



**Materializing recovery: Affective Materiality and the rituals of healing in  
Toni Morrisons *Home***

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**Abstract**

*In order to comprehend the protagonist's journey, this article proposes a concept of Affective Materiality to examine the relationship between psychological trauma and tangible items in Toni Morrison's Home. This research contends that for the disadvantaged individuals in Morrison's story, healing is essentially a material accomplishment, despite the fact that traditional trauma studies frequently highlight the importance of verbal confession and memory in rehabilitation. The analysis shows how traumatic events are stored in tangible objects like the veteran's gun and the unburied bones of the Aulder man turning them into containers of negative emotion by combining emotion Theory and Thing Theory. According to the research, language alone is not enough to resolve the characters' pain since it is somatic and physically grounded. Recovery is instead accomplished via material rituals and physical work, particularly the ceremonial burial of the deceased and the healing practices of quilting. The article's final conclusion is that the characters manually release stored trauma and regain agency by physically altering their surroundings, implying that action on the material world is the most efficient language of restoration in the wake of systematic violence.*



**Keywords:** Trauma Studies, Thing Theory, Material Culture, Healing, Affective Materiality, Toni Morrison, and Home.

### **Introduction**

Toni Morrison's 2012 novel, *Home* vividly explores Frank Money, a Korean War veteran, as he struggles to survive in a traumatized and segregated America. The story tracks Frank's journey from the mental hospitals of the North to the healing soil of his birthplace of Lotus, Georgia, and is set in the 1950s. The psychological aspects of Frank's Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and the sociological effects of Jim Crow racism are the subject of most of the current research on *Home*, but there is still a great deal to learn about how physical matter affects the healing process. The things in the book the firearms, the quilts, and the bones are viewed by most commentators as just symbols for inner moods. That said, this method ignores the vibrant these items' significance in the lives of the protagonists.

In order to close this gap, the analytical attention is shifted from the intellect to the Thing. I contend that trauma in *Home* is a physical presence ingrained in the material environment rather than only a mental haunting by using an Affective Materiality paradigm. The study's thesis is that, for Morrison's protagonists, healing is a material accomplishment rather than a linguistic or cognitive epiphany; recovery is only made possible by physical labor and the ritualistic manipulation of objects that enable characters to manually release the trauma that words are unable to express.

Two main schools of thought Trauma Theory and Sociopolitical Criticism have long dominated scholarship on Toni Morrison's *Home*. Scholars like Evelyn Jaffe Schreiber have



mapped Frank Money's psychological haunting in great detail, concentrating on how PTSD is a manifestation of memories and suppressed guilt. The work has also been analyzed historically by scholars such as Tessa Roynon, who has focused on how the material circumstances of the 1950s particularly the brutality of the Jim Crow era shape the African American experience. These investigations offer a crucial basis, but they frequently uphold a separation between the external environment and the internal mind, seeing the items Frank comes into contact with as inert symbols rather than active contributors to his psychological condition.

This article presents the Affective Materiality framework in order to close this gap. This paradigm combines Thing Theory with Affect Theory . By doing this, we transcend the notion that a quilt or a rifle is only a metaphor. Rather, I contend that these items are vibrant matter that have the ability to physically capture and retain traumatic effect, building on the research of Jane Bennett and Bill Brown. My approach indicates that because trauma is stored in the material world, it must be addressed via material labor, in contrast to earlier research that says talking cures or narrative memory are the keys to Morrisonian healing. This shifts the scholarly conversation from what the characters say to what they do with the Things that surround them.

### **Trauma in things : The Gun and theBones**

Trauma is stored in items that Frank is unable to get rid of during the first part of the book. Frank's rifle serves as a receptacle for the emotional fallout from the Korean War, in addition to being a weapon. It vibrates with the girl with the pie's guilt, serving as a tangible weight that keeps him stuck in a hypervigilant state. In a similar vein, unprocessed raw trauma is represented by the unearthed bones of the man Frank witnessed murdered as a boy. The trauma is still out of place in Frank's psyche because these bones are still out of place in the ground. These objects are not



symbols; they are trauma containers that exert a physical force on Frank's psyche, proving that until the Thing is dealt with, the mind cannot rest.

### **Material rituals: The Quilt and the Shovel**

If trauma is stored in objects, the only way to release it is via material work. The best example of this is Cee's quilting-based rehabilitation. Cee is cured by the sunlight and the touch of the local women stitching, rather than by medicine or psychology, after being physically broken by the doctor's tests. As she knits the fabric, she transforms from a broken thing to mended whole. The quilt is a tangible representation of community. In a similar vein, Frank's usage of the shovel marks the pinnacle of his recovery. When Frank excavates a tomb and lays the bones in a sweet-smelling cloth, he is engaging in a material ritual. The act of burial is a physical labor that finishes the trauma, moving the bones from a state of unresolved thingness to a state of ordered history.

The idea of emotional materiality is finally validated by Home's shift from objecthood to personhood, which shows that agency is a physical expression of control over one's surroundings rather than only a mental condition. Both Frank and Cee Money are first characterized by their position as things in a harsh social and political environment. Frank is reduced to a piece of the war, a biological extension of a military apparatus that used his body before discarding it, leaving him as a conduit for uncontrollably intense anguish. Similar to this, Cee is exposed to the eugenicist doctor's degrading gaze, since he sees her body as a medical specimen for testing rather than a human being. They are completely reactive in this objecthood condition, acted upon by the poisonous substances and structural injustices that are all around them.

The reclamation of their humanity occurs when they cease being passive recipients of material force and become active manipulators of it. This change is brought about by a sequence



of physical interactions that rearrange their reality rather than a psychological awakening. Frank and Cee are performing manual labor of the self when they pick up a shovel to bury the dead and a needle to quilt. They are taking control of the exact thing that formerly characterized their suffering by physically repairing clothing or excavating. Personhood is therefore a material achievement in Morrison's universe rather than just a place of survival, it is the outcome of a body recovering its power to act upon the world. Their capacity to change vibrant matter into ordered history at the book's conclusion marks their development into fully fledged subjects. By building a house out of the rubble of their history, they demonstrate that in order to transcend the status of an object, one must first conquer the objects that occupy their universe.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, our examination of Toni Morrison's *Home* shows that trauma and healing are profoundly ingrained in the material world, transcending the conventional limits of linguistic or psychological research. Using the concept of affective materiality, we can observe that the objects in the book from the healing stitching of a quilt to the eerie bones in the Aulder lot are active players in the lives of the protagonists rather than just symbols. These "things" carry pre-verbal intensities that the mind is unable to resolve, acting as receptacles for traumatic residue. According to the results, healing for Frank and Cee Money is a tangible accomplishment that necessitates physical exertion on the part of the body in order to finish the stories that were left unfinished by abuse and neglect.

This study challenges our understanding of human agency and recovery, which is its so what component. By acknowledging that the environment itself, not just the mind, is frequently damaged for the displaced and disenfranchised, looking at items alters our idea of healing. The



talking cure is insufficient if the trauma is somatic and physiologically rooted. According to Morrison, one might recover personhood by using their hands to dig, sew, and organize their local surroundings. This viewpoint provides a more comprehensive, grounded paradigm of trauma studies in which the act of burying the deceased or renovating a home is acknowledged as a deep type of psychological speech. In the end, *Home* tells us that in order to restore a broken spirit, one has to possess the ability to physically alter the material environment that attempted to shatter it.

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