JETIR.ORG ISSN: 2349-5162 | ESTD Year : 2014 | Monthly Issue
JOURNAL OF EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND INNOVATIVE RESEARCH (JETIR)
An International Scholarly Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

The Intersection Of Physical And Psychological Trauma In Recovery Narratives - The Vegetarian By Han Kang And Home By Toni Morrison

Abha Gupta

Student,
AIESR,
Amity University, Noida, India

Abstract : This research explores the various ways trauma can be expressed outwardly, encompassing both psychological and physical dimensions. Toni Morrison's Home and Han Kang's The Vegetarian investigate how trauma distorts an individual's sense of self and their relationships with others.

IndexTerms **– Trauma, The Vegetarian, Home, Psychological Trauma, Physical Trauma**

I. INTRODUCTION

This study examines how trauma can manifest itself externally in a variety of ways, including psychological and physical aspects. Toni Morrison's Home and Han Kang's The Vegetarian examine how trauma skews a person's identity and social connections. The texts also show the character's path to recovery or increased paranoia, as well as the contributing factors. The protagonists in both books are dealing with internal and external injuries that make it difficult to distinguish between psychological and physical issues. This examination looks at how these texts depict the connection between psychological and physical trauma in recovery tales. The goal of the study is to illustrate the connections between these dimensions. The ways that trauma shapes and alters identity are highlighted in both books. We see that rehabilitation is neither straightforward nor universal; rather, it is fragmented, shaped by culture, and intricately linked to the body. Morrison and Kang raise awareness of human resilience, transformation, and recovery. The Vegetarian tells the story of Yeong-hye, a woman who has some unsettling dreams and undergoes a profound psychological transformation. As a result, she decides to become a vegetarian, something that her family and society disapprove of. Yeong-hye's defiance of social expectations sets off a chain reaction of psychological and bodily unraveling. Her traumatized behavior is a reflection of the horrors of societal norms, and others around her try to manage it. There are three sections to the book. The texts explore the effects of unresolved trauma, resilience, and bodily independence. Frank Money, an African American Korean War soldier, is portrayed in Toni Morrison's Home. He is plagued by painful wartime memories when he returns to the United States. Frank suffers from detachment, purposelessness, and survivor's guilt. Later, he embarks on a quest to save his sister, who also needs to recover from the harm done to her physically and mentally. The book examines themes of resiliency, the wounds of racism, and the healing potential of community while taking place in 1950s America, a time of economic and racial injustice. By showing their entwined recoveries, the book provides an analysis of trauma and redemption. Although their techniques reflect different cultural and thematic concerns, Toni Morrison's Home and Han Kang's The Vegetarian both examine the interplay of psychological and physical trauma in recovery narratives. The pieces center on the complex healing processes connected to trauma and how it upends relationships and identity. The pieces highlight how deeply individualized rehabilitation is, rejecting conventional ideas about it.

Yeong-hye, the main character of The Vegetarian, expresses her psychological trauma by refusing to eat anything that isn't vegetarian and ultimately by avoiding meals completely. She withdraws into a sedative. Yeong-hye uses her body as a canvas to depict her inner mental condition and her painful recollections of societal brutality. Her psychological agony is depicted through her subconscious struggles to regain control over her body in a society that has routinely objectified and oppressed her. Others perceive her resistance to fitting in as lunacy instead of an agency. Frank Money's Korean War wounds in Toni Morrison's Home reflect his deeper psychological scars. His unresolved sadness and remorse from the battle are reflected in his dissociative state. The bigotry he encounters and his relationship with his sister Cee also contribute to his illness. The literature's placement of personal tragedy within larger familial and societal institutions is another characteristic. The expectations and conventions of South Korean society exacerbate Yeong-hye's pain in The Vegetarian. As an African American, Frank experiences economic obstacles and racism, which contribute to his hardships. Toni Morrison illustrates how social violence shapes relationships and feeds destructive cycles. In addition to highlighting his need for reconciliation, Frank's journey with his sister also shows how

their common past influences their healing processes. In both books, the path to rehabilitation is ambiguous and indecisive, but Home presents a more redeeming story. Despite the lingering effects of their suffering, Frank and Cee's reconciliation serves as a symbol of hope and healing. The significance of community in the healing process is emphasized by Toni Morrison. Frank's return to his ancestral home serves as a metaphor for his identity reclamation throughout the book. Yeong-hye's journey, on the other hand, does not end with a traditional recovery. She experiences severe bodily distress and a decline towards insanity. She is subconsciously regaining herself by psychologically distancing herself from the outside world. The fragmentation and disruption brought on by psychological trauma are reflected in both authors' use of nonlinear and fractured storytelling. This encourages readers to learn about the intricacy and difficulty of trauma on their own. The viewpoints and narrators of The Vegetarian are constantly changing. The reader is not given direct access to the protagonist's inner world, which represents the loneliness brought on by tragedy in real life. Toni Morrison uses a similar strategy even in Home. This illustrates how fragmented Frank's recollections are and how he gradually pieces the facts together. In both books, trauma serves as a method of resistance to repressive social and familial structures in addition to being a sign of injury. Her body's expression of her trauma turns into a protest. Her alleged lunacy also contradicts a culture that views sanity and obedience with health. Frank Money's horrific history forces him to confront the dehumanizing social structures that molded his life, even at Home. He is forced to confront his victimization as a result of his horrific recollections. He ultimately resists and turns his anguish into resistance against the powers that previously damaged him, as demonstrated by his act of going back to save his sister.

II.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research uses deep reading and qualitative analysis.

