

# Trauma, Mind Style, and Unreliable Narration in Toni Morrison's *Home*

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**ABSTRACT:** This article provides a twofold reading of Toni Morrison's novel *Home*. In the first instance, the stylistic representation of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is explored in relation to Frank's mind style; this is done through a focused examination on passages related to Frank's misremembered murder of a girl during his time as a soldier in the Korean War. Frank's guilt and faulty memories, and his lingering experience of PTSD, lead to the issue of narrative unreliability. This article shows how not just Frank himself but also the unspecified third-person narrator is just as unreliable as Frank, if not more so. The seemingly contentious relationship between Frank and the other narrator ultimately leads to Frank's realization about his hand in the murder of the Korean girl, and hence to a coming to terms with and recovery from war-induced PTSD.

**KEYWORDS:** Toni Morrison, *Home*, mind style, narration, unreliability

Toni Morrison's penultimate novel *Home* (2012) tells the story of Korean War veteran Frank Money's cross-country odyssey through 1950s America in an effort to save his sister Ycidra ("Cee") from a eugenicist doctor's medical experiments. Along the way, not only must he navigate his way through a racially hostile and segregated society, but he must also deal with the shell shock (now known as post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD) resulting from his experience in Korea. He is plagued by what Caruth calls the "returning traumatic dream . . . the literal return of the event against the will of the one it inhabits," thus possessing an "impossible history" within himself because he becomes a "symptom of a history that they [he] cannot entirely possess" (5). Only able to process the gravity of war after its frenetic occurrence, Frank is a classic case

of a war survivor who struggles with PTSD. A substantial amount of the novel's narrative thus focuses not so much on sequential events driving the plot forward (although there is still plenty of that), but rather on Frank's psychological experience in dealing with the symptoms of PTSD, which include amnesia and faulty memory, lack of concentration, tinnitus, as well as heightened sensitivity to noise, dizziness, and tremor (Jones et al. 1641; see also Crocq & Crocq). *Home* thus constitutes a work of trauma fiction in which "trauma can only adequately be represented by mimicking its forms and symptoms, so that temporality and chronology collapse" (Whitehead 3). It is the stylistic representation of these "forms and symptoms" and their narratological consequences that I wish to discuss here.

While coming to terms with the traumatic effects of war and racism are the perennial focus of criticism devoted to Morrison's novel (see, e.g., the work of Montgomery, Visser, Christiansë, Ibarrola, Schreiber, and Wagner-Martin 145–58), only scant attention has been paid to the manner in which trauma is realized stylistically within the narrative. Montgomery notes—without providing any examples—that stream-of-consciousness or interior monologue (referred to as free indirect thought here) is the prevalent means in which trauma is represented (326). A number of other techniques beyond this are also used, however, and free indirect thought—while present—is not necessarily the most prevalent expression of trauma. Similarly, Ibarrola comments that multiple levels of focalization are present without going into any substantial detail (109–10). In this sense, Morrison's novel bears resemblance to the works of William Faulkner and Virginia Woolf, two modernist authors famous for their style of exploring the inner workings of characters' minds, and whose works proved quite influential in shaping Morrison's style from very early in her career (Christiansë 2, Wagner-Martin 6, 145–46; see also Miller). Much has also been said about the narratological structure of the novel, which features two levels of narration: Frank's first-person account alongside an unspecified third-person narrator. The relationship between Frank and the other narrator has received much critical attention (Visser, Ibarrola, Christiansë), yet these analyses fail to take the insights provided by narratology on types of narrators and (un)

reliability into account. Indeed, in contrast to Faulkner and Woolf, there is a general paucity of scholarship devoted to the literary linguistic aspects of Morrison's writing style, and *Home* in particular (although Wen's recent article on Theory of Mind [ToM] is perhaps one exception, cf. Zunshine). In a similar vein, while there certainly has been some work on the stylistic representation of trauma in fiction (see, e.g., McAlister's discussion of Weinzweig's *Basic Black with Pearls* or Ahmad et al.'s exploration of McEwan's *Saturday*), there has not to my knowledge been a proper examination of how war-induced PTSD is linguistically represented in fiction, nor how Toni Morrison's technique allows such trauma to be seamlessly integrated into her narrative (Wen's discussion of ToM concentrates on Frank's sister Cee).

