

The Unseen Gales of Memory: Lingering Trauma in the Poem *The Word of the Wind* by Mah Jonggi

¹Ms. B. Aishwarya & ²Dr. K. Shantichitra

¹Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of English, College of Science and Humanities, SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Kattankulathur, Chennai. India., ORCID: 0009-0005-2150-5627, saishu1616@gmail.com, Phone: +91 9940947792

²Professor, Department of English, College of Science and Humanities, SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Kattankulathur, Chennai. India., Email: shanthik@srmist.edu.in

KEYWORDS

Wind,
Memories,
Inner world

Trauma,
Identity,

ABSTRACT:

Mah Jonggi's *The Word of the Wind* explores trauma using symbols from nature and poetic imagery. The poem illustrates how trauma is akin to the wind, unseen but deeply impactful. Trauma theory is employed to comprehend the significance and fragmented effects of traumatic events on the human mind. The wind in the poem symbolizes both a natural phenomenon and an intangible entity, representing the memories and emotions that persist. The poem examines the enduring and fragmented wounds caused by trauma, highlighting its ability to alter memories and identity. Mah Jonggi's use of evocative language and vivid imagery emphasizes how trauma quietly endures, demonstrating its power to transform the individual's inner world. This analysis underscores the importance of recognizing and articulating these hidden wounds, offering profound insights into the ongoing human struggle to reconcile with past traumas.

Poetry is a profound medium used to express and explore the complexities of human emotions. *The Word of the Wind* by Mah Jonggi is a poem capturing the intricate interplay between memory, loss, and healing. Jonggi's poem offers a rich landscape for examining the psychological and emotional aspects of trauma by using vivid imagery and delicate metaphors. This research paper aims to explore the themes and implications of trauma presented in *The Word of the Wind*, using trauma theory and qualitative methodology to uncover the deeper meanings within. Trauma theory offers a theoretical framework for comprehending how traumatic events are portrayed and processed in literature. It is based on psychoanalysis and literary studies. The significance of narrative in the understanding and recovery from trauma is emphasized by Cathy Caruth and Judith Herman, who contend that storytelling is essential for both individual and societal healing. Trauma theory enables us to of anguish and the ensuing path toward catharsis.

Qualitative methodology is implemented as it is exploratory research. The investigation focuses on understanding the meanings and interpretations of human experiences. By engaging with the poem through a qualitative lens, this study seeks to uncover the emotional and psychological layers. Thematic analysis is used to examine the text and explore Jonggi's use of language and symbolism through the essence of trauma and resilience. *The Word of the Wind* starts by considering absence and the speaker's spirit, compared to the wind. This metaphor helps reflect on the short-lived nature of human connections and the lasting effects of past relationships. Planting a flower in a shadowy spot represents turning pain into something beautiful and temporary. The poem's repetitive structure, especially the line *It will turn into petals and fly away* ("Korean Poetry in Translation." Korean Poetry in Translation) emphasizes the idea of release and the fleeting nature of suffering. This research aims to explore the emotional and psychological aspects of *The Word of the Wind* through detailed text analysis. By looking at the poem's themes, imagery, and structure, the study aims to understand how Mah Jonggi describes trauma and the possibility of healing. Using trauma theory and qualitative methods, this article will explore how poetry can express and reduce the effects of trauma, highlighting its healing power.

The poem begins with people leaving and the spirit passing by, suggesting a sense of loss or separation. This can be interpreted as the aftermath of a traumatic event, where the presence of those who have left continues to affect the survivor. A meditation on absence and the ethereal presence of the speaker's spirit, linked with the wind. The speaker expresses a desire to plant a flower, symbolizing the process of transforming pain into beauty. The imagery of the "wind sways the spring boughs" symbolizes the subtle and invisible influence of the past trauma on the present. It

contemplates that the effects of trauma are pervasive, even if they are not always immediately visible. “Today I will plant a flower” (“Korean Poetry in Translation.” Korean Poetry in Translation) A profound exploration of themes such as separation, memory, and healing. The speaker addresses that even after physical departure, the essence or spirit of the departed lingers on. This lingering presence is not merely a metaphorical afterthought but a significant element that sways the emotional state of the listener, corresponding to how the wind sways spring boughs. “Traumatic experience often undermines and destabilizes the fabric that holds together memory, emotion, history, and even language itself.” (Boynton 103) Planting a flower on the corner of the shadow where the speaker got to know the other person signifies an attempt to transform the site of trauma “the shadow” into something beautiful and new. This can be seen as a coping mechanism, where the individual tries to find meaning and growth from a painful experience. “all the distress that stemmed from our acquaintance / will turn into petals and fly away.” (“Korean Poetry in Translation.” Korean Poetry in Translation) The act of planting a flower serves as an allegory for the transformation of pain and sorrow stemming from the relationship into something beautiful and meaningful. The growth of the flower to full bloom represents healing and the eventual overcoming of distress. “...trauma makes reference to a real occurrence, a physical or emotional blow that overwhelms the senses and against which the mind and body must defend itself.” (Eyerman 90) The initial cause of the emotional state described in the poem could be a traumatic separation, loss, or significant change. This event disrupts the individual’s sense of stability and triggers a range of emotional responses. “It will turn into petals and fly away.” (“Korean Poetry in Translation.” Korean Poetry in Translation) The blooming flower turning into petals that fly away symbolizes the release of the emotional burden and the transient nature of trauma’s impact over time.

