

## THE FEMINISM MELANCHOLIA FOR THE MAIN CHARACTERS OF THE NOVEL “KIM JI-YEONG”

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### ABSTRACT

Trauma is inseparable from a strong memory matter. The bond between trauma and memory is inseparable so memory will always remember the trauma of an individual. Conflicts in a literature work cause various impacts and are influenced by social, cultural, and psychological factors. One of the factors is an internal family conflict. The conflict may lead to psychological factor impacts due to mental problems, depression, such as melancholia. Melancholia refers to the mental problem expressing the problems about life perception due to depression and a tendency to anxiety, fatigue, desperation, and excessive anxiety. This research aimed to describe the reflection of melancholia of the main characters in the novel titled Kim Jie-Yeong by Cho Nam Joo. The applied theory to analyze the melancholia of the main characters is - Cathy Caruth's theory. This qualitative research applies the literature psychology. The research data consisted of some text units in the novel Kim Ji-Yeong based on the research objective. The data source from the novel of Kim Ji-Yeong. The applied data collection techniques were reading and noting while the data analysis was descriptive. The results found that the situations of the primary characters indicated the suffering of trauma and melancholia in the past events.

**Keywords: Conflict, Melancholia, Trauma**

### INTRODUCTION

The literature work has different conflicts such as the internal family conflict. Internal family conflict may influence and impact the members of a group. Conflict occurs due to the different situations and backgrounds. Conflict may occur due to the past-event effects that traumatize the individuals toward other activities and events. Trauma refers to described events as the responses toward unexpected or uncommon violence and incidents that cannot be understood once the incident occurs. However, trauma refers to a flashback and repetition as if it were a bad dream and repeated phenomenon (Caruth, 91:1996). The responses of individuals may differ to respond to a trauma. Trauma is inseparable from a strong memory. The bond between trauma and memory is inseparable so memory will always remember the trauma of an individual.

The experience of trauma is unforgeable and undeniable from the concerned individual due to the unstructured and unforgeable memories. The same matter also goes for memories as something strong. Memories could bind many things in a life but memory is unstable to remember. Memories may be unstructured such as the original and ordered experience. Memories, the constructive memories, appear immediately and are recalled based on certain occasions. The instance is - a

recalling memory based on an incident or experience. This phenomenon is static, unchanged, and retained inside of an individual thought.

Cavanagh (1982) groups trauma into situational, developmental, intra-psychological, and extensional groups. Situational trauma appears due to certain situations such as natural disasters, war, accidents, wildfire, violence, crime, divorce, unemployment, and death of the loved ones. Developmental trauma appears in some human stages, starting from denial, unexpected birth, relationships in a family, and many more. The third group is - the intra-psychological trauma. This trauma refers to strong individual anxiety. The appearances of the anxiety included sexual orientation feelings toward the same sex types, the uncontrolled feeling of love, and many more. The latest group, existential trauma, refers to the existence of failure in an individual life.

This research analyzes a novel titled “Kim Ji-Young” by Cho Nam Joo in 2016. The novel is about women and males with different identities as males and females. Most communities see the figure of males as a strong, tough, and different figure from a human. In this case, most communities assume females as soft and tender figures with some limitations such as jobs. Thus, this matter leads to gender biases. In the novel, the main character of the novel is Kim Ji Young, aged 30 years old. His family expects his birth as a man could make the family better than the birth of a woman. However, as time goes by, Kim Ji-Young realizes that he receives unfair treatment from his family and that he must work extremely hard. These routine bores and exhausts him. Then, this matter changes Ji Young. While taking care of the children at his home, the husband Dae Hyun feels sad to see Ji-Young act strange as if she acts like another individual. When Ji-Young gets interrupted by his thoughts and his mood, he talks to himself.

This action happens due to depression and interruption in their activities. Sigmund Freud's Melancholia is a complex and pathological process. They find themselves disrespected and cannot achieve anything. Then, in the past event, they think of themselves as lower than other previous days. Besides melancholia makes an individual feel empty and lonely. The examples are observable in the characters in the novel. The characters suffer from depression and the ego-coercion of the family. The demonstrated attitudes of the primary characters indicate that depression against the ego could alter the individual ego to melancholia.