My focus here is thus twofold: I first provide a detailed stylistic account of how Frank Money's PTSD is presented in the novel using Fowler's notion of "mind style" as a guiding framework. Mind style, according to Fowler, refers "to any distinctive linguistic presentation of an individual mental self" (103; see also Leech & Short 150–67, Semino 2007). This concept goes hand-in-hand with Zunshine's ToM and metarepresentation—the manner in which a literary work gives the reader cues/clues as to a certain character or narrator's mental processes. This allows us to cast as wide a net as possible when searching for features, thus avoiding the risk of focusing excessively on well-studied phenomena such as free indirect style (Montgomery 326; see also Palmer 53–86). Secondly, I explore how one of the symptoms of PTSD, faulty memory, finds its expression in *Home*, most notably in Frank's witnessing of an African American couple getting assaulted in a café, and especially in his own sexually charged murder of a Korean girl. The latter incident adds feelings of guilt—often projected onto other people (such as Frank's deceased friends)—into the mix. These two incidents bring the notion of narrative unreliability to the fore (Booth 158–159; Phelan 49–53; Shen), and as we will see here, these incidents bring the third-person narrator's reliability into question just as much as Frank's, if not more so. Space precludes a fuller discussion of the general representation of trauma throughout the entire novel (such as Frank and Cee's childhood traumas, or the trajectory of Cee's trauma at the hands of Dr. Beauregard Scott), but the current study should at

least provide a representative illustration of how such trauma finds itself stylized in Morrison's novel *Home*, if not in her oeuvre more generally.

FRANK MONEY'S MIND STYLE: THE LITERARY LINGUISTIC  
REPRESENTATION OF PTSD

As mentioned above, mind style is how a particular character's mental state finds itself expressed in the language of narrative, and depending on authorial choice and character disposition, myriad features can be utilized in the linguistic representation of mind style. Scholars have shown, for example, how William Golding utilizes simplified syntax and transitivity patterns to mimic the mind style of Neanderthal man Lok in his *The Inheritors* (Halliday; see also Fowler 104–06); how lexical choice and simplified syntax serve to mark the mentally challenged Benjamin “Benjy” Compson in William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (Leech & Short 162–66); or how neurodivergent, autistic characters' mind styles result in various “pragmatic failures” related to informativeness, face management, and the interpretation of figurative language (Semino 2014). Even depictions of “normal” mind styles can vary in their use of lexis and syntax depending on how the author may wish to perspectivize a setting or characterize a persona (Leech & Short 154–58). Indeed, through an analysis of Richardson's *Clarissa* and Nabokov's *Lolita*, Zunshine demonstrates how broader textual structures can also provide readers insight into the minds of various—and in her case, dubious—characters (82–118). Throughout *Home*, Frank Money's mind style betrays a man who is suffering with an extreme case of PTSD, compounded by suppressed guilt, and this is made clear in both the first- and third-person narratives.

In the sections of the novel narrated in the first person by Frank himself, the narrative description provides explicit detail as to exactly how Frank's PTSD manifests itself (Morrison's use of italics to differentiate the first- from the third-person narration is maintained here):

*I remember exactly why I hadn't had a drink in four days and needed to dry-clean my clothes. It was because of that morning when I walked over by the bridge. A crowd was milling there along with an ambulance.*

*When I got close enough I saw a medic's arms holding a little girl vomiting water. Blood ran from her nose. A sadness hit me like a pile-driver. My stomach fell and just the thought of whiskey made me want to heave. I rushed off feeling shaky, then I spent a few nights on benches in the park until the cops ran me off (68–69).*