III. PHYSICAL TRAUMA AS A REFLECTION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL STATES RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The human body has coping mechanisms to deal with physical and psychological trauma. Acute stress reactions are the category that includes some of these reactions. Shock and disorientation, fight-or-flight, detachment, denial, hyperarousal, and even cognitive deficits are a few examples of these reactions. In The Vegetarian, Yeong-hye decides to give up meat after experiencing a series of disturbing dreams that symbolize psychological pain. These nightmares, which reference suppressed memories and atrocities, cause her to reject non-vegetarian cuisine and social norms. Her family's inability to comprehend her decision adds to her psychological pain and further distances her. Their perplexity regarding her vegetarianism serves as a metaphor for society's inability to recognize and treat mental health concerns. Her bodily reactions, such as self-starvation and anorexia, reflect her emotional turmoil. Frank in Home exhibits symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a Korean War veteran. His inability to recall wartime events points to a state of denial and mental shock. His constant switching between fight and flight mode throughout the book illustrates his underlying emotional turmoil. He also had flashbacks as a result of the systematic racism he encountered as a child and the trauma he underwent and suffered throughout the war. Throughout the book, his constant urge to travel triggers his hypervigilance, one of his numerous coping strategies.

Even after the victim's physical wounds have healed, these repercussions might still be present. These include relationship issues, substance misuse, depression, anxiety and panic disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Long-term dissociation, in which the brain's reaction to stress takes the form of bodily manifestations, such as starvation or extreme body rejection, is hinted at by Yeong-hye's condition in The Vegetarian. Because she is alone and no longer knows who she is or how she feels, Yeong-hye's trauma causes her to lose her identity. Throughout the book, she is portrayed as emotionally detached. When someone is unable to manage their emotions, they completely numb themselves by distancing themselves from their environment and themselves. Frank's trauma and violent experiences at Home fuel his rage and sense of powerlessness. He starts drinking because he has survivor's remorse. His social and community estrangement highlights the challenges soldiers frequently encounter when readjusting to civilian life following traumatic events.

Psychosomatic responses are physical symptoms or diseases caused by or exacerbated by emotional or psychological factors. In other words, mental emotional emotions can influence or cause bodily changes. Rather than having a direct medical cause, these reactions often take the form of physical pain, discomfort, illnesses, or other symptoms that are triggered by mental or emotional stress. Giving up meat is Yeong-hye's first overt rejection of the material world. This act of resistance is the first step towards her psychosomatic breakdown. But the more she withdraws from the human world, the more her body deteriorates medically. Her actual starvation is exacerbated by the mental image of wanting to change into something else entirely. As Yeong-hye's mind becomes further trapped in her delusions, her body begins to shut down completely. The novel claims that if trauma is not addressed, it may manifest physically in the body. Throughout the book, Frank is restless; his persistent pain, sleeplessness, and trouble staying still are all physical manifestations of the emotional weight he carries. Through his physical journey—which is marked by his return to the South and his interactions with his community—Frank can make sense of his trauma. His physical return to a place of safety and family support is a reflection of his mental journey towards healing.

Throughout her journey, Yeong-hye encountered a lack of understanding and compassion from everyone around her. Since they perceive her bodily and mental anguish as aberrant behavior, her family responds with control and rage instead of compassion. Yeong-hye's lack of a solid support system and deep ties prevents her from being resilient. Her physical decline and eventual

alienation symbolize the failure of recuperation in a society that silences and excludes her. Frank's ability to forgive himself and accept his past are markers of his psychological recovery. Cee defines resilience as her ability to regain her agency and sense of self-worth after experiencing emotional and physical violence. Frank and Cee both learn resilience via connection and community. The transformational power of love and collective healing is demonstrated by the Lotus women's treatment of Cee and Frank's return home. According to Toni Morrison, rituals like the lynched man's funeral are significant because they offer healing and closure.

