

## Traumatic Remembrance: An Exploration Of Love And Loss In The Snowy Night By Moon Tae-Jun

<sup>1</sup>Ms. Aishwarya B., <sup>2</sup>Dr. K. Shantichitra

<sup>1</sup>Ph.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, ab8401@srmist.edu.in

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

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Cite this paper as: Ms. Aishwarya B., Dr. K. Shantichitra, (2024), Traumatic Remembrance: An Exploration Of Love And Loss In The Snowy Night By Moon Tae-Jun. *Frontiers in Health Informatics*, 13(8) 517-520

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### ABSTRACT

Moon Tae-jun's *The Snowy Night* poem utilizes the theoretical frameworks of trauma and remembrance to delve into the complex interplay of love and loss. This study scrutinizes the poem's deployment of winter imagery as a metaphorical landscape for emotional healing and the enduring presence of traumatic memories. By examining the juxtaposition of tranquil winter scenes with internal turmoil, the research interprets ritualistic elements as symbolic endeavors for psychological purification. Additionally, it explores the poem's dual depiction of memory as both a source of solace and distress, shedding light on the intricate relationship between past experiences and present consciousness. This analysis seeks to elucidate Moon Tae-jun's sophisticated portrayal of trauma's lasting impact and the multifaceted nature of remembering lost love within the realm of contemporary poetry.

**Keywords:** Trauma, Remembrance, Emotional healing, Consciousness

Traumatic remembrance is a psychological process that greatly affects how people remember and interact with their past, often bringing up memories that are both painful and deeply emotional. In poetry, these kinds of memories are often explored using rich imagery and strong emotions, giving readers a deep insight into personal experiences of loss, love, and longing. Moon Tae-jun's poem *The Snowy Night* is a powerful example of how poetry can explore the connection between memory and trauma, focusing on the themes of remembrance and mourning. At its core, *The Snowy Night* is about loss and the lasting impact it leaves on the human mind. The poem begins by recalling a lover, who is described with purity and tenderness, which contrasts sharply with the cold, lonely imagery of the snowy night. The "silver scales" in the lover's eyes can be seen as a metaphor for how memories, especially those linked to trauma, can change and obscure the present. These scales suggest a sense of time being frozen, where the loved one is remembered not in the liveliness of life but in the stillness of a cold, wintry night. "The story of trauma, then, as the narrative of a belated experience, far from telling of an escape from reality—the escape from a death, or from its referential force—rather attests to its endless impact on a life." (Caruth 7) The narrative of trauma has a complicated relationship with both time and personal experience. Rather than being a one-time event, trauma is described as a delayed experience, meaning it emerges and continues to affect an individual long after the initial event. This perspective on trauma is different from the usual idea of avoiding a significant threat or its serious consequences. Instead of showing a successful escape from the harsh realities of a life-threatening event, the narrative of trauma focuses on the ongoing and deep effects it has on a person's life.

The idea of a delayed experience highlights that trauma is not immediately understood when it happens. It often takes a while for someone to realize, understand, and express the impact of the traumatic event. As a result, the story of trauma is influenced by this delay, as the person slowly becomes aware of the trauma's wide-ranging effects.

This delay in recognition and understanding shows that trauma is not just a separate, isolated incident but a life-changing experience that significantly impacts a person's life path. The narrative of trauma goes against the idea of escaping reality. It's not about running away from the difficult truths of life or the threat of death. Instead, it reflects the ongoing struggle with the consequences of the traumatic experience. This struggle can show up in different ways, like through persistent memories, emotional pain, and changes in behavior. The narrative of trauma becomes proof of the lasting impact of the traumatic event, showing how it continues to influence and define a person's life. The story of trauma, seen as a delayed experience, highlights the lasting and life-changing impact of traumatic events on a person's life. It challenges the idea of escaping reality and stresses the importance of recognizing and dealing with the long-term effects of trauma. The investigation of traumatic remembrance has emerged as a significant focus within both literary and psychological scholarship, signifying a wider cultural and academic effort to comprehend the intricate and deeply rooted ways in which individuals and communities navigate and recall traumatic events. Situated at the crossroads of memory studies and trauma theory, the concept of traumatic remembrance pertains to the ongoing and frequently involuntary recollection of painful experiences. These memories can surface in diverse ways, impacting an array of emotional and mental processes. "Trauma inevitably brings loss. Even those who are lucky enough to escape physically unscathed still lose the internal psychological structures of a self securely attached to others." As the poem moves forward, the act of remembering becomes more personal and almost ritualistic. The speaker remembers a tender moment—the lover wrapping a white towel around their neck and washing their face. This simple, caring act is treated as sacred, highlighting the importance of everyday memories in the process of mourning. The snow, often seen as a symbol of purity and silence, here represents both the forgetting that trauma can cause and the quiet that allows for deep reflection and memory. In this way, *The Snowy Night* shows that traumatic memories are not just past events but are lived in the present. The snow, the sacred silence, and closing one's eyes to remember all help create a space where the past and present exist together, allowing the speaker to connect with a lost loved one again. "...Implicit memories appear and disappear surreptitiously, usually far outside the bounds of our conscious awareness." (Levine 31) However, this connection also brings out the deep loneliness and sorrow tied to these memories. Moon Tae-jun's *The Snowy Night* provides a thoughtful reflection on traumatic remembrance, showing how memory can bring both comfort and pain. Through its vivid images and emotional depth, the poem encourages readers to think about how they deal with their memories, especially after a loss. By exploring this poetic reflection, we gain a better understanding of how trauma shapes our view of the past and continues to influence us in the present. "Feelings of attachment can be rated independently of actual support received and may be high even when the relationship is poor." (Bifulco 87) The poem frequently stirs feelings of nostalgia and yearning, indicating that the attachment focuses more on memories or the concept of the relationship than on its current state. This idea aligns with the notion that attachment can endure even without active support or a positive relationship. People often develop attachments driven by emotional needs rather than the actual interactions or state of the relationship. The poem uses winter imagery to convey this, with the severity of the snow symbolizing the challenging or unfeeling parts of a relationship. Still, the continual snowfall represents a lasting attachment despite these difficulties. People often have an idealized view of past relationships, leading to strong feelings of attachment. This romanticization can happen even if the relationship is troubled or lacks genuine support, showing how perception can overshadow reality.

