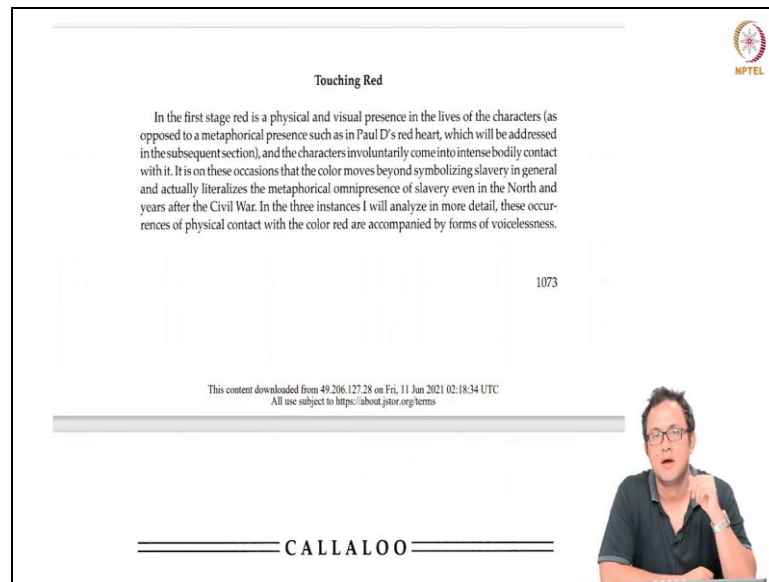


**Trauma and Literature**  
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**Lecture – 57**  
**Toni Morrison's Beloved - Part 3**

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This embattled course is titled “Trauma and Literature”. We are looking at Toni Morrison's novel “Beloved” we are looking at an essay which studies comprehensively the text of the novel. As well as touch upon some of the issues which we; discuss in this particular course looking at the convergence between the literary lens and the traumatic experience.

This particular essay talks about the colour symbolism the colour red in particular. In terms of how that corresponds to certain psychological conditions certain spiritual conditions certain embodied corporeal conditions. The redness becomes almost like a textural semiotic marker across which true generations are connected, disconnected as well as articulated.

In the first stage, this is a section called touching red. In a first stage, stage red is a physical and visual presence in the lives of the characters as opposed to a metaphorical presence such as in Paul D's red heart which will be addressed in a subsequent section and the characters involuntarily come to intense bodily contact with it. It is on these occasions that the colour moves beyond symbolizing slavery in general and actually

neutralizes the metaphorical omnipresence of slavery even in the north and years after the civil war.

There is this metaphorical presence of slavery and the real presence of slavery. So, the civil war is a political backdrop in the novel but then we find that even after years after civil war we have this sort of the continual presence of slavery in different forms real as well as metaphorical. In the three instances, it is to analyze in more detail these occurrences of physical contact with the colour red are accompanied by forms of voicelessness.

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**CALLALOO**

A conversation between Baby Suggs and Stamp Paid provides the first elaborate example of the link between physical contact with slavery's literalized presence and an instance of voicelessness. The discussion takes place in the fall when they are both "ankle deep in leaves" which are later explicitly described as red (209). There are "two whitemen burning leaves" who turn their heads toward them (210). The dialogue occurs because of Baby Suggs's reaction to Schoolteacher finding her home and invading it without hesitation to come after her family. This experience, more so than any of the suffering she endured under slavery about which she often speaks, has left her incapable of calling in the Clearing. After this violation, Baby Suggs has decided that she will no longer serve as the "unchurched preacher" of the community (102). She "believed she had lied. There was no grace—imaginary or real" (105). In fact, as Sethe puts it in explaining why she will not talk to Denver about what happened in the woodshed, "She and Baby Suggs had agreed without saying so that it was unspeakable" (69). Not only is the act itself unspeakable, but even the agreement about this state is reached "without saying so." Luckhurst has gone so far as to see the necessity of Beloved's haunting grounded in the "lack of testimony" as "ghosts are the signals of atrocities, marking sites of untold violence. . . . A haunting does not initiate a story; it is the sign of a *blockage* of a story" (*The Trauma Question* 93).