Yeong-hye's suffering is mostly ignored or misinterpreted by her family and the medical establishment, which values uniformity over empathy. The way Yeong-hye's brother-in-law uses her body as a canvas for his artwork touches on the therapeutic value of artistic expression. Frank's return to his homeland serves as a reminder of the importance of integrating cultural and community-based treatment. Frank's enthusiasm for Cee's recovery is correlated with his recovery. Their reciprocal care demonstrates the need for interdisciplinary support systems that integrate psychological treatment, community networks, and cultural knowledge. How trauma is seen, experienced, and managed is influenced by societal and cultural variables. This is seen by the way that the stigma attached to mental health in society may deter people from talking about their problems or asking for assistance. In some cultures, trauma is seen as a personal problem or a sign of weakness. Gender roles can also have an impact; men may be discouraged from displaying vulnerability, while women may feel more victim-blaming or shame. Examples of marginalized groups who commonly encounter systematic violence and prejudice include members of racial minorities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those living in poverty. Regaining their identity and cultural heritage may help them become more resilient. Historical traumas like colonization, enslavement, and genocide have affected communities for centuries, affecting communal identities and mental health. Communities that foster unity, group sorrow, and emotional support can foster resilience and healing. In collectivist cultures, healing often involves family and community rather than individual therapy. Conventional methods of healing are used. The Vegetarian explores how Yeong-hye, the protagonist, suffers as a result of deeply ingrained Confucian and patriarchal conventions. The book, which is set in contemporary South Korea, shows how trauma can occasionally result from cultural expectations. By deciding to follow a vegetarian diet, Yeong-hye rejects social norms that require compliance, obedience, and traditional gender roles. This choice and her subsequent withdrawal from societal norms cause her to become alone, vulnerable to violence, and alienated from her family and society. Her family, particularly her father and husband, who stand in for social pressure and view her nonconformity as embarrassing and deviant, contribute to her psychological breakdown. Yeong-hye's suffering is made worse by the cultural stigma attached to her actions, which are viewed as insane by her family and community. Due to her disobedience of societal norms, she experiences social isolation following her husband's divorce and her family's eventual departure. The alienation is a reflection of the social rejection that people who don't fit into the accepted cultural roles face. Yeong-hye's trauma is not just personal, but it also reflects the broader social oppression of women in patriarchal cultures. Her inability to assert control over Yeong-hye's life and body is a reflection of the institutional oppression and silence of women. The fact that her deteriorating mental health is handled with violence and force rather than compassion demonstrates how mental illness and nonconformity are stigmatized in society. Her recovery is severely hampered by the lack of genuine support from individuals in her nearby area. Her family and society view her through the lens of cultural standards rather than as a special individual in need of kindness and care. The community's failure serves as a reminder of how social norms may alienate people by penalizing deviation rather than recognizing it. Yeong-hye's shift to vegetarianism and her ultimate desire to transcend her physical form could be interpreted as a rejection of cultural narratives that need her to be in control of her body. Despite her eventual physical and mental collapse, her actions nonetheless signify a spiritual rebellion. In the middle of the 20th century, America was plagued by systemic racism, poverty, and the legacy of war. Frank Money, a Black Korean combat veteran, copes with the trauma of combat, financial hardship, and racial prejudice. His sister Cee is used and abused, reflecting the combination of racism, misogyny, and classism in American society. The dehumanization of Black people by society, particularly women, is a recurring source of pain, as seen by Cee's mistreatment at the hands of a white doctor who uses her as a test subject for unethical medical experimentation. Frank and Cee's sense of isolation is influenced by systemic issues. Frank has post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of his regret and fragmented memories, which makes him alienated from both his community and himself. Cee's loneliness stems from her vulnerability as an uneducated Black woman living in a deeply racist and patriarchal culture. For her agony, human and systemic negligence are to fault. According to Morrison, institutional racism and historical violence are directly linked to trauma. The history of enslavement and ongoing racial violence in the US provide a context for Frank and Cee's experiences. Frank's experiences as a veteran serve as a reminder of how Black troops were perceived as disposable and their efforts were not valued. Similarly, the long-standing practice of utilizing Black bodies in medical experiments is symbolized by the white doctor's mistreatment of Cee. The importance of community in the healing process is emphasized in Home. By going back to his hometown and re-establishing his roots, Frank finds healing. The Black community's traditions of strength and support for one another aid in Frank and Cee's recovery. The women in Cee's village support her recovery by highlighting her intrinsic value and applying traditional knowledge. Morrison refers to a place of mental and bodily comfort as "home" in this metaphor. Frank and Cee's return to their own country represents a reclamation of identity and connection. The burial of the bones of a man Frank seen killed as a little boy is a symbolic gesture of confronting and burying the traumas of the past.

IV. THE INTERPLAY OF MEMORY, IDENTITY, AND BODY

A profound and intricate theme that connects our understanding of time, physicality, and self is the interplay of memory, identity, and the body. A dynamic relationship that is fundamental to the human experience is created by how each of these elements informs and impacts the others. In both The Vegetarian and Home, memory, identity, and the body are interwoven and serve as both traumatic and transformative spaces. Collectively, the novels highlight the similarities of these issues while also highlighting the distinctiveness of each individual's and culture's experiences. The basis of an individual's identity is memory. According to philosophers like John Locke, memory continuity is crucial to one's sense of self. The self could become divided in the absence of memory. A person's identity can be profoundly impacted by traumatic memories, which might change how they perceive themselves. For example, intrusive memories may cause a person with PTSD to struggle with a broken identity. Somatic memory, another name for embodied memory, is a kind of memory that is kept in the body. Our perception of ourselves is influenced by our physical feelings, gestures, and muscle memory. Skills like riding a bicycle or playing an instrument are stored in the body, demonstrating how physical exertion forms memories outside of the conscious mind. Trauma can manifest physically, according to somatic psychology. A complex interplay between psychological and physical memory may arise from the body's capacity to "remember" what the mind has suppressed. Our identity is closely connected to our physical existence in the world and is not just a mental construct. How we and others perceive our physical appearance affects our sense of self. The relationship between memory, identity, and the body is influenced by social conventions and cultural narratives. Both individual and group memory exist. Societies remember and construct group identities through rituals, monuments, and collective histories. The body is key to experience and identity, according to philosophers like Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who reject mind-body dualism in favor of a holistic viewpoint. Memory is fragmented and personal in Han Kang's The Vegetarian, often acting as a site of trauma and repression. Yeong-hye, the protagonist, experiences violent memories from her childhood that resurface and influence her decision to reject societal norms, such as consuming meat. The way Yeong-hye views her body and her sense of identity is shaped by the intense reemergence of her repressed memories of her father's abuse. Her viewpoint is contrasted with the recollections of other characters, including her sister In-hye and her husband, highlighting the personal nature of memory and its effect on identity. In Toni Morrison's Home, recollection acts as both a burden and a foundation for Frank Money, the main character. His identity, physical state, and emotional well-being are all affected by his haunting memories of the Korean War and his formative years in a segregated America. Frank experiences a fragmented identity due to his recollections of violence and guilt from the war. His issues with PTSD illustrate how deeply memories become part of one’s physical being. Frank's trauma is tied to a larger cultural narrative that encompasses the memories of racial violence and systemic oppression in America. Yeong-hye's bold rejection of the identity imposed upon her by society and her family is illustrated by her choice to stop eating meat. Her transformation forces others to confront their own identities and creates tension in her relationships. By refusing to conform to traditional notions of femininity and submission, Yeong-hye's vegetarianism empowers her to reclaim authority over her body. As her mental health deteriorates, Yeong-hye's sense of self becomes increasingly disjointed, blurring the lines between conscious thought and unconscious impulses, as well as what is human and what is not. In "Home," Frank Money embarks on a journey of self-exploration and reconciliation. While trauma, prejudice, and guilt undermine his identity, returning to his roots aids in his healing process. Frank grapples with societal norms of masculinity, particularly following his wartime humiliation and his perceived failure to protect his sister Cee. As he confronts his memories and reestablishes ties with his community, Frank discovers strength through vulnerability and acceptance, gradually rebuilding his sense of self. In The Vegetarian, the physical body functions as a battleground, symbolizing existential transformation, personal rebellion, and societal control. By choosing not to eat meat, Yeong-hye demonstrates control over her body and rejects cultural and patriarchal expectations. Yeong-hye contests traditional boundaries between life forms by refusing human corporeality, as seen in her emaciation and her aspiration to transform into a plant. In Home, the body embodies the scars of historical and personal trauma, acting as a reservoir of both suffering and recovery. Frank's body bears the mental and physical residues of conflict, illustrating how violence leaves its imprint on the physical form. Systemic mistreatment of Black bodies is highlighted in Cee's life-threatening experience due to medical exploitation. Her healing, supported by the wisdom of the women in her community, symbolizes the possibility of recovery through collective care. The Vegetarian, set in contemporary South Korea, explores the pressures of a rigid, hierarchical society that prioritizes conformity. Yeong-hye's body becomes both a means of challenging these societal norms and a source of alienation. Conversely, racial violence and institutional discrimination profoundly affect Frank and Cee in Home, which takes place in mid-20th century America. The narrative emphasizes the communal aspects of identity and healing in response to historical trauma.

V. THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY OR THE LACK THEREOF IN THE HEALING PROCESS

Toni Morrison's Home and Han Kang's The Vegetarian explore the profound effects that relationships, societal influences, and communal interactions have on trauma recovery and individual well-being. In The Vegetarian, the primary reason for Yeong-hye's descent into emotional and physical solitude is the lack of a nurturing community. The novel begins with a conversation that effectively illustrates this, initiated by her husband in the first chapter. His inability to understand Yeong-hye reflects how he perceives her not as a person but as an entity meant to fulfill his expectations. When Yeong-hye chooses to stop consuming meat, her family and society respond with bewilderment, hostility, and even aggression. Rather than viewing her vegetarianism as an expression of her autonomy or inner struggle, her husband, parents, and in-laws interpret it as a challenge to societal norms and

conventions. Her community fails to provide her with the compassion necessary for healing. Instead of support, she faces control, oppression, and even violence, leading to instances of physical abuse and forced feeding. This rejection exacerbates her mental health struggles, deepening her sense of isolation. The dynamics within her family reflect a toxic society that discourages individuality and enforces conformity. The violent attempt by her father to force her to consume meat symbolizes patriarchal authority, while her husband perceives her as an extension of himself. These relationships illustrate how psychological distress can intensify in the absence of a nurturing community. Her only tenuous connection to understanding comes from her brother-in-law, yet this relationship is more exploitative than restorative. Her solitude is amplified by the fact that his artistic obsession with her body serves his interests rather than her own. In the end, Yeong-hye's descent into madness and physical frailty underscores the dire consequences of a society's failure to express compassion. In stark contrast, Home portrays community as a vital, healing force, demonstrating how care and connection can facilitate recovery in ways that sheer will does not suffice. Frank Money's healing journey is deeply intertwined with his relationships with family, community, and cultural heritage. Although he starts the narrative as a troubled man burdened by pain and guilt, his return to his hometown and reunion with his sister Cee, along with their shared memories, pave the way for his healing process. Frank discovers redemption through the support of his hometown. In sharp contrast to the isolation he experiences as a veteran and as a black man in a racist society, the black community in Lotus, Georgia, provides him with a sense of belonging and compassion. The healing journey centers on the bond between Frank and Cee. Frank regains his sense of humanity and purpose by choosing to care for Cee and protect her from her abusive employer. Cee's recovery is nurtured by the compassionate women of the Lotus community, who help mend her body and spirit through traditions and shared knowledge. Despite their economic struggles, the black community in Lotus demonstrates resilience and unity. The narrative highlights the significance of historical and cultural connections as a pathway to reconciliation. After the book, the bones of a man that Frank and Cee remembered from their childhood are laid to rest in a field. This act symbolizes their reclaiming of the past and healing from buried trauma, facilitated by their reconnection with each other and their community.

