Nov. 9: Acts of the Apostles 1-2, 6-9; Book of Revelation 1-2; 
*Vintage* (p. 27 *Plume*)

—I found it disturbing how much Sweet Home was presented as idyllic or beautiful: obviously the very name is evocative (and ironic), and Sethe remembers it as a beautiful place, yet recognizes the true nature of the place, wondering if hell is pretty also. So far there have been no “bad” memories or violent scenes depicted, and the Garners seem pleasant, even if they still treat Sethe and the men very distinctly as slaves.

¶Already in the first chapters of the novel Sethe’s willingness to do anything for her children, and especially the one who is now a ghost, is obvious: when she tells Paul D about sending her baby off without her, she focuses on “they took my milk,” while Paul D says “they beat you and you was pregnant?” Even after her baby dies, she gives “10 minutes for seven letters.”

¶Sethe’s relationship with Halle as compared to that with Paul D is interesting: Sethe regards Halle as a brother, yet he is the one she marries, and they actually have sex, 4 children, and 6 years of marriage. This relationship seems to be a replacement for the lack of family that slaves experience. Sethe appears to be more sexually attracted to Paul D, and they are no longer slaves—they don’t have to have sex in a cornfield, but in a bed—yet the sex is over quickly and doesn’t appear to bring them closer. They are only connected by their memories of Sweet Home.

¶Sethe’s “blessing” of a long marriage and having all her children with the same man actually cause her more hurt. This relationship more closely resembles a real marriage and family, which Baby Suggs never had, so when Sethe loses Halle, she is more affected than Baby Suggs could ever be. I really like what Baby Suggs says: “A man ain’t nothing but a man…but a son? Well now that’s somebody.” Relationship, and especially motherhood, gives more identity than simple existence or even humanity—this is definitely the case for Sethe.

>While reading Beloved I was absolutely transfixed by the idea of love it portrayed and how each character viewed and dealt with it differently. Baby Suggs talks about a time in which she used to preach self love and appreciation and is ripped to a crippling despair by the death of her eight children. Yet, Paul D. only loves each person just enough so that when they are gone, he has a bit left to give to another. He locks everything away in his “tobacco tin” and is shocked that Sethe is capable of loving Denver as much as she does. Sethe, it seems, only loves Denver and has buried all other feelings deep within herself, but she does love Denver infallibly. It was also remarkable and strange to me how the young slave men coveted Sethe so much. It was a strange situation especially considering the thoughts they entertained of rape. Overall, sex seems to be a huge and very complicated aspect of this book.
There seem to be so many symbols here and there in Beloved. What impressed me most among them was the meaning of the (haunted?) house, from which Sethe was unwilling to leave. I feel it connotes more than the personal (or familial) tragic memories; the house functions as a root of identity for her -- an African American who led a melancholic life.

I don't have too much to say because I'm not sure what to say. However, I was curious, what is the significance of the right hand? Why not the left?

Acts emphasizes the importance of the Holy Spirit. The purpose of the Spirit is to guide the people and form a shield from the evils of the world. Along with the Spirit is speaking in tongues. The Holy Spirit is Jesus (God) in spirit form. Thus, it can fill you and become your inner guide.

Revelation presents the advice given to the seven churches from Jesus Christ. The basic idea is to keep the faith and actively support and obey His commandments. Those who continue to do this will go to heaven.

The common themes presented in Beloved are love, companionship, and freedom. The love for children is seen in the chapters read. For example, it is evident that Sethe still loves her child despite her haunting of the house. Companionship is sought by each character. An intimate companion and simple friendship are seen. Sethe and Paul D begin to see each other intimately while Denver sees the baby's spirit as company and feels lonely after it is banished by Paul D.

The idea of Sethe carrying a cross was an interesting concept that I had not previously considered. I was intrigued by the idea that Sethe had the tree on her back, which could symbolize the wood used for the cross. It could be said that the burden that Sethe carried ranged from sadness and guilt to loneliness. Also, the all-nurturing mother idea was rather intriguing considering that Destiny described her mother as the person who would not blink, would not turn away from what needed to be done.

However, overall, I found the reading to be rather difficult to follow at first. Perhaps the introduction and the wording can be blamed. The back and forth concept with Sethe and Baby Suggs' is a key point, but sometimes hard to read along with. Nevertheless, the story steadily increased in intensity, especially when Paul D arrived. He brought in a different element that I cannot yet describe. It might be the mixture of old and new, but I cannot be sure.

Because this is a novel that deals with slavery and then the escape from slavery, freedom is a central theme found throughout this type of story. The is a part in Beloved that is different in its conceptions of freedom and the desire for freedom compared to other narratives on slavery. Sethe says that Halle gave her [Baby Suggs – RG] a freedom to her when it didn't mean a thing. Normally, one would expect freedom to be one of the only things worth valuing or pursuing, the one thing that gives hope and stays in the back of an enslaved person's mind. It is differently viewed here as something worthless. Contrast this to Douglas, who wanted freedom.
from slavery and freedom to pursue education as his ultimate values and the things he sought above all else

> This novel is probably the most disturbing slave narrative I have read. The reader is plunged into the middle of the action yet is still kept confused. I find the image of Sethe selling herself to a man in order to bury the baby she murdered. Sethe killed a child who came from her own womb which to me seems like an unforgivable act. She then further violates her womanhood by selling herself or is she atoning for the sin of her child?

|| The image of Sweet Home is another confusing image. The name itself is ironic why is it called Sweet Home when such horrible things happened there? What exactly happened in Sweet Home? "It never looked as terrible as it was and it made her wonder if hell was a pretty place too."

