



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**TRAUMATIC MEMORY IN CHIGOZIE OBIOMA'S *THE FISHERMEN* AND
VADDEY RATNER'S *IN THE SHADOW OF THE BANYAN***

AHMED DHAKAA ABDULWAHHAB AL MUBARAK

FBMK 2019 54



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By

AHMED DHAKAA ABDULWAHHAB AL MUBARAK

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts**

August 2019

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts

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Most research in the field of trauma studies has been limited to particular forms of traumatic memory like flashback, or traumatic nightmare or cultural artifacts, but my research will strive to focus on a new form of traumatic memory resulting from transference phenomena. Through this new form, the traumatized characters develop a new understanding in the present about what happened in the past. As a result, the characters become able to sense the survival function of trauma. Also, this form of traumatic memory provides authors with the ability to examine how their characters retrieve traumatic memories into narrative form. Some researchers have examined traumas of the fictional characters as a colonial manifestation of gender, slavery and race in the light of postcolonial, identity, historical, and feminist theories. I intend to fill the gap by examining contemporary African and Cambodian literature produced by traumatized African and Cambodian authors in the light of Cathy Caruth's trauma theory and Dori Laub's concepts of traumatic memory. This thesis conducts a close analysis of characters' traumatic memory resulting from or affected by the Nigerian and Cambodian civil wars in the fictional works of Chigozie Obioma's *The Fishermen* (2015) and Vaddey Ratner's *In the Shadow of the Banyan* (2012). I construct a theoretical framework by examining debates about the traumatic memory and narrative that have taken place in the fields of trauma studies and literary fiction. By drawing these debates, I argue that the traumatized victim is able to retrieve the unintegrated fragments of the literal registration in the black hole trauma by projecting them through transference phenomena onto currently experienced objects and relations. Consequently, these traumatic memories can also expose the enigma of trauma as not only a reason of psychological destruction, but also a reason for survival. The study aims to identify the literal registration of the traumatic events and the black hole effects in the selected novels. The characters enter into silence of the black hole, which becomes a source of pain and fear. I aim to explore the ways in which the novels present transference phenomena

and their counter-intuitive roles in re-externalising traumatic events that happened in the past, then grafting those events onto situations in the present. This research will analyse the effects of the transference phenomena on the survival function of trauma and whether the main characters manage to overcome the heavy burden of their traumatic memories. The findings from the research show that the selected characters went through 'the literal registration' of the traumatic event and the black hole effect of their traumatic memory. Therefore, traumatic memory belatedly returning through transference phenomena plays its role as a coping mechanism for survival. This study aims to enlighten readers on how both Obioma and Ratner bring a victim to speak what had not been spoken before, as well as bring into being a witness as a narrator of the atrocities of war through transference phenomena in fiction.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sastera