VI. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Although their perspectives on the healing potential differ significantly, Han Kang and Toni Morrison both highlight the resilience of individuals within oppressive institutions through vivid symbolism and innovative storytelling. Home offers a more hopeful vision of redemption through communal support and self-reflection, while The Vegetarian focuses on isolation and the consequences of defiance against societal norms. Han Kang's writing style is elegant, incisive, and understated. The concise prose often mirrors Yeong-hye's gradual retreat into silence. Nature-related imagery, particularly involving trees and plants, dominates the description, symbolizing both transformation and liberation. In contrast, Morrison employs poetic language infused with rhythm, repetition, and historical depth. She lends the narrative an epic quality by intertwining biblical allusions, mythology, and cultural heritage with realistic elements. Through recurring motifs like burial, flight, and home, she illustrates themes of tragedy and redemption, merging the tangible with the mythical. Morrison's lyrical style enhances the connection to memory and history, while Han Kang's minimalist approach amplifies the psychological horror present in the narrative. Both authors deeply explore the themes of suffering and resistance through their use of symbolism. The Vegetarian captures Yeong-hye's mental anguish and the dehumanizing perceptions of others by favoring surrealism and abstraction. Home, on the other hand, utilizes a more straightforward yet equally poignant approach to symbolism, achieving a balance between personal reflection and broader social critique. It features a cohesive narrative structure that links the intimate with the collective by integrating symbolism with historical context. Home is characterized by a fluid yet non-linear narrative. Morrison contemplates Frank's tragedy through a series of fragmented flashbacks, memories, and varying viewpoints. At times, Frank provides a layer of meta-commentary by addressing an unseen narrator, who may represent Morrison herself. This technique creates a dialogue between the past and the present, intertwining personal guilt with the external world. The novel Home examines the shared trauma resulting from racial violence and conflict, while The Vegetarian focuses on the internal suffering caused by gendered violence and societal control over women's bodies. Both physical (such as Yeong-hye's malnutrition and Cee's near-fatal injuries) and psychological (including Yeong-hye's dissociation and Frank's PTSD) expressions of trauma in these works emphasize the deep interconnection of these experiences. In contrast to the broader social and historical contexts that shape Frank and Cee's trauma, particularly concerning race and warfare, Yeong-hye's suffering is more personal and symbolic, with minimal engagement with external historical or systemic influences. In each case, trauma draws attention to the characters' bodies as sites of conflict—Frank grappling with his wartime actions and Yeong-hye's refusal to consume meat. Both novels critique the societal structures that foster violence and dehumanization. Home addresses the overarching impacts of race, class, and warfare, while The Vegetarian focuses on gender and familial oppression within a specific cultural framework. Each author scrutinizes how social expectations intensify individual suffering. Home offers a broader examination of institutional racism and its repercussions on marginalized communities, whereas The Vegetarian highlights South Korea's strict patriarchal and Confucian values that dictate women's bodies and choices. The former presents a historically aware, socially conscious narrative, while the latter serves as an allegorical, introspective critique of cultural rigidity. Morrison too critiques both gendered violence and institutional racism in 1950s America. Black women face both racial and gender oppression, with Black bodies—especially those of men—being dehumanized. Cee, as a victim of racist medical experimentation, symbolizes the vulnerability of Black women. Additionally, the novel portrays the impacts of war on Black veterans, illustrating how soldiers like Frank fought for a nation that disregarded their humanity. The text alludes to real historical injustices like the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, where Black bodies were exploited without consent, through Cee's experience with medical

experimentation. It unveils the systematic marginalization of Black Americans from safety and wealth, challenging the myth of the American Dream. Yeong-hye's trauma in The Vegetarian is rooted in patriarchy, family dynamics, and personal experiences. The narrative unfolds from the perspectives of three different characters: Yeong-hye's sister, brother-in-law, and husband. This structure, except for some internal thoughts, effectively silences Yeong-hye and denies her agency. Her portrayal as an object rather than a subject is reinforced through the lens of others who tell her story. Ultimately, she is reduced to sheer will and suffering; rather than actively resisting or yielding, she inhabits an ambiguous state between human and plant life. Frank Money in Home endures trauma associated with race, history, and warfare. The narrative alternates between his first-person perspective and third-person omniscient narration. While the third-person sections provide historical and contextual depth, the first-person passages are raw and unfiltered. He is haunted by combat PTSD, racial violence, and a personal crime—his involvement in the wartime killing of a Korean girl. Home narrates an uplifting tale of recovery through collective effort and individual accountability. It emphasizes the potential for healing through connection. The recovery of Frank and Cee relies on various elements, such as their journey back home, his nurturing of Cee, and the wisdom of the elder Black women in their community. Morrison asserts that self-awareness, communal support, and intergenerational wisdom are crucial to the healing process. The Vegetarian, on the other hand, conveys a bleak portrayal of solitude and the disintegration of community, as Yeong-hye finds herself isolated. Her brother-in-law exploits her, her husband abandons her, and even her sister, In-hye, views her as beyond redemption. The Vegetarian suggests that personal alienation and cultural indifference render healing an unattainable or unsuccessful goal. It illustrates how society can actively hinder healing through the promotion of oppression and isolation. Unlike Frank, who reclaims his identity, Yeong-hye ultimately loses hers entirely. Both novels illustrate that healing does not follow a linear path and is significantly influenced by the presence—or absence—of compassion and support. Despite differing conclusions—one being pessimistic and the other offering cautious hope—both works explore healing as a deeply relational journey.

