

Archetypal

Water

“A fully dressed woman walked out of water”

“She barely gained the dry bank of the stream before she sat down and leaned against a mulberry tree. All day and all night she sat there, her head resting on the trunk in a position abandoned enough to crack the brim in her straw hat.”

As we see Beloved walk out of water when she first appears, it represents her entrance to the world and her resurrection/second rebirth. Water is also a representation of birth and death, as an entry and exit to the living world shown in how Beloved remembers that she came from a place where she saw Sethe’s “diamonds”. Therefore the water is also a tomb for dreams.

“But there was no stopping water breaking from a breaking womb and there was no stopping now.”

Sethe’s womb/peeing/water breaking from the sight of Beloved indicates Beloved’s second rebirth. The idea of Beloved sucking the life out of Sethe is shown through when Sethe needs to pee in reaction to Beloved’s appearance and Beloved’s initial thirst.

Blue Stone Road

The road in which 124 resides on. It is a road which in itself represents a journey of initiation for Sethe, Denver, and Paul D (basically the ones who came into contact with Beloved). Also represents separation (Sethe and Beloved), transformation (When she realizes Beloved is her daughter), return (Paul D who saves Sethe). The blue represents the “sadness” of 124, religious feelings of security in how 124 was originally Baby Sugg’s house.

Three

“Sethe looked to her left and all three of them were gliding over the dust holding hands. Maybe he was right. A life.”

Three refers to unity in how she saw a wholesome, complete, and light (goodness/bright) future for Denver, Paul D, and she. Together they represent the holy trinity. Foreshadows the possibility of finality yet this is what upsets Beloved and causes her to take more drastic steps in ruining Sethe. The unholy trinity is formed through Beloved, Sethe, and Denver in how when they are together they are trapped within the house and Beloved is sucking the life out of Sethe and overall bad things happen.

Three is also the symbol for Beloved in how she was the third child, the missing number of 124 Bluestone road. In how she is the third child she completes the set of children, she completes Sethe’s journey (because Sethe had to face her to get over her), she helps complete Denver’s journey into adulthood in how Denver was forced to break out of her shell to protect her mother.

White

“Out of the dimness of the room in which they sat, a white staircase climbed toward the blue-and-white wallpaper of the second floor.

Paul D could see just the beginning of the paper; discreet flecks of yellow sprinkled among a blizzard of snowdrops all backed by blue.”

The stairs on the staircase were painted white in order for the already-crawling baby to see where she was climbing. The white also refers to the innocence, purity, and supernatural of the house. The fact that Beloved was seen on the stairs is because the stairs (being white) are pure and Beloved being impure would stand out.

“And it was the tender embrace of the dress sleeve that made Denver remember the details of her birth--that and the thin, whipping snow she was standing in, like the fruit of common flowers.”

When the dress “floats” up and embraces Sethe, we see again the idea of being haunted and ghosts yet the tenderness in the dress’ embrace shows a different, kinder side of Beloved that shows there is still love and tenderness for Sethe within her yet is confused by it’s bitterness

Biblical

“Sixty million

I will call them my people,

which were not my people;

and her beloved.

which was not beloved.

ROMANS 9: 25”

Biblically, refers to the separation of the gentiles and the Jews and how those who were considered to be his people, God calls his people, and those who were not considered to be loved by God were loved by him.

However in context to Beloved, we can assume that “her beloved” is in reference to the character of Beloved (otherwise known as 124 or the color red).

Also refers to how people thought that Sethe was mad and would kill her children out of hatred or anguish, but in actuality it was done out of love; something which 124 cannot understand, her being a baby and a static character. Because of her nature as a static character Beloved changes all those who come into contact with (which is why she can be seen as “not beloved” because she represents slavery), yet the fact that her presence forces those around her to confront their pasts (concerning killing her own child for Sethe and slavery as a whole for everyone “sixty million and more”).

The idea of Beloved is a biblical allusion in how Beloved’s pain from her separation from Sethe is paralleled to the pain of mankind and their separation from God such as Solomon’s wife and the watchmen. (Ochoa 115)

“Her skin was flawless except for three vertical scratches on her forehead so fine and thin they seemed at first like hair, baby hair before it bloomed and roped into the masses of black yarn under her hat.”

Similar to "Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. This calls for wisdom: let him who has understanding reckon the number of the beast, for it is a human number, its number is six hundred and sixty-six." (Revelation 13:16-18 RSV)

“Sethe was thirteen when she came to Sweet Home and already iron-eyed. She was a timely present for Mrs. Garner who had lost Baby Suggs to her husband's high principles. The five Sweet Home men looked at the new girl and decided to let her be.”