### **The Role of Imagery in Traumatic Remembrance**

The poem begins by directly addressing the lover, who is described as having "pure eyes," evoking a sense of innocence and vulnerability. "Oh, my lover / who had pure eyes;" (Song) This purity contrasts sharply with the "silver scales" that "occupied your eyes," implying that something cold and unnatural has clouded the lover's vision. The

“silver scales” act as a metaphor for how traumatic memories obscure and distort the speaker’s recollections of the past. The lover’s once pure eyes are now replaced by the coldness of these scales, symbolizing how trauma freezes memories, making them difficult to process or move beyond. “...anxiety as the realistic response to separation or threatened separation of a vulnerable individual from his caregiver.”(Holmes 73) Anxiety is often seen as a normal and helpful response to threats or stress. In the relationship between a vulnerable person and their caregiver, anxiety is a natural response when they are separated or could be separated. This idea comes from attachment theory, which suggests that strong emotional bonds, especially in early life, are essential for survival and well-being. This anxiety shows how much the person depends on the caregiver for safety and security, and it also means that their important bond has been disrupted. The caregiver helps provide a safe foundation from which the person can explore the world and learn to be independent. The stress of separation anxiety plays an important evolutionary role by pushing the person to stay close to the caregiver, which increases their chances of staying safe from danger. In this way, anxiety is a logical and useful response that helps maintain the bond with the caregiver and ensures the person’s safety. Separation anxiety is not limited to children and caregivers but can happen in any situation where someone feels a crucial emotional connection is at risk. This could happen in relationships with romantic partners, friends, or family members. The anxiety felt in these cases shows our basic human need for connection and the fear of losing essential emotional support. Anxiety as a normal response to separation or the threat of separation from a caregiver shows how important attachment bonds are in human development and emotional management. It highlights the need for secure relationships to reduce anxiety and support psychological health. As the poem unfolds, snow imagery takes on a central role in the narrative. Snow, typically linked to silence and stillness, falls on the night depicted in the poem, reinforcing themes of frozen time and emotional paralysis. The falling snow might symbolize how traumatic memories envelop the present, making it difficult for the speaker to look beyond their pain and loss. It covers the world in silence, mirroring the “sacred quiet” that “descends upon the lonely planet.” This quiet is both peaceful and sorrowful, creating a space for the speaker to remember while also deepening the sense of isolation and loneliness that comes with traumatic remembrance.

### Memory as a Process of Ritual

“Oh, my poor lover / who wrapped my neck / with a white towel and washed my face, / a sacred quiet descends / upon the lonely planet.” (Song) The poem emphasizes how memory transforms into a ritualistic process when dealing with trauma. The act of the lover wrapping a white towel around the speaker’s neck and washing their face, though simple and nurturing, gains a sacred significance in the context of grief. This act of washing transcends its physical nature, symbolizing a spiritual cleansing and an effort to alleviate the pain of loss. The white towel, symbolizing purity and mourning, stands in contrast to the silver scales and the cold snow, highlighting the tension between clinging to memories and the process of letting go. The speaker’s act of closing their eyes to recall this moment is an effort to reconnect with the past and hold onto the memory of the lover’s touch. This act of remembrance is both soothing and distressing, as it brings the lover’s presence closer, yet simultaneously highlights their absence. Closing the eyes symbolizes a retreat into the internal realm of memory, where past experiences can be revisited but remain unchanged.

### The Convergence of Past and Present

*The Snowy Night* demonstrates that traumatic memories are more than mere reflections of the past; they are actively experienced in the present. The snow, silence, and act of remembrance all help create a space where past and present intertwine. This blending is both poignant and painful, as it enables the speaker to sense the presence of the lost lover while simultaneously bringing the anguish of loss into the current moment. The poem implies that although memory can offer comfort, it also continues to sustain the pain inflicted by trauma. “I close my eyes / to remember the time / your hands washed my face.” (Song) The speaker’s yearning to recall the moment when their lover washed their face reveals a wish to cling to the past, yet this act of remembering also underscores the deep loneliness felt when recognizing that these memories are all that is left. The poem effectively illustrates the complexity of human emotions. It proposes that attachment stems not only from the support provided but also from intricate emotional connections,

encompassing hope, fear, and a yearning for closeness, even in challenging situations.

Traumatic remembrance is a complex psychological phenomenon in which individuals are deeply affected by memories linked to past traumas. These memories can emerge unexpectedly, evoking intense emotions such as loss, sorrow, and longing. Moon Tae-jun's poem *The Snowy Night* offers a powerful exploration of this process, using evocative imagery and language to illustrate the interplay between memory, trauma, and mourning. Moon Tae-jun's *The Snowy Night* provides a profound examination of traumatic remembrance, employing vivid imagery and emotional depth to capture the intricacies of memory, loss, and grief. The poem demonstrates how trauma alters our view of the past and persists in affecting our present, complicating the process of overcoming loss. By meticulously portraying the ritualistic nature of memory, *The Snowy Night* encourages readers to contemplate their own experiences of mourning and how they navigate the challenging landscape of remembrance.

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