The syntax here is unremarkable, but *verba sentiendi* (words of perception, cognition, and emotion) abound, providing insight into how PTSD manifests itself in Frank's day-to-day life. He *remembers* something that he *saw*, which triggered an emotional response (*a sadness hit me*) resulting in physical (*stomach fell, feeling shaky*) and psychological (*thought of whiskey, want to heave*) reactions. These words provide lucid insight into the “psychological plane” of Frank's viewpoint, allowing readers to get a clear sense of his state of mind (Simpson 30–43; see also Short 268–69, Rimmon-Kenan 81–83, Zunshine 47–54). This is quite similar to episodes that trigger similar, but less severe, flashbacks of Frank losing two of his childhood friends in the war, Mike and Stuff. If, for example, Frank heard a joke that “Mike would love, he would turn his head to tell it to him—then a nanosecond of **embarrassment** before **realizing** he wasn't there” (99) [emphasis mine]. Another run-in with a little girl, this time described by the third-person narrator, has similar consequences:

Anyway, they were in high spirits all afternoon—chatting with people and helping children load their plates. Then, smack in the middle of all that cold sunlight and warm gaiety, Frank bolted. They had been standing at a table, piling seconds of fried chicken on their plates, when a little girl with slanty eyes reached up over the opposite edge of the table to grab a cupcake. Frank leaned over to push the platter closer to her. When she gave him a broad smile of thanks, he dropped his food and ran through the crowd (76–77).

This scene describes a church picnic being attended by Frank and his girlfriend Lily Jones, but unlike in the first-person narration, we have little insight into Frank's feelings and perceptions, except that he was in “high spirits” until the encounter. Instead, his actions of dropping the

food and bolting through the crowd leave the reader little doubt as to why this happened: the psychosomatic response of seeing another little girl. That is, we are still able to “track” Frank’s mind through this narrative description, rather than depend on overt references to his psychological state (Zunshine 73–75). In one of Frank’s subsequent narrations, we learn that before Mike and Stuff were killed during the Korean War, he witnessed his relief guard shoot a scavenging young girl after she offered to perform fellatio on him (95–96). Near the end of the novel, Frank confesses that he was actually the one to murder the girl after she aroused him (133–34). This proves the triggering event for the later episodes discussed here, and Frank’s contradictory accounts of this episode draw his reliability as a narrator into question (the topic of the next section). In addition, Frank’s sister Cee often serves as a trigger for flashbacks. When Frank receives a letter from Dr. Scott’s housekeeper Sarah about the danger Cee is in, the words “She be dead” (103) induce memories of the Korean battlefield:

*I dragged Mike to shelter and fought off the birds but he died anyway . . . I stanchd the blood finally oozing from the place Stuff’s arm should have been . . . He died anyway . . . No more watching people close to me die (103).*

Indeed, it is Cee’s mentioning of the “toothless smile babies have” (132) while coming to terms with being rendered infertile by Dr. Scott’s experiments on her womb that ultimately jolts Frank’s memory and forces him to confess to the murder (note the Korean girl was also missing some teeth).

Just before Frank’s confession to the murder, we read about his response to Cee’s condition in third-person narration:

Frank stepped outside. Walking back and forth in the front yard, he felt a fluttering in his chest. Who would do that to a young girl? And a doctor? What the hell for? His eyes burned and he blinked rapidly to forestall what could have become the crying he had not done since he was a toddler . . . confused and deeply troubled, he

decided to walk it off . . . his sister was gutted, infertile, but not beaten. She could know the truth, accept it, and keep on quilting. Frank tried to sort out what else was troubling him and what to do about it (132).

Even though not in first person, this passage is heavily focalized through Frank's perspective and contains a variety of mind style indicators: *verba sentiendi* (*felt, confused, troubled, decided, tried to sort out, troubling*), physiological reactions to these mental states (*his eyes burned, he blinked rapidly, crying*), as well as free indirect thought containing Frank's evaluation of Cee's predicament (*who would do that . . . what the hell for? his sister was gutted, infertile, but not beaten*). Cee's condition and the mere mention of a hypothetical child prove sufficient to initiate the most intense of Frank's child-induced PTSD flashbacks displaying the widest variety of mind style techniques in the novel. The comparative lack of detail is missing from the earlier passage describing the incident at the church picnic, but this can be explained through focalization as well: the narrator is most concerned with Lily Jones' background and her relationship with Frank in that chapter, and she is thus the focalizer throughout. Nevertheless, as we saw above, a mere description of Frank's actions regarding the chance encounter with the girl at the picnic allowed us an insight into his state of mind. Frank is then back in focus in the chapter preceding his first-person confession, so we as readers also receive more cues to his mental state—rather than inferring this based solely on his actions as witnessed by others.<sup>1</sup> That said, the chapter in which Lily's relationship with Frank is detailed contains one more linguistic indication of mind style and Frank's struggle with PTSD: direct speech representation. In a conversation between Frank and Lily, Frank's seeming disinterestedness is conveyed through his short and less-than-informative responses to Lily's questions:

“Where were you?”