Bringing Sethe to Sweet Home - Paul D smiled then, remembering the bedding dress. Sethe was thirteen when she came to Sweet Home and already iron-eyed. She was a timely present for Mrs. Garner who had lost Baby Suggs to her husband's high principles. **Garner doesn't make or call Sethe, he just brings her to sweet home. In retrospect, Lilith is in the sense, the same as Mr. Garner brings Sethe is bringing. She is a story that is passed on but not written (Stave 24).**

Mr. Garner as God – “Mr. Garner bragged about while other farmers shook their heads in warning at the phrase. “

Here Mr. Garner as seen as the God who believes he has power “to make and call his own niggers men” (Stave 52). We can interpret Mr. Garner is someone who acts like naïve, and is not portrayed as a vicious being. He can impose a nature on the beings he believes he owns, seeing how all of the slaves are named “Paul _ Garner,” the biblical allusion is that Mr. Garner is God, who in the book is a God-figure here as he has no children, and his wife is portrayed as frail and/or impassioned. He has no understanding of the human need for sexual intimacy, and his authority allows him to impose his values on the human, with no regard for consequences (Stave 60).

Paul D personified as Adam - As if to punish her further for her terrible memory, sitting on the porch not forty feet away was Paul D, the last of the Sweet Home men. And although she said, "Is that you?"

We can see that Paul D is the Adam figure in the context of meeting Sethe (Stave 65). Adam always takes the dominant sexual role, as Paul D also does take the sexual front when he first initiates with Sethe by looking at the tree on Sethe's back—and then finishing it up in chapter two with the uneventful scene with the two in bed. Paul D also takes the lead role as the man, as Adam does, and we can see that this allusion to Paul D can be linked together with the example as him with a dominant stance.

Symbols:

“124 was spiteful”

“Her skin was flawless except for three vertical scratches on her forehead so fine and thin they seemed at first like hair, baby hair before it bloomed and roped into the masses of black yarn under her hat.”

124 is the name of the house and symbolizes Beloved because the 3 represents how she, the third child, is missing because she is killed by Sethe. The house's title is 124 and in that represents the fact that Beloved is attached and part of the home. Her presence is integrated into the house itself and its identity.

Red

“Paul D tied his shoes together, hung them over his shoulder and followed her through the door straight into a pool of red and undulating light that locked him where he stood.”

“he red was gone but a kind of weeping clung to the air where it had been.”

Red is the color that represents Beloved in her entirety throughout the work including her rage, her love, the blood that was spilled in her short lifetime and throughout the history of slavery.

Colors

“Now I know why Baby Suggs pondered color her last years.

She never had time to see, let alone enjoy it before. Took her a long time to finish with blue, then yellow, then green. She was well into pink when she died. I don't believe she wanted to get to red and I understand why because me and Beloved outdid ourselves with it.”

“It was as though one day she saw red baby blood, another day the pink gravestone chips, and that was the last of it.”

Trees

“Boys hanging from the most beautiful sycamores in the world. It shamed her-- remembering the wonderful soughing trees rather than the boys. Try as she might to make it otherwise, the sycamores beat out the children every time and she could not forgive her memory for that.”

“She barely gained the dry bank of the stream before she sat down and leaned against a mulberry tree. All day and all night she sat there, her head resting on the trunk in a position abandoned enough to crack the brim in her straw hat.”

“... she could still make out the black silhouettes of trees in the meadow beyond. She shook her head from side to side, resigned to her rebellious brain... I am full God damn it of two boys with mossy teeth, one sucking on my breast the other holding me down, their book-reading teacher watching and writing it up. I am still full of that, God damn it, I can't go back and add more.”

Repeated tree motif throughout the entire book. Beloved was resting on a tree when she comes back. “water in the woods” is where she saw the “diamonds” relating the water (death) to the woods (trees= slavery). This element of trees and slavery is based from the jungle (chapter 5)- repeating motif of a tree. Chokecherry tree on Sethe's back = slavery is what caused the tree to be there in the first place, and its choking her. School teacher created the tree in the first place.

Iron

“Halle's girl--the one with iron eyes and backbone to match.”

“But what he did broke three more Sweet Home men and punched the glittering iron out of Sethe's eyes”

“Merely kissing the wrought iron on her back had shook the house, had made it necessary for him to beat it to pieces.”

“And those cane-stalk arms, as it turned out, were as strong as iron.”

