

1 Nov. 30: *Beloved*, Part Two;
2 e Lars von Trier, "Medea"
3

4 >Chapter 19: Does this chapter ever end? I liked the connection you made between the
5 schoolteacher's notebook and the "two-feet, not four" line from chapter 18. While obviously
6 ironic in the sense that it was said by Paul D (who should understand her situation...didn't he
7 have sex with calves?), I felt like the contrast with the notebook was especially significant in this
8 chapter: Stamp seems to believe that the "black work-ethic" can be attributed to an attempt at
9 distancing oneself from the white people's view that all blacks are animalistic and bestial. The
10 harder they work (see "spent their strength pg. 234) the angrier and more 'animalistic' they
11 become; thus contradicting the end-goal they were trying to achieve. Here we have an example
12 of a hard working woman (Sethe), who's work (primarily directed towards the care of her
13 children) eventually forces her to regress to a 'savage state'. An earlier example proves the point
14 Stamp seems to argue at the end of 19.
15

16 Chapter 20: Quick note: senior year I read Joyce's 'Portrait of an Artist' which was primarily
17 written in what my teacher called "stream-of consciousness". These chapters (primarily 20-23)
18 seemed to follow this form. In Chapter 20 specifically, I think it is interesting how Sethe tries to
19 distinguish her infanticide from her mother's abandonment: Sethe's act being one out of love,
20 and her mother's act being one out of disregard (and possibly hatred??). I find it odd that the
21 other possible identity of Beloved (that is, Sethe's mother) manifests itself in yet another
22 mother/daughter issue. This, if followed through, might drastically change the motives that
23 spark Beloved's actions.
24

25 Chapter 21: Comparing Denver and Sethe's relationships to cannibalism: While Sethe's seems to
26 be associated with horror and loss, Denver's seems to deal primarily with protection "It
27 wouldn't harm me because I tasted its blood when Ma'am nursed me" (247).
28

29 Chapter 22: Yeah. This was a tough one. The most important thing I think this chapter
30 highlights is the Sethe's daughter/ Sethe's mother issue (Beloved's identity). While I won't be so
31 bold as to say that Beloved can only have one identity, she seems caught between the
32 reincarnation of the murdered baby and the ghost of Sethe's deceased mother. At the same time,
33 earlier in the text she seems to be fighting for an identity all together (when she tells Paul D to
34 say her name in the seduction scene). Does any single interpretation outweigh the others?
35

36 Chapter 23: Wow - lots of biblical references. I had issues trying to distinguish who was
37 speaking. While at first this posed a problem, it might actually shed some light on the identities
38 of Sethe, Beloved, and Denver: while all three characters seem to be going through some sort of
39 identity crisis, there are certain times where their roles seem to switch (particularly in
40 mother/daughter reversals). Here, their identities seem to become so confusing that eventually
41 the lines blur and they become one: tough on the reader, but interesting nonetheless.

42

43 Chapter 24: To sum up in three words: I LOVE SIXO. While his laughter is up for plenty of
44 interpretations, one in particular is hard to argue: He's won. Although Sixo loses his life, his
45 wife and child-to-be make it out alive. By laughing and calling out 'Seven-o' (child?), he makes
46 this fact known, greatly stunting any superiority that the schoolteacher might feel. There's a
47 reason they "shoot him to shut him up. Have to".

48

49 Chapter 25: In response to Stamp's characterization of Sethe's motives: "She was trying to out-
50 hurt the hurter" (276). Odd that he views it as an act of aggression rather than one of defense or
51 'last-resort'. This can probably be attributed to his own bitter feelings.

52

53 > I found it intriguing to consider the idea of the Tower of Babel with the phenomenon that
54 occurred in the Clearing with Baby Suggs. The social categories did indeed erode when the
55 men, women, and children changed roles, from crying to laughter to dancing. After reading this
56 passage I have an even greater for Baby Suggs and her work as a leader in this isolated
57 community. The people needed a way to release all that burned inside them and they
58 discovered how to release with the help of this ritual.

59 ¶Stamp's memories brought another dimension to the story. I have noticed that as the novel
60 continues the more motives and perspectives have been added. Although, this helps in
61 understanding the entire book it is still in the hazy zone for comprehension.

62

63 > The scene where the three women are ice skating is very striking. "Nobody saw them falling.."
64 a phrase which is repeated over and over again. The three women are beginning their descent
65 into madness like angels falling from grace. It is no wonder Sethe cracks under the pressure
66 believing all her dreams have come true. Stamp Paid is an interesting character and his
67 relationship with Baby Suggs seems to me reverence bordering on love. Ella's self
68 righteousness frustrates me. Why must a slave who gains freedom give up all their pride in
69 order to be part of a community?