“Just out.”

“Out where?”

“Down the street.”

Bar? Barbershop? Pool hall. He certainly wasn't sitting in the park.

"Frank, could you rinse the milk bottles before you put them on the stoop?"

"Sorry. I'll do it now."

"Too late. I've done it already. You know, I can't do everything."

"Nobody can."

"But you can do something, can't you?"

"Lily, please. I'll do anything you want."

"What I want? This place is ours" (79).

In Gricean terms, Frank violates the maxims of quantity and manner by providing vague and unclear answers that are shorter and less informative than one would expect in such an exchange. He also never initiates any topic of the conversation; his contributions are minimalist responses to Lily's chosen topics, and he simply reacts to whatever Lily asks without any initiative of his own. Whereas conventionally this would be an indication of a less powerful speaker (Short 206), it is here a sign of emotional numbing and disengagement resultant from traumatic experiences in war.

These passages are fairly representative of Frank's mind style throughout the novel, particularly in his experience with PTSD. Verbal expressions of his experience dominate, whether through the focalization of his mental states (emotions, perceptions, or other cognitive activities) or in the narrative description of his actions (physical or bodily actions and reactions). The occasional use of free indirect thought provides another window into his mind. Finally, the representation of Frank's speech provides a more pragmatically driven window into the symptoms of PTSD through conversational structure and the content (or lack thereof) of Frank's utterances. In terms of sequencing, the fact that the first concrete memories of the Korean War relate to Frank's friends (through hearing jokes or receiving word about Cee) or the misremembered memory of witnessing the murder of a girl, whereas the ultimate revelation about Frank being the murderer suggests that much of these earlier purported traumas result not merely from faulty memory but also suppressed or displaced guilt, with the latter the ultimate cause of the former. In a similar



vein, it is worth noting that in all the episodes discussed above, Frank's symptoms are at their worst when a little girl is involved. Frank's disengaged speech or embarrassment at mistaking his dead friends' presence pale in comparison to the two incidents involving the sighting of a girl, and especially to the third incident of Cee discussing a hypothetical—and toothless—girl. The cause of this is not clear until the end of the novel, and it only becomes obvious in retrospect, but it nonetheless suggests the murder is at the root of Frank's trauma. It is also the one part of the novel where Frank's (initial) version of events is not accurate, and the resultant unreliable narration is the focus of the following section.

CORRECTING THE RECORD: ON NARRATIVE  
UNRELIABILITY IN *HOME*

Narrative unreliability can stem from a number of factors: not acting in accordance with the (implied author's) "norms" in a work (Booth 158–59); contrasting accounts of events or "fallible" filtration through character focalization due to "mendacity, naiveté, or inconscience" (Chatman 149); limited knowledge of or personal involvement in events, or problematic value-schemes (Rimmon-Kenan 103); and erroneous or underappreciated reporting of facts, events, understanding and perception, and values (Phelan 49–53; see also Zunshine 77–79). The above discussion shows how one symptom of trauma is either complete amnesia or faulty memory, illustrated in Frank's belief—resulting from unacknowledged guilt—for most of the novel that he witnessed a Korean girl get shot rather than realizing or admitting he in fact was the one to shoot her. This is what Visser refers to as "screen memory" (10), and it renders Frank an unreliable narrator. That is, his account of things cannot be fully trusted, in this case due to faulty memory.<sup>2</sup> However, the third-person narrator is also rendered unreliable when Frank corrects their account of an African American couple getting assaulted at a café. Further textual clues (discussed below) suggest that the narrator is perhaps even more unreliable than Frank, even though critics often describe this narrator as "apparently objective" (Ibarrola 110) or serving some sort of therapeutic function in helping Frank come to terms with his PTSD (Visser 9; Ibarrola 117).