Further emphasizing the multi-layered loss of voice this scene addresses, the discussion revolves around Stamp Paid trying to convince Baby Suggs that "you can't quit the Word. It's given to you to speak. You can't quit the Word, I don't care what all happen to you" (Morrison, *Beloved* 209). It is in the face of this new reminder of her complete vulnerability to the evils of slavery, when she is standing ankle-deep in its physical literalization, when she is covered in the flying fragments of the burned red leaves, and when the "odor of burning leaves was brilliant" (209), that Baby Suggs answers Paul D's whispers of "The Word. The Word" with "That's one other thing they took away from me" (210). Stamp Paid is not able to understand the meaning of her compulsive repetition of "I'm saying they came in my yard" as an explanation of her loss (211),<sup>14</sup> which is a powerful example



Our conversation between Baby Suggs and stamp paint provides the first elaborate example of the link but in physical contact and with slavery's literalized presence and an instance of voicelessness. The discussion takes place in the form when they are both ankle deep in leaves which are later explicitly described as red there are two white men burning leaves who would turn the heads towards them.

The dialogue occurs between because of Baby Suggs's reaction to school teacher finding a home and invading it without hesitation to come after our family. This experience more. So, than any of the sufferings she endured under slavery about which she often speaks has left her incapable of calling in the clearing after this violation Baby Suggs has decided that she will no longer serve as the unchurched preacher of the community.

She believed she had lied there was no grace imaginary or real in fact as Sethe puts it in explaining why she will not talk to Denver about what happened in the woodshed she and Baby Suggs had agreed without saying. It was unspeakable not only is the act itself unspeakable but even the agreement about this state is reached without saying. So, Lucas has gone so far as to see the necessity of *Beloved's* haunting grounded and the lack of testimony has caused other signals of atrocities marking sites of untold violence.

A haunting does not initiate the story it is a sign of a blockage of a story. The reason due to which the story is read out in details is it talks about different forms of violence and different forms of redressals. We find there is a rejection of the institutional the institution of Christianity the institution of forgiveness and the institution of articulation. There is a definite movement away from the church and definite acknowledgement and awareness of the falsity of the Christian faith.

The falsity or the irrelevance shall we say of grace of goodness of the stereotypical sentiments which are preached by the church. There is a rejection of the institution of forgiveness there is a relational institution on grace but what is most important over here is the fact that the unspeakability of the even the unspeakability of the experience which is what makes it.

It is violent and atrocious in the first place. The violence is visceral, embodied and corporeal at the same time; violence is also a narrative category. In the sense that it is some kind of an act experience which cannot be put into a narrative which cannot be invested into a narrative. So, the rain lies the quality of violence which is also a narrative category. The quotation of Roger Lockhart at the end from the trauma question where he says that the production of spirituality the fact that there are so many ghosts.

So, ghost can be seen as again unspeakable situations. Situations and conditions which are unspeakable indescribable. The very idea of the course, the experience or the category of the ghost is something which lies outside of representation lies outside of ontological boundaries ontological definitions. So, there is the costly quality now we can see how the ghostliness in "*Beloved*" of the character of *Beloved*. The novel "*Beloved*" and the ghostliness is also a narrative category.

It is something which is outside the narrative it is something which cannot be spoken about something which cannot be touched by narrative by voice by words. So, there are not lies the quality of the haunting quality in “Beloved” now this untold violence this spectrality of violence is something which it does not initiate the story it blocks the story. This is interesting because what Lucas was saying over here is how the blockage to a story becomes a narrative device.

In a certain sense, so, we have a device which does not just propel the plot as is commonly known but it is also a device for which the plot is interrupted which is through which the plot is blocked. So, this blockage of the story is important for us to understand and therein lies a problem and also the complexity of spectrality and narrativity and this is the convergence we are looking at here spectrality and narrativity.

Further emphasizing, the multi-layered loss of voice this scene addresses the discussion revolves around stamp page trying to again another character is trying to convince Baby Suggs that one cannot quit the word. It is given to one to speak, one cannot quit the word “I do not care what all happened to you”. The way in which the idea of Christianity and negativity are blended in together.

As “The Book of Genesis” tells us that in the beginning there was this word and the word belonged to God and the word was God. The quality of voice, the quality of language is seen as a divine design. We see Baby Suggs over here trying to reject word, trying to reject speech trying to reject language want to move away from language and are trying to acknowledge wordlessness conduct knowledge voicelessness because that seems to be the more authentic state to be the more authentic condition to be voicelessness a wordlessness.