Evi Irawanti et al titled “*Analisis Trauma dalam Novel Atonement*” by the 21<sup>st</sup> literature work found the correlation between the 9/11 attack seen from the psychological perspective lens approach. Kathryn Robson explains that emotional trauma attacks both individual and group. Besides that, Burhanuddin Aulia also investigates the psychiatric trauma of the main characters in the novel titled *Lelaku Harimau* by Eka Kurniawan in 2020. This research explains that narrative structure by using the novel to identify the primary characters as the realization of post-trauma with scars and rude treatment against the characters in the novel. The researchers explain the experienced trauma by the characters to identify the event. The same matter goes for the primary character Kim Ji-Young as described in the novel. The novelty of the current research is the focus on the female character, Kim Ji Young, with individual trauma. Then, the formulated problem in this research deals with the responses and the attitudes of the primary character to manage the situation and the problem of the interval family such as the gender bias within the socio-cultural bound in Korea. Thus, the women do

not get any opportunities since they are children. This matter makes the primary characters traumatized and depressed.

## **DATA SOURCE**

The data source of this research is the novel titled "Kim Ji Yeong" by Cho Nam Joo, published in 2016. This research attempts to determine the feminist melancholia reflection as a woman of the primary character in the novel.

## **METHODS**

This descriptive-analytic research describes the facts of a research object, the text. Then, the researchers describe the obtained facts. The obtained data were verbal data to describe and comprehend the observable facts in the text. The material object of this research is the novel titled "Kim Ji Yeong" by Cho Nam Joo, published in 2016. This research attempts to determine the feminist melancholia reflection as a woman of the primary character in the novel. Thus, this research applies the approach of the melancholia memory trauma by Cathy Caruth.

This descriptive-qualitative method applies the socio-literature approach (Alfehaid et al., 2018; Larsen et al., 2021; Sipayung et al., 2016). The research data deals with words. The researchers collected, analyzed, and arranged the data into texts for further analysis. The researchers collected the data with literature study, reading, and noting. Here are the data collection steps. Here are the data collection steps. (1) reading carefully, (2) labeling the relevant data, (3) screening the data based on the focus, (4) grouping the data and categorizing the data based on the research focus, and (5) checking the data adequacy. The researchers analyzed the data by (1) grouping the data based on group, and (2) analyzing the short stories based on the literature sociology. The researchers quoted the sentences and citations as the data to facilitate the data explanation and elaborate the research analyses. The researchers comprehended and grouped the data based on Halbwach's trauma and memory theory. Then, the researchers grouped the data descriptively. The researchers chose three short stories from the short story set.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

In her seminal treatise on trauma, entitled *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History*, Cathy Caruth, building on Freudian psychoanalysis and poststructuralist approach, has articulated her trauma theory, which not only addresses the individual trauma haunting a traumatized person but also the collective cultural trauma, which comes to pass on a societal scale, hence psychologically wounding the citizens of a specific society. It can be construed from Caruth's text that the distinguishing line between individual and collective trauma has been blurred into nothingness. Not only can the individual traumas be transferred to the other residents of society, but also the collective trauma of a nation can find its way into the private realm of individuals' lives. That the traumas of individuals and a collective body of people are ineluctably intertwined with each other is evident in

Caruth's saying concerning how "history, like trauma, is never simply one's own, that history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas" (Caruth, 1996:24). Addressing the transmission of traumata from the individual to the collective plane, and vice versa, as well as the intergenerational facet of traumatic experience, Hyun-Joo Yoo elaborates

. . . the effect of trauma leaks across generations, affecting racial or cultural identities of contemporary individuals. Trauma experienced by a group in the historical past can be experienced by an individual who lives centuries later, owing to the everlasting, overarching, and universal characteristics of traumatic experiences. In short, collective trauma can be experienced by an individual and individual trauma can be experienced by a group, due to transhistoricity and intergenerationality of trauma (47-48).

According to Yoo, therefore, timeless and relentlessly influential as it is, a traumatic experience is liable to be transmitted across several generations, hurting the people of the subsequent periods, not to mention its potential to profoundly influence and shape their ethnic and 'cultural' identities. The trauma of slavery, for instance, continues to affect the racial identity of the latter-day African American community, even though those of the present generation have not witnessed and experienced that traumatic event directly. Furthermore, blurring the individual/collective binary, the trauma that a person has endured can be experienced by other individuals in society, and vice versa.