70 > This isn't really a comment or question, but a complaint. I have no idea what is going on in the
71 second to last chapter in part II. At the beginning of the book, things were mysterious and little

72 information was given, references were made that in due time seemed set up to be explained.
73 People that read this before said things would start to make sense later on. And to some extent
74 that is true; major plot points and turns have come up and been explained or resolved in some
75 manner. But then this second last chapter comes, opening with beloved's perspective and just
76 going everywhere. I'm not sure what beloved is talking/thinking about at what points in the
77 chapter and when it shifts from beloved to sethe to denver? to whoever else. I understand that
78 things aren't supposed to be easily laid out, things should not always be easily tied up. But I
79 come away from that chapter with nothing. Is the ambiguity in voice just used there to show
80 how connected the characters are to each other? What else is going on here?

81 >Upon reading the final segment of Beloved, I was most taken by the reasoning behind Stamp
82 Paid changing his name due to his wife's repeated rape by their master. I related it so strongly
83 to the way so many people feel after they are broken as human beings and all that they crave is
84 to be someone else, to be someone better, to be whole again. Stamp Paid changes his name due
85 to this type of reasoning. He respected his wife's wishes and did not kill, but in doing so and
86 allowing her to be raped by their master, he gave up a huge part of himself. Thus he has little
87 other choice than to change his name and be the man that he has become. This part of the story
88 really affected my emotions due to the fact that so many people need an identity that they must
89 create themselves.

90
91 >The second part of Beloved was really interesting especially the monologues and the exorcism.
92 Here are just some notes that I noticed throughout the second part of the book:

93 -Baby Suggs talks about how the white men's intrusion had detrimental effects. They took her
94 willpower away.

95 -Sethe finally understands that beloved is her resurrected daughter, took her a really long time.

96 -Stamp Paid changed his name from Joshua because his wife was given to his master's son and
97 that was basically his price for freedom.

98 -How Halle, Sixo, and Paul A die is very sad. At least Paul D was spared, but him surviving in a
99 way always brings him back to the past.

100 -Stamp Paid's thought about slavery dehumanizing everyone, even the whites is pretty
101 accurate.

102 -Learn that Sethe's mother was also hanged.

103 -Beloved's chapter is very sick and twisted. "I am Beloved and she is mine."

104 -Paul A and F are Paul D's half brothers.

105 -Beloved is literally turning into a parasite and is feeding off of Sethe's energy to the point
106 where Sethe gets tired and when the food runs low she gives her portion to Beloved.

107 -Surprising that Denver actually steps out of 124, it's almost like her coming of age. She gets a
108 job, is educated and gets people together to exorcise Beloved.

109 -The exorcism is really intense. It shows that Sethe has actually turned crazy. But finally
110 Beloved is gone forever.

111 -Paul D comes back, talks about how Sethe makes him feel and how they need to start thinking
112 about the future and not yesterday.

113 -Weird how t the end Sethe, Paul D and Denver don't actually know if Beloved came to 124 in
114 the first place.

115

116 >1. I was keep wondering if the name of "Sweet Home" was resulted from the product of slave-
117 labor plantation in the Europe -- sugar cane, which is, indeed, "sweet." If the book allows to
118 draw a parallel between the present in the story and the whole past, the history of African
119 American slavery, I believe this could be a plausible interpretation.

120 2. I was disturbed by Paul D's attitude toward Sethe after having slept with her; the narrative
121 mainly describes the inner psychology of Paul D -- one of the African American men, in whose
122 minds Sethe was represented as the OBJECT of their sexual desire. While there is a possible
123 reading that Paul D plays a positive role in the haunted house and for Sethe, I want to argue
124 that African American slavery implies another subtle male-dominancy other than white-
125 dominancy.

126

127 >Part II of *Beloved* goes further into the spiritual aspect of the novel. This includes the voices, the
128 description of where Beloved came from, and the spiritual beings of the main characters.
129 Beloved, Sethe, and Denver are driven by some form of love and their intentions are made clear
130 in the chapters from their perspectives. Part II also explains each person's past so everything is
131 as clear as Morrison wants it to be. Now we wait for the next big happening.

132 >Comments:

133 The 3 first-person chapters are especially interesting. Sethe's focuses on motherhood, relating it
134 to the image of water: "smells like the creek when it floods, bitter but happy" — Sethe's
135 motherhood was bitter when it "flooded" and caused her to kill Beloved, but is now "happy."
136 "Now I can sleep like the drowned" — Sethe is submerged in her motherhood because Beloved
137 has returned, but "drowned" connotes death and "sleep" connotes peace, revealing a paradox
138 within motherhood. Beloved's chapter also reflects this: "she goes in the water with my face"
139 and "why did she go into the water." The imagery of water comes up previously. While talking
140 to Stamp Paid, Ella says, "I ain't got no friends take a handsaw to their own children," and
141 Stamp Paid answers, "You in deep water, girl," to which she responds, "Uh uh. I'm on dry
142 land and I'm going to stay there." Once more the image of "deep water" represents

143 motherhood, but only in relation to “taking a handsaw to [one’s] own children.” Ella’s desire to
144 stay on “dry land” implies that she is separating herself from the apparently insane version of
145 motherhood that water symbolizes.