**MEMORI TRAUMATIK DI DALAM *THE FISHERMEN* OLEH CHIGOZIE
OBIOMA DAN *IN THE SHADOW OF THE BANYAN* OLEH VADDEY RATNER**

Oleh

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Kebanyakan penyelidikan dalam bidang kajian trauma adalah terhad kepada bentuk tertentu memori traumatik seperti kilas balik, atau mimpi buruk traumatik atau artifak budaya, tetapi penyelidikan saya akan berusaha untuk memfokuskan pada bentuk baru ingatan trauma akibat fenomena pemindahan. Melalui bentuk baru ini, watak-watak yang mengalami trauma ini akan mewujudkan pemahaman baru pada masa kini mengenai apa yang berlaku pada masa lalu. Akibatnya, watak-watak dapat merasakan fungsi kelangsungan trauma. Juga, bentuk ingatan traumatik ini memberikan pengarang kemampuan untuk memeriksa bagaimana karakter mereka mengambil kenangan traumatik ke dalam bentuk naratif. Sesetengah penyelidik telah mengkaji trauma watak-watak fiksi sebagai manifestasi penjajah jantina, perhambaan dan bangsa dalam cahaya pasca kolonial, identiti, sejarah, dan feminis teori. Saya bercita-cita untuk mengisi jurang dengan mengkaji kesusasteraan Afrika dan Kamboja kontemporari yang dihasilkan oleh penulis Afrika dan Kamboja yang trauma berdasarkan teori trauma Cathy Caruth dan konsep Dori Laub tentang memori traumatik. Tesis ini menjalankan analisis yang dekat dengan memori traumatik watak-watak yang disebabkan oleh atau terjejas oleh peperangan sivil Nigeria dan Kemboja dalam karya-karya fiksi *The Fishermen* oleh Chigozie Obioma (2015) dan *In the Shadow of the Banyan* oleh Vaddey Ratner (2012). Saya membina rangka kerja teori dengan mengkaji perdebatan tentang memori traumatik dan naratif yang telah berlaku dalam bidang kajian trauma dan fiksi sastera. Berdasarkan perdebatan-perdebatan ini, saya berpendapat bahawa mangsa yang trauma dapat memperoleh serpihan yang tidak terintegrasi dari pendaftaran literal dalam trauma lubang hitam dengan memperlihatkan mereka melalui fenomena pemindahan ke objek dan hubungan semasa yang berpengalaman. Akibatnya, memori traumatik ini juga boleh mendedahkan teka-teki trauma bukan sahaja sebagai sebab pemusnahan psikologi, tetapi juga sebab untuk hidup. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti pendaftaran literal peristiwa traumatik dan kesan

lubang hitam dalam novel yang dipilih. Watak-watak memasuki keheningan lubang hitam, yang menjadi sumber kesakitan dan ketakutan. Saya ingin meneroka cara-cara di mana novel-novel ini memperlihatkan fenomena pemindahan dan peranan mereka secara intuitif dalam mengulangi semula peristiwa-peristiwa traumatik yang berlaku pada masa lalu, kemudian mencantumkan peristiwa-peristiwa tersebut ke dalam keadaan sekarang. Penyelidikan ini akan menganalisis kesan fenomena pemindahan pada fungsi kelangsungan trauma dan sama ada watak-watak utama berjaya mengatasi beban berat kenangan traumatik mereka. Penemuan dari penyelidikan ini menunjukkan bahawa watak-watak yang dipilih telah melalui 'pendaftaran literal' peristiwa traumatik dan kesan lubang hitam dari ingatan traumatik mereka. Oleh itu, memori traumatik sepatutnya kembali melalui fenomena pemindahan memainkan peranannya sebagai mekanisme mengatasi untuk kelangsungan hidup. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menerangkan kepada pembaca tentang bagaimana kedua-dua Obioma dan Ratner membawa mangsa untuk bercakap apa yang tidak pernah dituturkan mereka sebelumnya, dan juga menjadi saksi sebagai penyampai kekejaman perang melalui fenomena pemindahan dalam fiksi.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to use this opportunity to express my gratitude towards my supervisor Dr. Hardev Kaur Jujar Singh, for her endless patience and inspiring guidance while helping me to finish my thesis. She provided invaluable insight and expertise that greatly assisted the research.

I would also like to thank Mr. Rohimmi bin Noor as I am sincerely grateful to him for sharing truthful and illuminating views on certain issues related to my research.

I am also thankful to my parents for their never-ending care and for always encouraging me and to my brothers and sisters, whose support was my motivation to do my best in obtaining a Master's degree.

Last but not least, I would like to thank all my thesis examination committee members for their time, their careful reading of this thesis and sound judgment.

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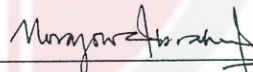
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Trauma war literature focuses on the psychological wounds suffered by the survivors of traumatic experiences and the post-traumatic healing process. These works contain a narrative of the traumatic combat experiences, remarkably essential to trauma war literature. Any analysis of this genre of literature, thence, requires a profound understanding of the psychological effects of trauma and the passages of post-traumatic recovery. The foundation of trauma war literature and its main dialectic is a character's struggle to endure witness to the traumatic events experienced during the violence of war and by that to integrate the horrific scenes of war into consciousness and to provide meaning and reason to his/her survival. Trauma war literature also reveals how the characters often fail to narrate their traumatic memory because these memories are often thwarted by the belated return of these memories in the literal registration forms such as flashbacks, traumatic nightmares, or other repetitive phenomena.