This rejection of the word anyway is a narrative strategy in a way that moves away from the normal normative narrative design but it is also a spiritual strategy. Because it is also moving away from the institution of the church the institution of Christianity is the rejection of the word the word given by God because that is seen as irrelevant. And insufficient given the atrocities and violence suffered by these subjects.

It is in the face of this new reminder of a complete vulnerability to the evils of slavery when she is standing ankle deep in his physical literalization when she is covered in the flying fragments of the burnt red leaves. And with the order of burning leaves was brilliant the Baby Suggs answers Paul D's whispers of the word the word where that is the one thing they took away from me.

The word being taken away from the subject is the voice taken away from the subject. The subject can only retaliate by a deliberate suspension of language by a deliberate refusal to speak by deliberate and strategic silence because the word is taken away. We were talking about how voicelessness is not really a biological corporeal condition, meaning, it is not saying that you cannot make a sound.

We cannot say anything but it is also symbolically saying that whatever we say is not meaningful whatever we say is not enough it is not relevant it is not substantial. This insubstantiality of certain subject's voices compared to certain other subject's voices that defines and calibrates the politics of articulations. There are certain kinds of articulation which are more dominant which are more privileged and certain other forms of articulation which are relegated to the margins which are marginalized, irrelevant which are powerless and agents less.

The relationship in agency and voice becomes quite experiential in this novel particularly with the backdrop of slavery. So, stampede is not able to understand the meaning of a compulsive reputation of "I am saying they came in my yard as an explanation of a loss which is a powerful example of the traumatic events speakability being hampered by the nature of the experiences and experiences outsideness".

We find that ability becomes a luxury that not anyone can speak, not everyone has the ability to speak and describe what really took place. The whole idea of trauma the whole experience of trauma takes away speakability. So, that reputation aware that "they came to my yard, so, that that idea is interesting I am saying they came in my yard and yard here is obviously space".

"It is also the body in a certain sense they came in my yard they came and invaded my heart they came and invaded my body they came invading my space." So, that idea of

space has connected to a sense of self is interesting away and that is what has been depicted they came in his arguments they invaded him and took away his voice, it took his word.

It is told and is repeated that this recursive traumatic condition is something which is not really understood by the non-traumatized subject. By the normal quote unquote normal subject rights. We find how the traumatic reputation over here becomes the most authentic way to talk about the sense of loss in the sense of agencylessness.

During the conversation while he is still energetically scuffing to the red leaves as he went she has lost any fight her face not clean of interest she could have been a plate indifference lodged where sadness should have been. This is a really magnificent line and also talks about a very interesting and very complex cognitive condition where. This repeated consumption of sadness is repeated consumption of trauma it generates indifference it takes away sadness.

These people are numbed to certain extent these subjects are numb to such an extent that they can't even feel sadness anymore. So, that the reputation of the traumatic encounter the traumatic even the dramatic experience it takes away any gravity of sadness and all there is left with is indifference there is flatness of indifference. We talked about this cognitive flatness in Malabou when we were discussing Catherine Malabou's "The Ontology Of The Accident".

And also "New Wounded" we are talking about how indifference a non-committal cognitive noncommittal quality becomes a condition of trauma and the traumatized subject. And we also saw a fictional representation of it in Joseph Heller's "Catch-22" where the soldiers or that the veterans were there and numb to such a condition to such an extent that they cannot even feel sad anymore.

They cannot even feel tragic anymore because this is a tragedy that "I cannot feel tragedy anymore". They are just numbed and indifferent to what is happening around them. We have a similar situation here. The faces characterized and marked by indifference where sadness should have been can only desperately try to convince her that a word has had been given to her.

She had to speak. He has not reached that stage of resignation in the face of the horrors around him yet the whole conversation is actually related to the reader as a memory of stamp paint when the trauma he cannot seem to recover from has invaded his psyche “my marrow is tired he thought I have been tired all my days born tired but now it is in the marrow”.

The depth of trauma has been suggested away it has entered the marrow of the system not just the bones but the innermost marrow of the human body. It is almost like an anatomy of trauma. The anatomy of trauma becomes an experiential effective category which takes away in a whole agency he remembers the conversation and finally understands Baby Suggs's reaction when he himself is holding onto a red ribbon which appears to be the remains of a black girl who had fallen victim to racial violence.

This is a deeply disturbing novel as we can see. Children are killed people have been just butchered and it is racial abuse at a physical corporeal epistemic level but also i mean look at the symbols in a story at which violence is depicted in a very disturbing and uncertain manner. We find that how stampede reaches where Baby Suggs is at this point of time when he just resigns.