146 ¶I thought it was interesting that you mentioned Paul D as a foil for Sethe, and I see it especially
147 in their definitions of love: Paul D thinks her love is “too thick,” that “for a used-to-be-slave
148 woman to love anything that much was dangerous, especially if it was her children she had
149 settled on to love” —in contrast, he loves “small and in secret” and thinks one shouldn’t love too
150 much, whereas Sethe allows her mother love to rein free, taking it to extremes.

151

152 >I found it interesting that Toni Morrison does not use any punctuation from page 248 to
153 around 251. She only uses spaces and capitalization. Is it because they are the thoughts of
154 Beloved when she was a child? It seems like the thoughts are not fully developed and one
155 cannot very easily make out the meanings. I also thought of the spirit world and the concept
156 that there is no time in the world of spirits and therefore those thoughts were always going on
157 in her mind without stopping, thus the need to not put fullstops and commas.

158

159 >I really enjoyed the chapters from Sethe's, Denver's, and Beloved's perspectives. It was so good
160 to finally get into each of their heads, listening to their streams of consciousness in place of
161 Morrison's 3rd person interpretation of their events.

162

163 ¶Sethe: Here, you could tell that she was torn about her decision to kill Beloved. On one hand,
164 she was saving her from a life of servitude, a life without color as she points out through her
165 talk about Baby Suggs. On the other hand, she was also regretful of it; she wishes to lay down
166 with Beloved in the grave!

167 ¶Denver: Denver is WAY too attached to Beloved, and it's not at all healthy. It very much seems
168 like Beloved is turning Denver against her own mother, as she is fearful of Sethe's future
169 intentions. She trusts her ghostly sister more than she does Sethe, and this will only harm her in
170 the end.

171 ¶Beloved: This chapter was a lot harder to comprehend, and I still don't think I fully
172 understand it. Beloved keeps mentioning "a hot thing"... Is this a fire? Hell? The last one makes
173 sense to me, considering how much she mentions "men without skin" that broke her family up.
174 Slavery is evil, after all, in my opinion, so even if the "men without skin" were not literal
175 demons, they were at least hell-bound sinners.

176 ¶May we please go over Beloved's narrative?

177

178 Medea

179

180 >Obvious parallel to 'Beloved'. However, one striking difference:

181 ¶Motives - In Medea, it seemed the murder took place more as an act of revenge than
182 protection. Sethe murders (and attempts to murder) her children for what she considers 'their
183 own good'. Medea is more intent on punishing Jason, who leaves her for (the admittedly more
184 attractive) Glauce. I suppose one could argue that as a woman, Medea was left with no other
185 out: her husband could do as he pleased, leaving her with no other option. However, the
186 murder of a third party still seemed unjustifiable to me - the children shared no blame, why
187 should they be punished?

188 ¶One possibility to consider:

189 In the Odyssey, Telemachus was put in control of his mother once his father was assumed to be
190 dead. Being that both the Odyssey and Medea are Greek mythologies, is it safe to say that the
191 same would have happened to Medea once her husband left for another woman? In that case,
192 there actually MAY BE some justification for the murders, in that it was her only way of
193 escaping the masculine domination of her husband (and her husband's name).

194 ¶Might be a bit of a long-shot, just thought I'd throw it out there.

195

196 > Medea

197 Overall I have to be honest I wasn't too impressed with the movie. It is very feminist, Medea is
198 always questioning women's rights and she is showing her cleverness and power throughout
199 the movie. She uses her skills to bring down Jason and ruin his life; she won't accept being
200 exiled without getting revenge. She kills her children just how Sethe kills Beloved, but unlike
201 Sethe, Medea kills her children to get revenge on Jason. Sethe was doing it to protect her
202 children from a life of slavery, Medea does it out of selfishness.

203

204 >'Medea' seems to kill her children out of malice, whereas Sethe kills out of love, "to out-hurt
205 the hurter "(276).

206

207 > I found the movie Medea really disturbing. In some ways she is like Sethe in the sense that
208 they both kill their children but I think she is worse because there is no valid reason for killing
209 them. She does it to hit back at Jason which is not reason enough. The fact that she poisons the
210 princess means that she was motivated by hatred and not love as Sethe was.

211