Chigozie Obioma's *The Fishermen* (2015) and Vaddey Ratner's *In the Shadow of the Banyan* (2012) provide an excellent model for reading trauma war literature and introduce many of its themes based on the civil wars in Nigeria and Cambodia, which have inflicted traumas on its people. For Nigeria and Cambodia, the civil war engraved deep scars within every Nigerian and Cambodian and left them severely traumatized.

It is well known that Nigeria has a long history of colonisation and that its people suffered terribly during the colonial period. Not only that, but also Nigeria has borne the heavy burden of the postcolonial period; after the country won its independence from Britain in October 1960, political instability was continuous until 1985, when a military coup swept away the ruler of Nigeria, Ibrahim Babangida. The first fair election—as it was believed—was held in 1993, the winner being Moshood Abiola; however, it was widely claimed that the results of the election were fraudulently manipulated. Within two months of the election, his regime started arresting pro-democracy and human rights activists, and hundreds of demonstrators were killed. Several Nigerian cities were completely paralysed. Nigeria's human rights record deteriorated even further, with its people subjected to political and other extrajudicial killings, disappearances, arbitrary arrests, detention, exile, torture, and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishments. As such, Nigerians experienced psychological trauma in extensively different forms and degrees. Nigerians need to move on with their lives and tell their story, and under those circumstances, *The*

Fishermen pertains to the horrors and the sufferings of Nigerians during the civil war.

After the near century of exploitative colonisation by the French from 1863 until 1953 and the brutal Japanese occupation, which lasted during World War II from 1941 to 1945, Cambodians then had to endure the horror of the wars and the other consequences of colonial succession that held its society under the fear of death. The Cambodian Civil War broke out when the Communist party revolted against the establishing government represented by Prince Sihanouk. The outcome was the establishment of the Khmer Republic; the communists seized control of all areas of Cambodia, changing its name to Democratic Kampuchea. During this period, the communists forced many Cambodian citizens to move from their homes in towns and cities into rural areas, incarcerating them in supervised work camps. Within the span of four years, from 1975 to 1979, the Khmer Rouge carried out appalling contraventions of human rights on the Cambodian people, killing an estimated two million in what has become known as the killing fields. Unsurprisingly, Cambodians are now considered to be among the most traumatised people in modern memory. (Becker)

Thus, Ratner portrays these tragedies in *In the Shadow of the Banyan*, set during Khmer Rouge regime, and the characters witness all the sufferings and killings from this period. Additionally, this literary text is a way into the world of hardships in which victims of civil wars keep their traumatic memories through many years.

Colonised society has always provoked the interest of researchers to study the exploitation of its people and the terror of violence that destroyed the nation. Issues regarding black slavery, colonisation, and civil war were some of the main topics that occupied many researchers' interests. For this current research, a study of the novels considering the era of the civil war was undertaken to examine the presence of the traumatic memory and how the characters are affected by these memories in each respective novel.

Acclaimed authors Obioma and Ratner have inserted their experience, knowledge, and creativity into their writings in order to make history real for their readers, who then feel the pain that the civil war has brought. *The Fishermen* and *In the Shadow of the Banyan* are novels written by two prominent Cambodian and Nigerian born writers who lived through political turmoil caused by civil wars that brought mayhem into the lives of citizens. This tragedy plagued both the Cambodians and the Nigerians until the end of their lives. The horrors portrayed in the novels are so vivid that readers are left saddened. These novels were written based on the writers' outlooks on the tragedies of the civil wars in Cambodia and Nigeria.