Relying on the Freudian concept of trauma, Cathy Caruth defines trauma as "the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena" (Caruth, 1996: 91). Construed from the above-cited text is one of the essential attributes of trauma: the incomprehensibility and unassimilated nature of trauma, that is to say, how traumatic events cannot be grasped and assimilated into the consciousness as they occur, and it is only belatedly and "in connection with another place, and in another time" (Caruth, 1996:17) that they can be experienced and registered by traumatized individual's psyche.

The belated recurrence or experience of trauma materializes in the shape of multitudinous psychological phenomena such as traumatic flashbacks, nightmares, hallucinations, and intrusive thoughts, not to mention the "numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event" (Caruth, 1995: 4). Even though the traumatic experience is barely integrated into the traumatized individual's consciousness at the moment of occurrence, it is still "preserved just beyond the limits of understanding in a timeless, wordless state and continues to inflict pain on the psyche" (Balaev, 2018: 363). Therefore, it can be regarded as a liminal and spectral experience, for it is at once absent and present and blurs the lines between past and present. In addition, apropos the haunting impact and the unintegrated nature of trauma, Caruth avers that the impossibility of fully registering "the event as it occurs" (Caruth, 1996: 7), a phenomenon that Laud denominates as "the collapse of witnessing" (ibid. 10), is what constitutes the haunting effect and force of a traumatic event: "The force of this experience would appear to arise precisely, in other words, in the collapse of its understanding" (Caruth, 1996:

7). Simply put, it is the unassimilated and ungrasped nature of the traumatic experience that repetitively returns to haunt survivor later on in the form of flashbacks and nightmares.

Addressing Caruth's viewpoint on the inability of the victims to witness or grasp the psychologically devastating events at the moment of occurrence, Anne Whitehead states that "Caruth's interest lies in the collapse of understanding which is situated at the heart of trauma. Trauma emerges as that which, at the very moment of its reception, registers as a non-experience, causing conventional epistemologies to falter" (Whitehead, 2004: 5). Lying at the heart of trauma, therefore, is its paradoxical nature and temporality, as Caruth observes in the following statement: "the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it; that immediacy, paradoxically, may take the form of belatedness" (Caruth, 1995: 91-92).

Reinhartz (2005:221) explains that feminism identifies the removal, deletion, and lost information about women. Reinhartz (2005:67) also asserts that the understanding of women, based on the feminist perspective, deals with the experience of the female perspective to improve herself. The non-feminism tends to underestimate the activities and thoughts of women or to use male perspectives. The feminism study reveals the possibility of the patriarchal culture that constructs the images of women and men, the inter-relationships, and the oppositions against the patriarchal domination as reflected in the literature works. Therefore, this research describes the melancholia of women that may be more extraordinary than those experienced by men. Feminism melancholia or women refers to the individual trauma experienced by women due to the impacts, of the poor future of the individual such as in the character made by Cho Nam Jo.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The examples are observable in the characters in the novel. The characters suffer from depression and the ego-coercion of the family. The demonstrated attitudes of the primary characters indicate that depression against the ego could alter the individual ego to melancholia. The association with the main character Kim Ji Young is described in the novel. The novel tells how some characters are having a casual time while drinking beer after they make Kim Ji-Yeong and Jeong Dae-Hyeon's children sleep. The husband, at that time, drinks a lot of beer and then pats her husband's shoulder.

"Dae-hyeon, Ji Young seems to be sad recently. Physically she gets better but not her thoughts. She fidgets. You should go talk to her and say thanks."

From the statement of the wife, the character is fidgeting about her life. She acknowledges her life is not joyful to row. Then, she reminds the old story when they go to college together. At that time, the wife found her husband confessed his feelings to Dae-Hyeon. However, at that time, Dae-Hyeon had no feelings for him. Kim Ji-Young suddenly says something happened at noon. It was a hot day, twenty years ago, that no one knows but only Cha Seung Yeon and Jeong Dae Hyeon. The melancholia effects are impulsive and bring the feeling of sadness and fidgeting. Melancholia of Freud's writing explains the cause of sadness is losing an object due to death or ignorant actions by loved ones. Kim Ji Young remembers the sad events during her childhood and those make her sad.

