morrison makes us jump around, back and forth between her clues and symbols and images. It’s ironic to note that while slaves are compared to animals, Sethe is acting in a sense animalistic, bestial, in killing her child, to save her from that bestiality. Sethe says that “Unless carefree, motherlove was a killer.” The definition of mother love is presented as an absurd paradox because mother love supposedly protects and consequently brings death. Though being “carefree” is the only alternative to being “a killer,” mother love cannot be carefree, because Sethe has already stated that “this love ain’t love at all.” Any other choice for motherhood is nonexistent. (However, this phrase [as so many of Morrison’s phrases] could also be interpreted as not merely killing the children, but also killing the mother in some way...though maybe a spoiler alert is in order there.) Sethe says, “look like I loved em more after I got here. Or maybe I couldn’t love em proper in Kentucky because they wasn’t mine to love” (190). Though the fact that she loved her children “more” after she escaped means one can still love in bondage, she could not “love [them] proper.” The reason for this is the lack of ownership: “they wasn’t mine to love.” Ownership is necessary for mother love, and Sethe
cannot be a full-fledged mother if she is not free. For Sethe, freedom is all about this love and
ownership of another, and although she calls it “selfishness” (190), it actually isn’t. Sethe shares
the story with him because Paul D understands Sethe’s view of love in freedom: “He knew
exactly what she meant: to get to a place where you could love anything you chose—not to need
permission for desire—well now, that was freedom” (191). “Loving anything you chose” is their
definitive definition of freedom. However, Paul D cannot understand the actions caused by her
motherly love—possibly no character in the novel, or any reader, can.

>Pg.139: Lisle dress
"Denver’s skin dissolved under that [Beloved’s] gaze and became soft and bright like the lisle
dress that had its arm around her mother’s waist.” I draw your attention to this quote because it
could either says a lot or very little. In small terms, it attests to Denver’s material sensibilities
and her coming to age in this superficial way. In a greater terms, it could be a foreshadowing. In
Beloved’s gaze, Denver feels like that ghostly dress which is almost to say that, in her gaze,
beloved makes Denver into that ghost...could this speaks towards Beloved’s intentions?

¶pg.191: free love
"...To get a place where you could love anything you chose- not to need permission for desire-
well now, that was freedom." This, out of every other circumstance of slavery, pulls on my heart
strings the most. One’s capacity to love freely should be an inalienable right, a vital piece of our
humanity that distinguishes us from any other species. However, in slavery, even this is
suppressed! Slaveholders play god, on illegitimate grounds, and degrade the lives of fellow
human beings to the point where they cannot love completely- this is as base and perverse as is
depriving fish of adequate supply of water.

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

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

3.) After reading this, I can’t help but sympathize with Beloved a bit. She endured a horrible
death, but she would’ve lived a terrible life, too! Either way, she was always a doomed soul.
4) I can now see why Beloved is so attached to both Sethe and Denver. Obviously, Sethe only killed Beloved out of love, meaning her attachment to her child was always there. Beloved realizes the love her mother had for her and wishes to keep it alive, despite the fact that she has been dead for years. Also, Denver accidentally drank her dead sister’s blood, so she will always have a strong bond to Beloved, no matter what. Denver needs Beloved because she literally drank her for sustenance.

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