“And the wrought-iron maze he had explored in the kitchen”

Iron represents the inner strength and perseverance found within mostly Sethe. We see a repeated motif of iron in Sethe's eyes and on her back representing how she suffered and still endured in order to pursue her goals. The only other time this iron is mentioned in accordance to another person is when Amy Denver is described as having “And those cane-stalk arms, as it turned out, were as strong as iron.” The scar on Sethe's

back being referred to as iron represents how that which has caused her suffering has actually made her stronger.

Names:

"And when the baby's spirit picked up Here Boy and slammed him into the wall hard enough to break two of his legs and dislocate his eye"

Sethe's laugh of delight was so loud the crawling-already? baby blinked.

Rape

"After I left you, those boys came in there and took my milk.

That's what they came in there for. Held me down and took it. I told Mrs. Garner on em. She had that lump and couldn't speak but her eyes rolled out tears. Them boys found out I told on em. Schoolteacher made one open up my back, and when it closed it made a tree. It grows there still."

Takes something intimate and makes it a tool of power and punishment and a symbol of dominance and control. It is also a violation of privacy and human rights because slaves are not considered human and therefore rape of a slave is permitted and accepted.

Sweet Home

Paul D laughed. "True, true. She's right, Sethe. It wasn't sweet and it sure wasn't home." He shook his head.

"But it's where we were," said Sethe. "All together. Comes back whether we want it to or not."

It is a symbol of slavery as an institution in how it portrayed the experiences of two different sorts of slavery. Catalogued "good" slavery under Mr. Garner where slaves were never whipped and were trusted and allowed guns. It also showed "bad" slavery under Schoolteacher where the slaves were treated as animals. Ironic because it was neither "sweet" or a "home" which parallels to the irony of slavery as a whole because slavery was such a great thing for the white people (they believed it to be economical and beneficial to their own interests) yet it is the most terrible example of racism in the history of America..

Cornfields

"the first two having been in the tiny cornfield Mr. Garner kept because it was a crop animals could use as well as humans. Both Halle and Sethe were under the impression that they were hidden.

Diamonds

"Where your diamonds?" Beloved searched Sethe's face.

"Diamonds? What would I be doing with diamonds?"

"On your ears."

"Wish I did. I had some crystal once. A present from a lady I worked for."

The diamonds represent the marriage ceremony Sethe never had. She had always dreamt that when she got married there would be a big ceremony, but Mrs. Garner told her that slaves didn't get that type of treatment. The diamonds were a gift from Mrs. Garner to Sethe to in a sense, "make up" for the grand marriage ceremony Sethe had always imagined.

Schoolteacher

A schoolteacher is supposed to be someone who teaches and promotes learning and truth. The title itself is also very innocent however this is greatly contrasted by the true nature of schoolteacher who is not “evil” necessarily but rather spreads the belief that slaves are akin to animals through research and studies he performs on the Sweet Home slaves. On a greater scale he represents the typical “Evil plantation owner” who is so overcome with

Garner:

“Sweet Home men--the ones Mr. Garner bragged about while other farmers shook their heads in warning at the phrase.

"Y'all got boys," he told them. "Young boys, old boys, picky boys, stroppin boys. Now at Sweet Home, my niggers is men every one of em. Bought em thataway, raised em thataway. Men every one."

"Beg to differ, Garner. Ain't no nigger men."

"Not if you scared, they ain't." Garner's smile was wide. "But if you a man yourself, you'll want your niggers to be men too."

Garner functions as God, who believes he has the power to “make and call his own niggers men”. Also he is a God figure because he has no children, his wife is portrayed as frail and unimpassioned, he has no understanding of the human need for sexual intimacy, and although he is outside a human context his authority allows him to impose his value on the human with no regard to consequences (Stave 52)

Scrunched down among the stalks they couldn't see anything, including the corn tops waving over their heads and visible to everyone else.

A false sense of privacy in which Halle and Sethe hide in order to be intimate, yet this privacy is not achieved because they are betrayed by the movement of the stalks overhead. This desire for privacy is one specific only to humans and their desire for privacy is paralleled to their desire for human rights. Therefore in their denial of this basic right, is their denial of humanity by the institution of slavery. Also the cornfield is the property of Mr. Garner, therefore even while intimate they not even in ownership of their surroundings (Harding and Martin 26)

Milk

“Nothing I could do about that. All I knew was I had to get my milk to my baby girl. Nobody was going to nurse her like me. Nobody was going to get it to her fast enough, or take it away when she had enough and didn't know it.”

Milk is a symbol of motherhood and the maternal instincts towards protection and provision for their young. Sethe's attachment to her milk and the stealing of her milk being her breaking point is connected to how the act of nursing your own child is the only bonding and provision she can give as a slave. This is also seen in how Sethe's own mother regretted never being able to nurse Sethe herself.