The flower, once it blooms, becomes a representation of healing and the eventual release of distress, signified by petals that fly away. This transformation underscores the potential for growth and renewal even in the wake of emotional turmoil. “Though it is unbearably distant / and futile, / how can we measure all the things in the world / with only a small ruler?” (“Korean Poetry in Translation.” Korean Poetry in Translation) The poem identifies the feelings of distance and futility that often accompany trauma. It reflects the emotional struggle and the sense of hopelessness that can be a symptom of post-traumatic stress. The poem explores the inherent challenges in understanding or surmounting the complex emotions tied to past experiences. It suggests that these emotions are often beyond the scope of simple understanding or measurement, as depicted by the metaphor of attempting to measure the world with a small ruler. The limitations of trying to understand or quantify the vast and complex experiences of trauma with inadequate means. It highlights the inadequacy of conventional measures in capturing the full scope of trauma’s impact. “There are simply too many incidents, and often similar memories have blurred together. Usually, however, a few distinct and particularly meaningful incidents stand out.... Letting one incident stand for many is an effective technique for creating new understanding and meaning.” (Herman) The act of listening to the wind symbolizes staying attuned to the echoes of the past. This can be seen as an ongoing process of remembrance and reflection, which is crucial in trauma recovery.

This metaphor emphasizes the limitations of conventional tools or perspectives in grappling with profound emotional experiences. “my beloved, don’t forget even if you become tired / the word of the wind that comes from faraway.” (“Korean Poetry in Translation.” Korean Poetry in Translation) The speaker advises the listener to remain receptive to the subtle yet enduring messages carried by the wind from the past. This final sentiment emphasizes the significance of holding onto the lessons and memories from the past regardless of distant place or time. A form of resilience is suggested where despite reluctance, the individual remains connected to the transformative power of those memories. “Whether we remember a particular event at all, and how accurate our memories of it are, largely depends on how personally meaningful it was and how emotional we felt about it at the time.” (van der Kolk) Despite the fatigue and weariness that might accompany such an endeavor, the poem encourages an ongoing engagement with these distant echoes. This engagement is portrayed as essential to maintaining a connection with the transformative power of memory and love, which persist beyond the immediate temporal and spatial confines of the relationship. “Memories form the very bedrock of our identities and help define what it means to be human. Though not necessarily

entirely accurate or permanent, memories are a magnetic compass that guides us through new situations.” (Levine) The effects are depicted as ongoing distress, attempts to find meaning, and the struggle to heal. The symptoms of this trauma include emotional turmoil, a sense of futility, and the need to transform the traumatic memory into something positive. The lingering emotional pain, a sense of loss, difficulty moving on, and the need for symbolic acts to process and cope with the trauma. The image of wind and petals suggests a fluctuating process of dealing with symptoms, where moments of distress are interspersed with efforts at healing and release.

The poem is an intricate meditation on the enduring impact of emotional bonds, the transformative potential of memory, and the complex journey towards healing. “All our emotions tell us about something we need... When we do not listen to what we feel, we miss vital signs that can help us meet our needs.” (Liv Larsson. Anger) Through imagery and metaphors, it reflects on the nature of separation and the lingering presence of those who have departed, urging a mindful engagement with the memories and emotions that shape our understanding of love and loss.

Works Cited

“Korean Poetry in Translation.” Korean Poetry in Translation, jaypsong.blog/. n.d.

Boynton, Eric, and Peter Capretto. Trauma and Transcendence. Fordham Univ Press, 2018. n.d.

Eyerman, Ron, and Springerlink (Online Service. Memory, Trauma, and Identity. Springer International Publishing, 2019. n.d.

Herman, Judith Lewis. Trauma and Recovery: Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror. Basicbooks, 1992. n.d.

Levine, Peter A. Trauma and Memory. North Atlantic Books, 2015. n.d.

Liv Larsson. Anger, Guilt & Shame : Reclaiming Power and Choice. Friare Liv, 2012. n.d.

van der Kolk, Bessel. The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma. Penguin Books, 2015. n.d.