He reaches a point of resignation when he is holding on to a red ribbon of a dead girl of a dead black girl the remains of a black girl and who is just been abused physically perhaps sexually as well. This is a long drawn on racial violence which has happened over centuries. Paul D's time in captivity in Ophra Georgia a place that signifies the mental and physical brutality of slavery by causing a condition of living death designed to erase manhood.

Humanity is a further instance of physical contact with red combined with shock and voicelessness. We can see how for someone like Paul D's emasculation as a very physical experience as a very symbolic experience also connected to voicelessness the fact that he is emasculated his erase is deprived of all these manhood's actually physically.

He is dehumanized at a very direct level and that systemic process of dehumanization and emasculation is part of the agencylessness and voicelessness that he is suffering. Certainly his experience at a prison camp is one of immense psychological trauma prisoners are raped and beaten routinely the entire purpose of the prison camp is for the slaves to use their hammers to kill the flood whom folks call life from leading them on.

Making them think that the next sunrise would be worth it another stroke of time would do it at last only when she was dead would they be safe. So, deadness is only escape being dead is only scared because it is a repetitive ritual of abuse and trauma and torture and this is a camp where torture is not just legitimized it is an industry of torture.

This is how identities are broken now identities are fragmented our identities are taken away and we find that this degree of dehumanization which becomes almost an industry and comes like this and this is a process for which certain kinds of subjects are broken and rendered fragile and precarious and vulnerable. Whereas in other forms of subjectivity becomes dominant the relationship the division aware is racial and quality.

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==== CALLALOO ====

folks called Life for leading them on. Making them think the next sunrise would be worth it; that another stroke of time would do it at last. Only when she was dead would they be safe" (Morrison, *Beloved* 128). The voicelessness of this place, the sheer lack of verbal sounds coming from black people, is subject to detailed description in the novel. Once more, this particular instance of voicelessness is not solely due to an inability to process the traumatic event but is also enforced by slavery's representatives. In accordance with the novel's narrative project of portraying the cruelties of slavery, the inflictors of trauma actually order what would otherwise be its psychological consequences. Prisoners are not allowed to talk to one another, so they have to find different ways of communicating. During roll call in the morning, "not one spoke to the other. At least not with words. The eyes had to tell what there was to tell" (126). Even in expressing their emotions in song there is a need for "garbling the words so they could not be understood; tricking the words so their syllables yielded up other meanings" (128). In fact, the prisoners invest what little sound is allowed with an almost mythical quality. Shouting the signal to get off one's knees

was the first sound other than "Yes, sir," a black man was allowed to speak each morning. . . . They called him Hi Man. . . . [Paul D] believed to this day that the "Hiiiiii" at dawn and the "Hoouoo!" when evening came were the responsibility Hi Man assumed because he alone knew what was enough, what was too much, when things were over, when the time had come. (127-28)

It is surely no coincidence that the text sets this most overtly brutal manifestation of the institution of slavery in Georgia, a place not only deep in the South but also famous for the color of its soil. One of the first things which the text points out in narrating Paul D's arrival at the prison camp is that the boxes which serve as the prisoners' cells during the night are set five feet deep into the "red dirt" of Georgia (125). The plethora of abuse



"The voicelessness of this place the sheer lack of verbal sounds coming from black people is subject to a detailed description of the novel." It is a silent suffering and the silence of suffering is it makes it even more brutal in a certain sense. There is no voice of pain there's no voice heard there's no does not cry there is no shriek it is just silent suffering throughout and on this process of torture.



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We can see how torture moves from the corporate condition to a psychological condition or emotional condition. They are completely eliminated they are not allowed to talk to anyone. There is no human contact except for the perpetrators of violence. There is no word spoken there is no one to speak to there is no one to speak with.

That voicelessness is something which is systematically produced out of the processes and rituals of torture the eyes had to tell what there was to tell even in expressing their emotions in song there is a need for gobbling the words. They could not be understood trick in the words. The syllables yielded up other meanings. We find also what is happening here is the production of courts.

The black subjects over here who render the slaves they need to produce some coded forms of communication they need to produce an alternate order of meaning through songs to different kinds of rhymes. In fact the prisoners invest what little sound is allowed with an almost mythical quality shouting the signal to get off one's knees was the first sound other than yes sir.