It is the nature of Frank's relationship with the third-person narrator, as well as the status of unreliable narration throughout the novel, in focus in this section.

But who exactly is the third-person narrator in Morrison's novel? Their precise identity remains a mystery; but in Rimmon-Kenan's terms (97–99), they appear to exist within the story world of *Home*, as Frank is in direct conversation with them throughout the text. They thus constitute an intradiegetic narrator on the level of narration. They themselves, though, remain nameless and play no part in the story itself. So in terms of participation in the events of *Home*, they are heterodiegetic. The nature of their relationship with Frank remains unclear, but the latter provides several interjections in his narration that suggest an uneasy, if not hostile, relationship between the two:

*Since you're set on telling my story, whatever you think and whatever you write down, know this... (5)*

*I have eaten trash in jail, Korea, hospitals, at table, and from certain garbage cans. Nothing, however, compares to the leftovers at food pantries. Write about that, why don't you? (40)*

*You don't know what heat is until you cross the border from Texas to Louisiana in the summer. You can't come up with words to catch it.*

*Trees give up. Turtles cook in their shells. Describe that if you know how (41).*

*Don't paint me as some enthusiastic hero. I had to go but I dreaded it (84).*

The first exchange comes at the very beginning of the novel, and Frank's claim that the narrator is "set" on telling his story suggests that our protagonist actually has very little say in whether his story is told or not, and he has simply resigned himself to this fact and then insists the narrator be aware of certain details ("know this...") in the telling of his story. His frustration in the narrator's seeming inability to capture the essence of Frank's experience manifests itself in the imperatives "write about that" and "describe that," emphasized either with the tag question "why don't you?" or with a conditional clause explicitly bringing

the narrator's intellectual abilities into question: "if you know how." Frank also rejects the narrator's desire to portray him as a hero with another imperative, "don't." Frank's most adamant engagement with the narrator comes after the latter's account of an African American couple attacked while attempting to buy coffee (witnessed by and focalized through Frank). During Frank's train journey to Chicago, Frank "woke to the sobbing of a young woman" with a bloody nose and the sight of a "silent, seething husband" (24) next to her. The waiter tending the couple informs Frank that, during a stop at Elko, the husband was literally kicked out of a café by the (white) owner and customers after wishing to buy coffee, and when his wife attempted to intervene, "she got a rock thrown in her face" (25). The crowd continued to yell and throw eggs at the train until its departure. The narrator reports on Frank's assessment of the situation through an extended passage of free direct thought:

The abused couple whispered to each other, she softly, pleadingly, he with urgency. He will beat her when they get home, thought Frank. And who wouldn't? It's one thing to be publicly humiliated. A man could move on from that. What was intolerable was the witness of a woman, a wife, who not only saw it, but had dared to try to rescue – rescue! – him. He couldn't protect himself and he couldn't protect her either, as the rock in her face proved. She would have to pay for that broken nose. Over and over again (26).

In the narrator's account, Frank's assessment of the couple is driven by assumptions of a rugged machismo wherein women remain passive and must always be protected by men; the wife's attempted intervention into the assault on her husband is anathema to his existence, and she must now suffer for this humiliation. However, later we learn from Frank himself that this evaluation is riddled with inaccuracies:

*Earlier you wrote about how sure I was that the beat-up man on the train to Chicago would turn around when they got home and whip the wife who tried to help him. Not true. I didn't think any such thing.*

*What I thought was that he was proud of her but didn't want to show how proud he was to the other men on the train. I don't think you know much about love.  
Or me (69).*