Animals

“The jealous admiration of the watching men melted with the feast of new corn they allowed themselves that night. Plucked from the broken stalks that Mr. Garner could not doubt was the fault of the raccoon.”

“All in their twenties, minus women, fucking cows, dreaming of rape, thrashing on pallets, rubbing their thighs and waiting for the new girl!”

“But she could not, would not, stop, for when she did the little antelope rammed her with horns and pawed the ground of her womb with impatient hooves. While she was walking, it seemed to graze, quietly--so she walked, on two feet meant, in this sixth month of pregnancy, for standing still.

Antelope

“she waited for the little antelope to protest, and why she thought of an antelope Sethe could not imagine since she had never seen one. She guessed it must have been an invention held on to from before Sweet Home, when she was very young. Of that place where she was born (Carolina maybe? or was it Louisiana?) she remembered only song and dance. Not even her own mother, who was pointed out to her by the eight-year-old child who watched over the young ones--pointed out as the one among many backs turned away from her, stooping in a watery field... Oh but when they sang. And oh but when they danced and sometimes they danced the antelope. The men as well as the ma'ams, one of whom was certainly her own. They shifted shapes and became something other. Some unchained, demanding other whose feet knew her pulse better than she did. Just like this one in her stomach.”

Dying Roses

“Up and down the lumberyard fence old roses were dying. The sawyer who had planted them twelve years ago to give his workplace a friendly feel--something to take the sin out of slicing

trees for a living--was amazed by their abundance; how rapidly they crawled all over the stake-and-post fence that separated the lumberyard from the open field next to it where homeless men slept, The closer the roses got to death, the louder their scent, and everybody who attended the carnival associated it with the stench of the rotten roses. It made them a little dizzy and very thirsty but did nothing to extinguish the eagerness of the coloredpeople filing down the road... All, like Paul D, were in high spirits, which the smell of dying roses (that Paul D called to everybody's attention) could not dampen."

The dying roses represent Beloved and foreshadow her arrival. Like the roses she is nearing her death (due what seems like an impending happy ending for Sethe) and like the roses, the closer to death the "louder" they are. Beloved's loudness is coming back to the living world and causing trouble. Paul D being able to ignore this "scent" is connected to how he was able to stand up to Beloved while she was a "red light".

Marks of Slavery

Right on her rib was a circle and a cross burnt right in the skin. She said, 'This is your ma'am. This,' and she pointed. 'I am the only one got this mark now...

How will you know me? Mark me, too,' I said. 'Mark the mark on me too.'" Sethe chuckled.... "She slapped my face."

"What for?"

"I didn't understand it then. Not till I had a mark of my own."

"And so they were: Paul D Garner, Paul F Garner, Paul A Garner, Halle Suggs and Sixo, the wild man."

All of these are different ways that slavery has marked the people underneath it like animals. Sethe's mother is branded like an animal and the Pauls are branded by their names in how they are so similar without originality as if they have

Chokecherry Tree

"Whitegirl. That's what she called it. I've never seen it and never will. But that's what she said it looked like. A chokecherry tree.

Trunk, branches, and even leaves. Tiny little chokecherry leaves. But that was eighteen years ago. Could have cherries too now for all I know."

First the fact that there is a tree on Sethe's back uses once again trees as a representation of slavery. The fact that there is a permanent tree on Sethe's back parallels the lasting effect of slavery upon Sethe. The fact that it is on her back and she is never able to see it shows how Sethe is unable to realize and consciously understand the effect of slavery upon her that is so visible to everyone else around her once she is intimate enough with them (showing her bare back). The fact that a white girl was the one who named it a chokecherry tree parallels the white race's attempt to euphemize slavery. The fact that it is a "chokecherry" tree in particular has to do with the literal name of "chokecherry" because the tree (slavery) is effectively choking Sethe.

Checkers

Pg. 27-28 “Anybody Baby Suggs knew, let alone loved, who hadn’t run off or been hanged, got rented out, loaned out, brought up, brought back, stored up, mortgaged, won, stolen or seized. So Baby’s eight children had six fathers. What she called the nastiness of life was the shocks she received upon learning that nobody stopped playing checkers just because the pieces included her children.”

In the passage Baby Suggs compares the institution of slavery to a game of checkers. The emphasis of comparing her children to checker pieces indicates how slavery dehumanizes one to be treated as object to be moved around without allowing individual will. The system does not see slaves as human and therefore hold no compassion towards their personal feelings of maternal instinct, etc; this is shown through Baby Suggs as she is torn from her own children, the most cherished of life, as they are treated merely as checkers.