The novel also shows the depressed feeling of Kim Ji-Young after giving birth.

"Kim Ji Young has not slept recently. She looks so exhausted. Kim Ji Young is grateful for her husband. She says that he is feeling exhausted and has no spirit to do anything. She also explains that she is probably depressed after delivery."

Mudi (2020:7) explains that perinatal depression deals with the complex interaction among biology, psychology, and socio-culture. This problem influences the physical and emotional convenience after giving birth; changes the lifestyle and responsibility; and leads to fatigue and sleeping problems.

The childhood memory of Kim Ji Young is - when she tasted the milk powder of her young brother. Back then, she was 5 years older than her brother. She was 6 or 7 years old and curious to find out the taste..."

"The grandmother who lived in a house with her did not like Kim Ji Young while she was eating the milk powder of her brother. Then, the grandmother bet her."

The excerpts describes the memory of Kim Ji-Young that is never experienced by other children due to the abuses. In her childhood, Kim Ji Young should have received the feeling of convenience and compassion but she did not receive it. Since the beginning, her family hoped for the brother. This situation resembles the patriarchal culture because of the social opinion about the excellence of having sons than women. The society argues that male children could lift the status of parents. Therefore, Kim Ji-Young found herself compared to her brother and received negative treatment. Kusumawati Hatta explains that trauma refers to the memory of violence against the primary characters such as beating, stabbing, and shooting (Hatta, 2016: 36). In the story, Kim Ji Young was silent and remembered her childhood event. She suffers from trauma and enormous perception experience toward past events.

After getting into school, Kim Ji Young and her brother went to the school for the first time. They encountered harsh experiences at school such as the juvenile actions of males. Many female learners also found the same problem. One of the juvenile actions is - disturbing Kim Jeong by slapping the bag on Kim Jeong's shoulders. The other actions are kicking Kim Jeong's sandals. After Kim Ji Young tells her experience with her brother and mother, they argue that those juvenile actions are merely jokey pranks and childish behaviors. Then, the mother and the brother asked her to ignore the juvenile actions. However, Kim Jeong cannot ignore the actions and think that those are jokey pranks. This situation makes her cry.

"However, they do not help her to solve the problems. Her brother only says that males are childish and ask her to just ignore them. On the other hand, the mother scolds her because she is crying due to the juvenile actions." (Page 35)

"When sitting or standing in line, the bag will bump into Kim Ji Young's shoulders as if the action was unintentionally done while running into her. Then, the boy will come close to her and hit Kim Ji Young's arm." (Page 36)

"One day, at the beginning of the summer, Kim Jeong took off her sandals because her feet got sweaty. Then, she put her feet on the foot holder below the desk. Suddenly, the naughty boys kicked her sandals away. Her sandals slid across the tables and stopped in front of the class. Everybody looked at the sandals and laughed. The face of the teacher got red and then he slammed the desk and yelled whose sandals. Jeong could not speak a word because she was frightened but the boy next to her admitted that he kicked the sandals. However, the boy only bowed his head." (Page 36)

The committed action is a memory and it goes into the situation in which Ji Young feels exhausted and depressed. Therefore, her unconsciousness recalls the trauma of her childhood. She thinks that women have no space to move so society and culture underestimate women. Therefore, many female learners especially someone like Jeong get violated by their classmates. The realizations of the violence include assaulting other individuals, and violating other individuals due to anger, and hatred. The response to violence is similar to the response to fear. However, the response to violence tends to assault and oppress. However, in reality, these reactions have the opposite feeling. The committed action is a past memory and it goes into the situation in which Ji Young feels exhausted and depressed. Therefore, her unconsciousness recalls the trauma of her childhood. She thinks that women have no space to move so society and culture underestimate women. Therefore, many female learners especially someone like Jeong get violated by their classmates. The realizations of the violence include assaulting other individuals, and violating other individuals due to anger, and hatred. The response to violence is similar to the response to fear. However, the response to violence tends to assault and oppress. However, in reality, these reactions have the opposite feeling. When Jeong finds herself hurt and violated, she cries and keeps remembering her childhood events at Primary School.