A black man was allowed to speak each morning they called him high man poorly believed to distract the high at dawn and the who one evening came with the responsibility of high man assumed because he alone named what was enough what was too much when things were over when the time had come. We find this high man “oh yeah this high, high is also high”.

It is a superior man and superiority of supremacy is conferred to the white people the whiteness and the black person was just allowed to say yes sir. And the other the only other sound that was allowed to the black man is getting off one's knees. So, again getting off one's knees standing up suggests that a fallen state. The fallenness of the black

man is symbolized over here the physical fallenness the emotional fallenness the existential fallenness which is systematically perpetrated by this rituals of torture.

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actually order what would otherwise be its psychological consequences. Prisoners are not allowed to talk to one another, so they have to find different ways of communicating. During roll call in the morning, "not one spoke to the other. At least not with words. The eyes had to tell what there was to tell" (126). Even in expressing their emotions in song there is a need for "garbling the words so they could not be understood; tricking the words so their syllables yielded up other meanings" (128). In fact, the prisoners invest what little sound is allowed with an almost mythical quality. Shouting the signal to get off one's knees

was the first sound other than "Yes, sir," a black man was allowed to speak each morning. . . . They called him Hi Man. . . . [Paul D] believed to this day that the "Hihihi!" at dawn and the "Hoouoo!" when evening came were the responsibility Hi Man assumed because he alone knew what was enough, what was too much, when things were over, when the time had come. (127-28)

It is surely no coincidence that the text sets this most overtly brutal manifestation of the institution of slavery in Georgia, a place not only deep in the South but also famous for the color of its soil. One of the first things which the text points out in narrating Paul D's arrival at the prison camp is that the boxes which serve as the prisoners' cells during the night are set five feet deep into the "red dirt" of Georgia (125). The plethora of abuse which is inflicted upon Paul D happens, as the novel explicitly states at the beginning of this passage, on red earth. Moreover, Paul D is actually buried in this trope of slavery every night. In his cell, his only resting place, which is highly reminiscent of a coffin, he has "two feet of it over his head" at all times (125).

A third instance of a combination of physical contact with red and an occurrence of voicelessness can be identified in Sethe's behavior when she is stopped in the woodshed. Clearly in shock, she cannot say a single word during the entire episode. She loses her voice as soon as she sees Schoolteacher's hat coming towards her up the road. She does not call out, does not warn any of the other people present, "and if she thought anything, it was No. No. Nono. Nonono. Simple. She just flew" (192). Without a word, she grabs her children and runs to the woodshed to kill them. It is important to note here that Sethe's silence throughout the entire scene is more than just an expression of being temporarily



It is surely no coincidence that it takes this most overtly brutal manifestation of the institutional slavery in Georgia a place not only deep in the south. But also famous for the colour of his soil one of the first things which the text points out in narrating Paul D's arrival at a prison camp is that the boxes which serve as a prisoner cells during the night are set five feet deep in the dirt red dirt of Georgia.

The plethora of abuse which is inflicted upon Paul D happens. The novel explicitly states at the beginning of the passage on red earth. The colour red becomes interesting it literally becomes a landscape of soil, the earth in which the slavery or the institutional slavery institutional torture is practiced and executed almost an industrial level. Moreover Paul D is actually buried in his troop of slavery every night in a cell his only resting place which is highly reminiscent of a coffin.

He has two feet of it over his head at all times. There is a cultural quality about redness. It is almost like everyone is already in a coffin everyone is already dead and this is a part of the dehumanization because as human beings they are already dead. It is just symbolically appropriate perversely speaking that they are already in a coffin they are already buried.

There is this red soil in which they are sinking and their feet are sinking and it is sort of buried deep and they are little cells in which they are imprisoned it reminds them of a coffin it looks like a coffin as well. There is a cultural quality in which they are buried in prison tortured and confined. We can see as in nervous conditions space here also becomes quite symbolic the space of torture the space of imprisonment the space of identity production manipulation torture abuse.

So, always become very carefully calibrated and carefully constructed in order to enact trauma at a daily level in order to enact or subject the traumatized person into different kinds of trauma corporeal bodily existential emotional. As we have examples of physical beating physical corporeal violence but also examples of alienation they are separate from each other not allowed to talk to anyone.

They literally become voiceless they have no one to talk to and instead all they see around them is a red soil red earth red buildings. And the psychological condition of redness this constant redness around them is what makes them a traumatized subject is what informs the traumatized states of being rights.