> What I found particularly interesting about this weeks reading, centers around the whole notion of one being 'haunted'. In many of the novels/writings that we've read for class this year dealing with the topic of slavery, we've been introduced to plenty of examples of ex-slaves who've felt 'haunted' by the traumatizing events of their pasts. In 'Beloved' however, this pattern seems to falter: many of the characters (primarily Sethe and Paul D) seem instead to CHERISH the memories provided by their past lives of servitude. This becomes even more problematic, when we consider the violent ghost of Sethe's deceased daughter. Not only is this 'haunting' taking place in a house that may have traditionally represented a means of freedom for the escaped slave (let alone a female one), but the ghost's presence seems to be attempting to will them out of the house entirely. This contrast undoubtedly changes the dynamic between characters in the novel. On a side note, understanding that the death of 'Beloved' was not by any means under the 'happiest of circumstances', are we given any inference as to why she's acting in such a violent way towards her former family?

> Beloved:

- All characters have interesting names
- Why is the grandmother pondering color?
- Did Sethe name her daughter beloved or did she just put that on her gravestone? Who would cut a baby's throat? Is that actually how she died?
- Characters don't talk proper English which shows that they were definitely not schooled
- Interesting how even Paul D notices the evil of the house before he even enters it.
- Is Sethe blind?
- The young men had taken to calves? Really?
- What does it mean that Halle bought her with five years of Sundays?
- I was shocked to find out that their dog, named Here Boy, lived after being beaten up like that. The dog's name is very weird.
- Denver calls her mom ma'am, this is a sign of ultimate respect and a bit like servitude.
- Boys breast fed off of Sethe, she was more upset that they took her milk than that they whipped her.
- Paul D feels her up and she lets him.
- Paul D steals Denver's company away from her and also takes her mom.
- Interesting lines: "slowly, methodically, miserably she ate it."
  - "nobody stopped playing checkers just because the pieces included her children."
- call Native Americans "Redmen"

Bible:
- Judas is cursed by Peter and replaced by Matthias b/c he betrayed Jesus
- The arrival of the Holy Spirit can be compared to that of being possessed by something evil.
- God wants John to spread the story of how God appeared

>It is strange that Denver's biggest complaint with living in Sethe's house is that she feels cut off from society- that she is devoid of friendships or respect- but not that her house is haunted (p.17). I've referenced Maslow's hierarchy of needs once before this year and i will do so again to make a point: that the haunting is not a bad(physically harmful) haunting. If it were a bad haunting, then Denver's complaint would be about her dead sibling's ghost. In the hierarchy, before esteem(respect by others) and love or belonging(friendship) are one's physiological needs. If the haunting were bad, then Denver should feel as though her physiological need to subsist was in jeopardy and if this were, in fact, the case, then she would not have cared about social isolation, so much as her own physical well being. What makes the haunting bad has nothing to do with the nature of the 'haint' but more of how the protagonist perceives the mere presence of it: that it is a constant reminder of her(Sethe's) inescapable past. However, the haunting is beneficial for Denver who finds pleasure in the company of her dead sibling's ghost, it being the only company she has apart from a mother whom she resents (p.23).

¶The scene involving Paul D holding Sethe's breasts is crucial to the understanding of Sethe's character (p.20-21). Sethe expresses relief in having the burden of her breast, now a reminder of the milk for her unborn child that was both wasted and stolen, taken from her. This is almost to say that, in weight being literally taken from her shoulders, that some emotional baggage is also taken from her by this action. To feel relief in the temporal absolution of past baggage suggests a constant struggle with her past and an exhaustion in dealing with it's weight on her conscience. Sethe is depicted as a character with a tragic past that does not have enough strength to accept that tragedy and to attain liberation.

> To comment on your notes, the coming of the Holy Spirit and the gift of tongues is a unifying factor because it brings the whole world together as opposed to the incident of Babel where people were scattered through it. We talked about the new concept of God coming into covenant with all people in class as something unique to Christianity. I think that this is the first clear proof that it was meant for all people.
I find this statement interesting, "...nobody stopped playing checkers just because the pieces included her children." What do you think about the attitude towards family in this novel. Personally, I find this notion very different from the one in FD's story because in FD's case family seemed to mean a lot more than it does in the 'Beloved'.

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Beloved, like The White Tiger, exhibits another story about oppression by family. Though Sethe is technically a free woman, she is still haunted by the ghost of her baby, which in turn brings back haunting memories of her time as a slave. Grandma Baby Suggs shares the same problem, as her 8 children were also taken away from her. This situation is extremely similar to what Balram faced during his search for freedom, as he was being constantly reminded of the death of his Tb-infected father. Family, here, holds back yet another victim of servitude from attaining freedom.

¶As for the passage in the Bible, I was not really surprised by much. It yet again discussed the disciples’ issues with gaining followers of Jesus. The story of Saul, however, was quite interesting; he was an unfaithful man given a second chance by the Lord, and yet his worldly companions wished to murder him. The book of Revelation also gave me a strange thought. I realized how, though Heaven is a passage to ultimate freedom, if one sins and follows in the path of Satan, he/she will be forced to live an eternity of servitude in Hell. It's such a cool concept.