"At that time, Kim Ji Young was scolded by her father. Why must she go to the course so far; why must she speak with strangers; why must she wear a short skirt; she should have learned, to be careful, wear something polite, act politely, avoid dangerous routes, avoid dangerous times, and stayed away from dangerous men. If she did not do these things, she was the one to blame." (Page 57)

When Kim Ji Young called her father to pick at a bus stop, she was frightened and depressed at that time, her father said those things. Eventually, Kim Jeong quit the course and did not go near the bus stop in the evening. She had no bravery to go on course because of the far distance. She also had no bravery to stare at other individuals. She was frightened of all men even her own brother. Then, she was never free from the fear. In the book by Kusumawati, the effects of anxiety on depressed individuals or individuals suffering from PTSD include fear and nervousness to deal with certain situations. Fear becomes the common thing but this matter could develop into a disease. In this case, Kim Jeong suffers from fear each time she meets males. She did not want to meet any males (Hatta, 2016:58). Before the father arrived, a woman appeared and approached Kim Joo Young. Back

then, she was squatting and suddenly crying at the bus stop. At that moment, the father arrived, Kim Ji Young told her father and the woman. Then, the woman said,

“All these things are not your faults. There are many good men out here.” (Page 65).

Since that moment, Kim has always been stuck on the woman. That woman erased her trauma about gender limitation and neglect ion. However, Kim was not totally free from many things, especially the things related to having a course away from her house.

“Suddenly she tears down. *I am such a kind of girl, seeking other people's money around the subway train although I am pregnant.* She could not bear her tears and immediately got off at the next station. There, she sits on a table on a platform and cries for a long time before she leaves the station. Although the distance from her house is far; although she is in an unfamiliar situation; and although she does not know the streets there; at least she leaves the station. There are many caps waiting on the street. Kim Ji Young gets on the first cap. Her crying is not a big problem on the train because no one knows her. Although she gets off the train because she is shocked, she could have got on the next train. However, she chose to take cap because she wants to do it.” (Page 140)

In the excerpt, Kim Ji Young cannot bear the pressure of her life and witness many hindrances but she keeps her will strong. This action is associated with Kim Ji Young's childhood with a strong image in her mind. Green J, Stanley, and Peter (2007) explain that the bond of an unstructured memory in the childhood or infant period deals with the feeling of loss or unresolved trauma in which the mothers and the children are influenced in the future. Therefore, children suffering from trauma will remember the memories of their parents nurturing themselves. They will remember whether the parents ignore or pay attention to their needs and their complexity. In addition, that women are able to lead or become leaders, unlike the view of society which assumes that men have the potential to lead or become better leaders than women (Kusumaningtyas, (2022: 114). But back again a very disturbing thought that is the existence of tarumatic in themselves giving different things and images

Kimchiong begins to change as if he were another person. He could change into someone who passed away or is alive; he could change into any woman around him; he does not look like joking around or making fun of other individuals. Now he looks totally different. (Page 66)

From the excerpt, Kim Ji Young changes into another individual. Sometimes she seems like another person that her husband does not even recognize. She seems like acting weird and having a different personality from the original Kim Ji Young. She seems like a cold person while gathering around her husband's family. She could face her parents-in-law bravely as if she was not Kim Ji Young. In this case, she remembers a painful memory that traumatizes her due to the treatment she received when she was a child. These memories made them upset. Kusumawati Hatta explains that intellectual symptoms such as confusion, losing focus, easily forgetting, and other cognitive problems occur due to anarchic matters and interrupted cognition due to external factors. These matters lead to the absence



of a joyful response. Depressed individuals may encounter physical effects as the responses while the individuals are thinking. These matters make them have sleeping difficulty, lose interest, feel numb, feel strange, fidget, lose desire, lose appetite, and lose hope. The physical responses change the individual mood. The individuals may encounter some decisions to make and find the decisions painful. Therefore, depressed individuals may have the intention to commit suicide as the solution to their problems (110:2016).

## CONCLUSION

Melancholia refers to a depression effect due to past event activity. In the novel, the characters provide reflections and descriptions of past events problems, and the painful activities that make the characters depressed, such as desperation and anxiety of the characters. These matters make them give up as mothers but the character struggles to rise. Kim Ji Young cannot bear the pressure and the challenges but the character attempts to rise. This action is associated with Kim Ji Young's childhood with a strong image in her mind. Thus, the treatment of the father when she was a child created a memory and melancholia trauma until she became a mother.

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