VII. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

The Vegetarian by Han Kang and Home by Toni Morrison both explore trauma theory and can be analyzed through the frameworks of Cathy Caruth, Judith Herman, and Dominick LaCapra, among others. Caruth (1996) posits that trauma often re-emerges in fragmented or non-linear ways and is not fully comprehended at the moment it happens. This idea is reflected in both novels. Aligned with Caruth's notion of belatedness—where trauma does not register immediately but instead reappears through physical symptoms—Yeong-hye's trauma remains unarticulated throughout the story. Caruth's concept of repetition compulsion, where trauma is relived instead of being consciously processed, relates to her persistent nightmares about blood and meat, suggesting an involuntary revisit of her horrifying experiences. Her refusal to eat and transformation into a plant-like being illustrate how trauma is expressed through the body rather than through language. In a similar vein, Frank's (Home) memories of war are suppressed and fragmented, only emerging later in the narrative. Caruth's portrayal of the post-traumatic condition resonates with his avoidance behaviors and flashbacks. The book's fragmented narrative structure emphasizes that trauma must be reconstructed into a coherent story, echoing Frank's disoriented mental condition. Caruth points out that trauma is paradoxical because it demands to be shared while simultaneously resisting understanding. This is evident when Frank confronts his wartime atrocities, a crucial step in his path to healing. Judith Herman outlines three stages of recovery in Trauma and Rehabilitation (1992): safety, remembering, and reconnection. Characters in both novels navigate these stages. Yeong-hye never fully achieves Herman's rehabilitation framework. As her family confines and physically restrains her, she is unable to establish a sense of safety and remains trapped in her trauma. Instead of verbalizing her memories, she retreats into silence, underscoring the idea that trauma can lead to self-alienation rather than reintegration. Her transformation into a non-human entity symbolizes how certain injuries may never heal completely and represents a failure to reconnect with reality. Frank's journey aligns more closely with Herman's model. Initially, he suppresses his memories of war through avoidance and denial, but upon returning home, he is compelled to confront his past atrocities. He progresses toward remembering and mourning as he recounts historical events, particularly acknowledging a war crime. The final stage—reconnecting with his community and himself—is illustrated by his eventual reunion with Cee and his active involvement in aiding others (burying the remains of an unidentified girl). LaCapra (2001) differentiates between "Acting Out" and "Working Through." Yeong-hye manifests her pain through self-destructive behaviors (such as starvation and hallucinations) rather than processing it through words. Her actions—refusing to consume food and standing in sunlight—suggest that she is "stuck" in her trauma, unable to distinguish between the past and the present. Her inability to "work through" the trauma is reinforced by her confinement and silence, which contribute to her ongoing decline in both physical and mental health. In Home, Frank transitions toward narrative reconstruction after initially expressing his trauma through dissociation and hostility. His acknowledgment of moral injury—a central concept in combat trauma studies—makes his confession of killing an innocent girl a crucial moment of "working through." The novel emphasizes that sharing personal trauma stories, regardless of their painful nature, is vital for recovery. Both books illustrate how trauma physically manifests, supporting the views of trauma theorists who argue that the body can "remember" even when the mind is in denial. Yeong-hye's physical signs of trauma, such as loss of appetite, insomnia, and a complete withdrawal from human needs, exemplify this. Bessel van der Kolk's theory that trauma is "stored" in the body when it remains unprocessed can help explain her transformation into a tree-like being. The physical abuse she suffered from her husband, family, and medical institutions underscores the relationship between gendered trauma and control over one's body. Frank experiences symptoms of psychosomatic trauma that resemble PTSD, including dissociation, hallucinations, and sleeplessness. The historical trauma of forced sterilization of Black women is represented in Cee's medical

mistreatment—experimental procedures on her reproductive organs—which demonstrates how medical institutions perpetuate physical trauma. Healing is also a physical process; traditional Black women healers play a crucial role in Cee's recovery, emphasizing the significance of cultural memory and community in overcoming trauma.

Both Han Kang's The Vegetarian and Toni Morrison's Home delve into themes of gendered violence, bodily autonomy, and the suppression of female trauma, making feminist trauma theory a crucial lens through which to analyze these texts. This approach emphasizes the social and gendered dimensions of suffering, challenging traditional and medicalized conceptions of trauma. Scholars like Judith Butler, Susan Brison, and Kelly Oliver argue that trauma is not only an individual psychological damage but also a relational and discursive issue shaped by oppressive societal structures. Judith Butler (in Precarious Life and The Body in Pain) investigates how vulnerability and trauma are politically constructed. She asserts that societal norms determining whose suffering is worthy of grief are central to the issue of gendered violence. Trauma is experienced unevenly; some individuals are marginalized due to their gender, race, or socioeconomic status. The provision of justice, empathy, and care is contingent upon how trauma is perceived socially. Yeong-hye's treatment exemplifies Butler's concept of precarity; as a single, childless woman, her existence is deemed expendable, stripping her of personhood. Butler's argument that certain lives become unintelligible within dominant discourse aligns with Yeong-hye's increasing silence; her anguish fails to conform to socially acceptable frameworks, leading to neglect or medicalization. Laura Brown emphasizes the necessity of framing trauma within the contexts of sexual violence, domestic abuse, and institutional misogyny. Feminist critiques regarding the societal punishment of women who upset traditional roles resonate with Yeong-hye's eventual confinement. Susan Brison (in Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self) posits that trauma obliterates an individual's sense of self and their perception of the world, necessitating a narrative reconstruction journey. She highlights the physical embodiment of trauma and its psychological repercussions. Yeong-hye's trauma predominantly surfaces through her body, supporting Brison's assertion that trauma is deeply physical as well as psychological. Frank exemplifies Brison's notion that trauma alters one's worldview and self-perception due to his PTSD. His violent episodes and dissociative experiences illustrate the concept of fractured subjectivity. Reconstructing a coherent narrative, often through interpersonal connections, is vital for healing. Brison's claim that storytelling is integral to trauma recovery is mirrored in Frank's effort to reclaim his narrative through his return home. Unlike traditional trauma stories that utilize narrative for healing, Yeong-hye's experience is disjointed and seen through the lenses of others. Kelly Oliver (in Witnessing: Beyond Recognition) argues that being “witnessed” is crucial for re-establishing subjectivity after trauma. She posits that victims of gendered violence, particularly women, face silencing and exclusion from societal acceptance. Yeong-hye’s body becomes a battleground for patriarchal domination, highlighting the profound gendering of her trauma. Her husband, family, and medical institutions attempt to control and penalize her body, reinforcing Oliver's notion that women’s suffering is often dismissed or undervalued. Those in Yeong-hye's surroundings fail to fully recognize her trauma, affirming Oliver's belief that the inability to acknowledge trauma perpetuates psychic death. Cee’s suffering is explicitly gendered; her life-threatening encounter with a eugenicist doctor reflects Oliver's argument that institutional and medical violence contributes to the erasure of women. Cee’s community of Black women aids in her healing, aligning with Oliver's view that agency can be restored through witnessing within a supportive group. Home supports Oliver’s claim that intersubjective recognition is vital for healing, suggesting that recovery is achievable through collective witnessing. Kimberlé Crenshaw notes that experiences of trauma are shaped by factors of race, gender, and class. Morrison specifically addresses how racial trauma intensifies gendered suffering. Bell Hooks critiques mainstream feminist dialogue for often neglecting the pain experienced by Black women.