Although there are still some traces of masculine bravado present, Montgomery rightly points out these conflicting accounts boil down to a focus on machismo versus an admiration of courage (327); she fails to locate the former with the narrator and the latter with Frank, however (see also Visser 11). In Phelan's terms (49–53), the narrator “misregards” or “misevaluates” Frank's assessment of the husband because they evaluate Frank's values system incorrectly, as opposed to getting basic facts about the situation wrong (misreporting) or possessing an inadequate ability to understand or perceive the nature of the described situation (misreading). Such misevaluation is also implicit in Frank's above admonition to the narrator not to be painted as an “enthusiastic hero” (84). Frank's additional implications of the narrator's inability to describe the horrid state of food pantries or the brutality of heat waves in the southern United States (40–41) also point to someone who underreports, and possibly underreads, situations. Frank's admonitions to and corrections of the narrator amount to what Hansen describes as “internarrational unreliability” (241–42)—one narrator's account of events is contrasted by another narrator's version of the story. In addition, his edgy relationship with the narrator throughout the novel can further be interpreted as another metarepresentation (in Zunshine's terms) of his suppressed guilt—something we as readers do not fully appreciate until the end of the novel. Once he acknowledges his crime, the hostilities cease.

Frank's own narratorial unreliability is, on the other hand, more straightforward and less dispersed throughout the novel. As discussed earlier, Frank first reports that he witnessed a fellow soldier shoot a Korean girl (95–96) but later confesses to the murder (133–34). Both these episodes occur in Frank's first-person narration, and Frank only involves the other narrator by seeking to address his confession directly to the latter:

*I have to say something to you right now. I have to tell the whole truth. I lied to you and I lied to me. I hid it from you because I hid it*

*from me. I felt so proud grieving over my dead friends. How I loved them. How much I cared about them, missed them. My mourning was so thick it completely covered my shame... I shot the Korean girl in her face (133).*

The earlier analysis of Frank's mind style and the repeated triggering of his PTSD-induced episodes by encounters with or mentions of young girls suggests Frank's unreliability stems from his misreporting of events due to faulty memory and subconscious guilt rather than outright prevarication (Phelan 51). This hardly excuses his behavior, but it posits his unreliability as yet another symptom of PTSD, whereby the cause of the third-person narrator's misevaluation and underreporting/underreading remains unaddressed. This can likely be explained by something both Frank and the other narrator have in common: deep-seated masculine insecurities as motivations for their actions. Whereas such machismo is forefront in the narrator's mind when (mis)evaluating Frank's response to the attack on the African American couple, it is also at the front of Frank's mind when evaluating the motivations of the (mis)remembered relief guard murder the Korean girl: "*Thinking back on it now, I think the guard felt more than disgust. I think he felt tempted and that is what he had to kill*" (96). Parallel feelings make their way into his own confession:

*How could I let her live after she took me down to a place I didn't know was in me?*

*How could I like myself, even be myself if I surrendered to that place where I unzip my fly and let her taste me right then and there (134)?*

This is the last time we hear from Frank himself, and it is this confession that ultimately leads to Frank coming to terms with his guilt and beginning to recover from PTSD in the novel's denouement. "*You can keep on writing, but I think you ought to know what's true*" (134), implores Frank of the third-person narrator, thus staving off the possibility of further unreliability on either of their parts.

The kinds of unreliability we find in Morrison's *Home* appear rarely discussed in the literature on unreliability, which focuses on first-person homodiegetic narration (Martens 78; see also Chatman 149–54).

