

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

This study has examined Joe Goldberg's childhood trauma in Caroline Kepnes's *You* through the theoretical frameworks of Cathy Caruth's trauma theory and Sigmund Freud's concept of repetition compulsion. The analysis was guided by three research questions concerning Joe's childhood trauma, how they return belatedly, and how he repeats them as an adult. From the areas of discussion, it has been found that the traits of Joe Goldberg, such as obsessive, controlling, violent, and stalking, were all the consequences of his unresolved childhood trauma that he never consciously processed.

In response to the first research question, two primary experiences contribute to Joe Goldberg's trauma. The first one is parental abandonment. Joe was abandoned by his mother in his second grade, while his father was neglectful throughout his childhood. The wound of parental abandonment was, however, unprocessed as Joe did not even acknowledge it as a wound, rather explaining it as a mere fact he experienced. As a father figure, Mooney's mentorship throughout Joe's vulnerable growth was at times authoritarian and abusive. His role as caregiver and disciplinarian was filled with confinement and verbal abuse. Joe was locked in a cage, verbally degraded, and taught distorted philosophy at such a vulnerable age. However, Joe has come to interpret that these are Mooney's form of love and care, not mistreatment. These experiences serve as evidence of childhood trauma.

In response to the second research question, the study revealed that Joe has suffered trauma belatedly, as he has not yet mourned these experiences as trauma when he was a child. Therefore, his obsession and stalking are rooted in his abandonment trauma. He also demonstrates idealization that comes from emotional deprivation, and hears Mooney's internalized voice as the belated return of past trauma.

In response to the third research question, it has been identified that Joe demonstrated repetition compulsion through two patterns. The first one is confinement as the repetition of his own confinement. Joe did not imprison Benji out of his own desire; it was a repetition of what Mooney did to him. Joe mastered his own traumatic experience, even rationalized it with Mooney's logic of how suffering is a form of teaching. He also repeated it in his relationship with Beck by controlling her, as he learned from Mooney that love is conditional.

The study demonstrates that Joe Goldberg did not simply become a perpetrator of violence, but of trauma left in his childhood. His obsession, stalking, confinement of others, and control are all constructed from his wounds that were never healed or processed. Joe's experiences helped to understand that the unconscious of trauma does not lessen the impact of early suffering; rather, it extends within the survivor. This research traces evidence of trauma from Joe's childhood experiences to his adult experiences. Future studies are recommended to consider alternative approaches, such as cognitive or sociological frameworks, and further provide broader insights into his character.