In the context of psychoanalysis, trauma is depicted in The Vegetarian and Home as a complex experience that is challenging to articulate or fully overcome. Instead, both novels suggest that trauma lingers in the body and mind, permanently reshaping one's perception and identity. Through the lens of psychoanalysis, we can explore how trauma operates at a profound level, influencing characters' subconscious drives, physical symptoms, and fractured senses of self. Both Home and The Vegetarian illustrate trauma as a lasting presence in the unconscious, manifesting as displacement, repression, and physical symptoms. When individuals endure intense suffering, their psyche attempts to suppress it; however, the trauma often re-emerges through hallucinations, dreams, and neurotic behaviors, as proposed in Sigmund Freud's trauma theory. Yeong-hye exhibits signs of schizophrenic detachment. Yeong-hye's dissociation and hallucinations imply a Freudian return of the repressed, where suppressed memories emerge through a fragmented consciousness. Aligned with Freud's studies on women's neuroses, the narrative explores hysteria, a condition historically linked to repressed trauma. According to Freud's theory of trauma repetition, which suggests that individuals unconsciously re-enact past trauma, Frank Money suffers from PTSD stemming from his Korean War experiences. His journey home symbolizes a confrontation with the primal scene, a Freudian concept where traumatic events are revisited and reinterpreted. Frank's divided sense of self, juxtaposing his identities as both a monster and a hero, reflects Freud's notion of the split ego, struggling to assimilate painful memories. The broken identities and self-perception issues of both protagonists can be analyzed through Jacques Lacan's Mirror Stage. In The Vegetarian, Yeong-hye's aversion to food and the human body signifies the collapse of the ego ideal or the socially constructed symbolic self. Her inability to recognize her reflection illustrates the disintegration of the Imaginary Order, where identity is typically coherent. In Home, Frank's war-related trauma similarly fractures his sense of self, mirroring Lacan's concept of a fragmented body that occurs when trauma disrupts one’s identity. Yeong-hye’s transformation into a "plant-like" being can also be interpreted as a rejection of the Symbolic Order, akin to Lacan's descriptions of psychotic breaks. By opposing patriarchal norms—such as her father’s forceful feeding, her husband’s control, and the authority

of medical professionals—she denies the Symbolic Order, often referred to as the law of the father. Trauma often arises from an individual's inability to assimilate their experiences into the Symbolic Order, leading to identity, communication, and memory challenges. Yeong-hye's trauma in The Vegetarian is expressed through her linguistic rejection, as demonstrated by her intermittent silence, reminiscent of the aphasia seen in trauma victims. The novel frequently illustrates communication failures, highlighting how trauma transcends language. In Home, Frank's fragmented and unreliable narration supports Lacan's assertion that trauma disrupts the consistency of self-expression. Morrison's use of diverse perspectives throughout the narrative showcases how trauma eludes a singular storyline. While it remains uncertain whether complete reintegration is possible, his return to his sister Cee symbolizes an effort to re-enter the Symbolic Order through the bonds of family. The concept of othering traumatized individuals is explored in both novels, particularly concerning oppressive and patriarchal systems. Julia Kristeva's abjection theory is crucial to understanding how trauma manifests in the physical body. Anything that blurs the lines, especially those between life and death or between self and other, is categorized as abject. In The Vegetarian, Yeong-hye is perceived as an outsider by her family and society because she refuses to eat meat, thus rejecting human civilization. Her aversion to the male gaze—exhibited by her husband, brother-in-law, and doctors—leads to her complete alienation. The novel's vivid and brutal imagery (such as bloody meat and forced feeding) evokes abjection and emphasizes the pain associated with the loss of bodily autonomy. As a veteran and a Black man, Frank represents a marginalized figure in the 1950s American setting of the novel Home. He needs to reclaim his sense of agency within a society that routinely strips him of his humanity as part of his journey toward self-restoration. The narrative explores the relationship between racial trauma and feelings of abjection, emphasizing the dehumanization experienced by marginalized individuals. Ultimately, both novels suggest that trauma is a recurrent cycle that continues to haunt individuals in ways that are challenging to convey through simple healing stories. When viewed collectively, these works complicate simplistic ideas of resilience. The Vegetarian emphasizes the dangers of societal constraints on individual autonomy by demonstrating how healing can be hindered when one's pain is overlooked or misinterpreted. Home, on the other hand, offers a contrasting perspective, illustrating how communal care and recognition of history can foster resilience. Ultimately, both novels reveal that healing encompasses more than mere personal strength; it also involves the supportive or oppressive systems that impact a person's healing potential. As a whole, these books represent two opposing yet complementary viewpoints on resilience. Yeong-hye's deterioration suggests that resilience is shaped by external influences rather than being an inherent quality. Conversely, Morrison depicts resilience as a collective endeavor rather than an individual achievement. The physical body serves as a significant lens through which both novels explore healing. Yeong-hye's eventual state—gaunt, nearly mute, and convinced she was transforming into a tree—illustrates how trauma can push individuals beyond the boundaries of what society deems acceptable or understandable. Frank and Cee's recoveries suggest that healing, despite its challenges, can be achieved when the body is treated with care and dignity. Morrison argues that true healing requires both acknowledgment of past wrongs and the support of others. Unlike Yeong-hye, whose trauma leads to isolation, Frank can reintegrate into a flawed world that still offers him a chance for redemption.In popular narratives, resilience is often depicted as a straightforward journey of overcoming adversity and emerging stronger. This idea is challenged by The Vegetarian, which illustrates that recovery does not always equate to resilience. Resilience is not necessarily about triumph; rather, it can be more about endurance than victory. Yeong-hye's eventual demise, resulting from her defiance of societal expectations, illustrates that surviving in an oppressive environment can be an act of resistance, even if it incurs a heavy toll. Toni Morrison also suggests that healing is neither simple nor complete. Frank's quest for atonement becomes more complex as he confronts the traumatic recollections of a violent act he committed during the war. His ongoing healing, similar to Cee's, indicates that resilience is about learning to coexist with trauma rather than attempting to eliminate it. Their capacity to recover from hardship and transform that experience into something constructive defines their resilience. Both novels indicate that trauma does not exist in isolation and that relational, historical, and cultural elements play a crucial role in the healing process. The Vegetarian and Home urge us to confront the uncomfortable truth that while recovery is not always achievable, it is seldom accomplished in isolation.