That may be the case with Frank in *Home* as well, but it is limited to the incident involving the Korean girl; there is no suggestion anywhere else that Frank's account of things is unreliable. And even here, we learn of Frank's misreporting through an overt confession, rather than through any textual clues implying unreliability, or from some sort of narratorial intervention (Chatman 149). The narrator's unreliability, on the other hand, is repeatedly signalled either by Frank correcting the record or directly addressing the narrator concerning the quality of their account. And as Christiansë points out, Frank is incapable of correcting the narrator on things over which he has no knowledge (35–36), so there may be further unreliability in the narrator's accounts of Cee, Lily, and Lenore (Frank and Cee's grandmother). For example, the narrator's account of Cee's discovery of Dr. Scott's eugenics-themed library collection is as fleetingly clueless (underread, underevaluated) as Cee herself is about the danger she is in (Christiansë 36–38; Wen 499–500). Given the ultimate outcome of the novel (recovering from trauma), critics such as Visser and Ibarrola tend to see Frank's relationship with the third-person narrator as serving some sort of therapeutic function because they keep each other's "referential frameworks and their possible limitations" (Ibarrola 118) in check; and for all of his own corrections of the narrator's account, by the end of the novel, Frank too feels the need to correct the record, confess his crimes (to the narrator), and ultimately begin the gradual process of recovery. Christiansë, on the other hand, takes a more politically oriented interpretation and sees Frank's correction of the record as "speaking truth to power" because he confronts "an invisible, defining presence that has the power of language" (3), an act parallel to the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. This is an historical "resistance to [dominant] narration," yet due to his own unreliability, we are shown the corrective limits of the "simplifications of oppositional narratives" (4). It is certainly unlikely Frank's relationship with the other narrator is in any official medical capacity, given both his sister's and his own disastrous encounters with the (white) medical establishment in the novel; only Ethel Fordham and her associates' alternative, folk medicine in Lotus, Georgia, provide any sort of positive outcome. That said, Frank's engagement with the narrator ultimately does prove therapeutic insofar as his confession begins

the road to recovering from PTSD. And while Morrison's works are indisputably works of social criticism (Ludwig)—*Home* being no exception in its portrayal of racism in post-war American society—it is unclear how this is evident in the relationship between Frank and the narrator: aside from perhaps the comment on food pantries, none of Frank's narratorial corrections are politically themed. They all concern things of a more personal nature. The social critique comes through a number of narrative plot points (involving medical experimentation, police discrimination, housing, assault, and murder), none of which appear to be in dispute. Thus, the therapeutic interpretation appears more feasible, for after the confession, there are no more textual indications of Frank's PTSD in the representation of his mind style.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have seen here that the linguistic realization of PTSD is rendered in a number of ways through textual indications of Frank's mind style: *verba sentiendi* (of perception, emotion, and cognition), verbal descriptions of actions indicative of reactions to traumatic stressors, as well as both direct and indirect representations of speech and thought. Frank's guilt-induced trauma also proves to be the source of his unreliable narration due to his faulty memory surrounding the murder of the Korean girl, but it is the third-person narrator's unreliability that proves more multifaceted and complex: Frank is guilty of misreporting the girl's death, whereas the other narrator is guilty of a string of underreadings and misvaluations, and possibly even more where the narratives of Cee, Lily, and Lenore are concerned. Still, this internarrational unreliability ultimately proves restorative for Frank, whose seemingly contentious relationship with the other narrator leads to his own confession and coming to terms with both his guilt and the resultant psychological detritus. Space precludes a more in-depth examination of other narratological or stylistic features of *Home* (such as the mind style of other characters, layered uses of focalization throughout the novel, not just in relation to PTSD), or of how such metarepresentations of ToM are realized in Morrison's other novels. But hopefully this article serves as a springboard

for further narratological and literary linguistic explorations of Toni Morrison's canon.

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#### NOTES

1. Rimmon-Kenan points out that even in first-person retrospective narration, the narrator is separate from the focalizer (73). This is especially true of child "narrators" in works such as Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*, Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, or Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India*: the narrator is in fact the adult, and the narrative is focalized through the child's eyes. This clearly applies to the earliest first-person sections of Morrison's *Home*, and even in the later sections (such as the passage of Frank's flashback discussed here): Frank-as-narrator has deemed this incident worthy of narration, and Frank-as-focalizer is the one who has the lived experience at the moment of occurrence.

2. There are two often competing approaches on how to treat unreliable narration: the rhetorical approach tends to focus on textual cues of unreliability, whereas the cognitivist approach focuses more on readerly processes used to decode unreliability in a text. The current discussion falls squarely in the rhetorical camp, as I believe most unreliability in Morrison's *Home* is made explicit and there is little for the reader to actually infer or "decode" about unreliability. That said, these approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but it is beyond the scope of the current study to unpack these distinctions any further (good overviews are provided in Shen & Xu 50–55 and Shen). Indeed, Zunshine's model of ToM seamlessly blends textual cues with the reader's ability to decode these metarepresentations of characters' or narrators' thoughts and feelings.

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