



BELLOVED (part 2)

Toni Morrison

STYLE

- * nonlinear/fragmented narrative
- * experimental narration
- * biblical allusion
- * consciousness of writing
- * changing point of view
- * flashbacks
- * stream of consciousness
- * symbolism/ metaphor

“In trying to make the slave experience intimate, I hoped the sense of things being both under control and out of control would be pervasive throughout; that the order and quietude of everyday life would be violently disrupted by the chaos of the needy dead; that the herculean effort to forget would be threatened by memory desperate to stay alive. To render enslavement as a personal experience, language must get out of the way.”

(foreword, xix)

“And if she thought anything, it was No. No. Nono. Nonono. Simple. She just flew. Collected every bit of life she had made, all the parts of her that were precious and fine and beautiful, and carried, pushed, dragged them through the veil, out, away, over there where no one could hurt them. Over there. Outside this place, where they would be safe.” (pg. 192)

The central, and perhaps most horrific, scene in *Beloved* occurs when Sethe murders her young daughter and attempts to murder her other children to keep them from schoolteacher. Ironically, it is a scene that could have easily been prevented. The community that Sethe has found solace in for 28 days has turned its back on her deliberately, failing to warn her of the horsemen’s arrival because of a perception that Sethe is “too proud” and perhaps deserves what she gets. She is then “ostracized because of the actions she takes in the face of the assault that was in some part enabled by the community’s failure to include her” (Jesser, 340).

Trees

--A motif of trees is prevalent throughout *Beloved*. A circle of boxwoods for Denver, a chokecherry on Sethe’s back, a holy clearing for Baby Suggs, a “Brother” for Paul D, and a stump for Beloved--to name just a few. Lorrie W. Fulton writes that Morrison “adds complexity to the tree as a symbol by associating the key issues that each of her characters struggles against with a tree of some kind, and her characters even become tree-like themselves as they work through these respective issues” (Fulton 189). Is this true?

“There was no nursing milk to call my own. I know what it is to be without the milk that belongs to you; to have to fight and holler for it, and to have so little left.” (page 236)

124 was spiteful...

124 was loud...

124 was quiet...

A Few Questions:

- * What is Beloved's given name? Why are we never told?
- * Schoolteacher believes Sethe's behavior is a result of freedom. Is it?
- * Paul D stirs Sethe's memory and shares his stories, yet is unwilling at first to accept Sethe's own. Why?
- * Knowing what they know of slavery, how can the community offer Sethe and her children up to the four horsemen and still remain a community?
- * Who IS Beloved? Is she really Sethe's daughter?
- * Why is it not a story to be passed on--as stated in the final chapter?

"Denver thought she understood the connection between her mother and Beloved: Sethe was trying to make up for the handsaw; Beloved was making her pay for it. But there would never be an end to that" (295).

According to Olivia McNeely Pass, Sethe needs to pass through five stages on her way to accepting her daughter's death: Denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression, and finally acceptance (Pass 118).

Are blame, guilt, justice, and redemption necessary to the process of healing? Does trauma really ever end? Do we want it to? (see Banks)

"It was though Sethe didn't really want forgiveness given; she wanted it refused" (297).



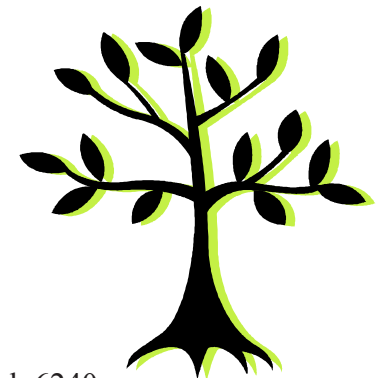
Beloved

Directed by Jonathan Demme
Starring Oprah Winfrey, Danny Glover, Thandie Newton and Kimberly Elise
1998

Sources/Sites:

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- Jesser, Nancy. "Violence, Home, and Community in Toni Morrison's Beloved." African American Review. 1999. 325-345.
- Morrison, Toni. Beloved. New York, Random House, 1987.
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"The best thing she was, was her children. Whites might dirty her all right, but not her best thing, her beautiful, magical best thing--the part of her that was clean" (296).



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