VIII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The relationship between physical and psychological trauma serves as a powerful lens to examine the complexities of suffering, agency, and healing in Toni Morrison's Home and Han Kang's The Vegetarian. Both novels illustrate how trauma, whether stemming from war, personal violence, or social injustice, becomes ingrained in the body, reflecting the inextricable link between mental anguish and bodily harm. Frank's battle with his guilt from war and Yeong-hye's destructive transformation reveal how trauma dismantles identity, alienates individuals from society, and forces them to navigate a fragile existence where distinguishing between improvement and deterioration is challenging. By emphasizing the non-linear and often incomplete nature of healing, Kang and Morrison challenge traditional narratives of recovery. Yeong-hye's refusal to eat and eventual withdrawal from social engagement act as a silent protest against patriarchal and cultural domination, showcasing how trauma can manifest as a form of self-neglect instead of healing. Conversely, Frank's journey toward redemption—which involves returning home and confronting his past—suggests that healing is possible, but only after addressing deeply rooted traumas and reclaiming lost agency. Although their journeys differ, both characters underscore the lasting impact of trauma and the difficulty of reconciling psychological anguish with physical autonomy. These narratives also investigate the role of society in both inflicting and addressing trauma. Yeong-hye's ambitions are overlooked in favor of societal norms, subjecting her to medical and familial authority. This emphasizes how institutions tend to pathologize deviation rather than understand the root causes of distress. Similarly, Frank seeks solace in

self-reflection and shared history despite being shaped by systemic racism and external violence, illustrating the struggle between individual suffering and collective responsibility. In both instances, trauma serves as a more extensive critique of the oppressive structures governing the mind and body rather than merely a personal affliction. Ultimately, both The Vegetarian and Home illustrate that healing involves an ongoing negotiation with memory, identity, and the physical remnants of suffering, rather than a straightforward process of overcoming pain. Kang and Morrison reveal how trauma endures, challenging simplistic resolutions, and requiring a deeper exploration of the elements that affect human vulnerability and strength by intertwining the psychological and physical aspects. Through their respective narratives, they compel readers to reconsider the essence of healing—not as a return to complete wholeness, but as a persistent and often painful journey of self-definition in the aftermath of violence. The relationship between physical and psychological trauma underscores the enduring effects of oppression, violence, and memory on both the body and mind in Toni Morrison's Home and Han Kang's The Vegetarian. As Cathy Caruth posits that trauma is not entirely comprehensible at the moment it occurs and instead reemerges through disjointed memories and physical manifestations, both novels depict how trauma resists articulation, presents itself somatically, and disrupts conventional ideas of recovery. Caruth's concept of trauma as an experience that is both inexpressible and constantly present, reshaping both body and mind in unexpected ways, is exemplified by Yeong-hye's quiet defiance and self-destructive bodily changes, as well as Frank's disconnection and haunting recollections of war. From a psychoanalytic perspective, both novels illustrate the Freudian concept of repressed experiences resurfacing. Yeong-hye is unconsciously attempting to address past violence, particularly the gendered trauma stemming from sexual violence and patriarchal oppression, as shown by her repeated dreams and increasing emotional withdrawal. Her decline into a vegetative state can be viewed as a manifestation of Freud's death drive (Todestrieb), representing the compulsion towards self-harm when conventional communication and therapy fail to provide relief. On the other hand, Frank exhibits classic PTSD symptoms such as emotional numbness and intrusive memories, revealing how systemic racial violence interwoven with wartime trauma cripples his ability to function within standard societal frameworks. His final confrontation with a repressed childhood memory—his participation in a sexual assault—correlates with psychoanalytic theories of trauma, which argue that any form of healing necessitates the intentional uncovering and acknowledgment of trauma. By demonstrating how patriarchal violence contributes to both individual and societal distress, feminist trauma theory complicates these narratives further. Reflecting Judith Herman's assertion that trauma is intrinsically political and anchored in systems of dominance, Yeong-hye's choice to stop eating and her transformation into a nonhuman entity serve as forms of defiance against a culture that subjugates women's bodies. Yeong-hye's experience with medical coercion and marital rape underscores how women's trauma is often pathologized or overlooked. Morrison's depiction of Frank's sister Cee aligns with feminist trauma discussions that highlight the exploitation of Black women's bodies in medical contexts. Cee's near-fatal experience with a eugenicist doctor evokes historical traumas, such as forced sterilization and medical experimentation, underscoring the interaction between gendered and racial traumas that shape marginalized identities. By incorporating psychoanalytic, feminist, and trauma theories, these novels illustrate that trauma extends beyond individual affliction to reflect broader cultural dynamics—like racism, patriarchy, and war—that influence who suffers, whose pain is recognized, and whose healing is deemed possible. In doing so, they prompt readers to reconsider trauma as a complex interplay of past experiences and the pursuit of autonomy, self-definition, and, at times, survival, rather than as a problem that can be simply fixed.