Over a century ago, psychologists and psychiatrists focused most of their studies on “how the mind processes memories” (Caruth, *Trauma* 158). This was done in order to distinguish different aspects of the mind represented by, on the one hand, flexible memories, and on the other, the way in which “certain memories become obstacles that [keep] people from going on with their lives” (Caruth, *Trauma* 158). By the turn of the 20th century, those scholars had become fully aware that some memories do not fade quickly and moreover, that certain events engrave indelible memories which continually return to the sufferer (Caruth, *Trauma* 158). Psychologists then started to observe the effects of these engraved memories on consciousness (Caruth, *Trauma* 158), eventually classifying them as trauma.

Cathy Caruth as well as Laub and Auerhahn mention various concepts that fall under the umbrella of the traumatic memory: literal registration, flashbacks, traumatic nightmares, black hole trauma, traumatic departures, and transference phenomena, as well as survival and witnessed narratives. This study uses the concepts of literal registration, black hole trauma, and transference phenomena. A traumatic event is interpreted by psychologists such as Caruth as one that emphasises in its literal and memorial character, the literal return of the event (Leys 266). In addition to that feature, which Caruth was committed to, there is also the delayed return of the traumatic event (Leys 266).

As a result, a traumatic event that is literally registered is undistorted; the traumatic “memory” is dissociated from consciousness and normal memory, so it cannot be represented, but returns later as part of repetitive phenomena (Leys 266). The traumatic event is literally and timelessly stored in a specific memory system in the brain. The claim that a traumatic event is encapsulated as a literal memory is justified, since the traumatic event is not processed by the declarative memory system (Caruth, *Trauma* 152).

Van der kolk, Caruth, Laub, and others, however, have suggested that a traumatic event creates a wound or a hole, called by Dori Laub a black hole in the mind (Felman and Laub 64; Leys 231). Consequently, unlike Freud’s belief, the traumatic memory is not linked to repression, unconsciousness, and symbolisation, but rather to temporal delay, repetition, literal return, and belated return. The traumatised individuals become incapable of making sense of the traumatic event, as the traumatised one emerges “attached” to the trauma when the traumatic “memory” is recognised as the literal registration of the traumatic event (Caruth, *Trauma* 151). The sufferers, consequently, will not live with what most of us would perceive as memories of the past but with the actuality of the traumatic event as it continues to return in the form of flashbacks, traumatic nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena (Caruth, *Trauma* 152-153). For the sufferer, then, the event is presently occurring, rather than remembered.

According to Laub and Auerhahn's perception, these literal traumatic registrations generate phenomena called transference phenomena in which the traumatic 'memories' encapsulated in the traumatised individuals are grafted onto their relationships with other people and objects, and their perceptions of day-to-day life in the present moment, shaping their interactions with the world, and indeed their very thinking processes.

Transference phenomena is a concept which was first discussed under trauma theory by Dori Laub and Nanette C. Auerhahn in their article "Knowing and not Knowing Massive Psychic Trauma: Forms of Traumatic Memory" (1993). Through transference phenomena, the traumatic memory will imprint from the past onto other persons, animals, or objects in the present. This produces an iconic form of traumatic memory different from the typical forms of traumatic memory such as flashbacks and traumatic nightmares.

Important examples of transference phenomena, which sparked research into other forms of traumatic memory in this study, are found in the stories of Chigozie Obioma's *The Fishermen* and Vaddey Ratner's *In the Shadow of the Banyan*, wherein the horror of traumatic events is transferred into art by the authors. Traumatic memory returned through transference phenomena can be a cause for the creativity of the authors as they depict it in their novels. Eventually, the unspeakable memories will return with aesthetic properties. Furthermore, transference phenomena are also apparent in the characters of the novels *In the Shadow of the Banyan* (2012) by Vaddey Ratner and *The Fishermen* (2015) by Chigozie Obioma. Indeed, the main reason to mention transference in the plural form 'phenomena' instead of its singular form 'phenomenon' is because it might be transferred onto not only aesthetic art but may also be mapped onto the relations of a person with others (in isolation or as a community), or it might be transferred onto objects or imaginal images of animals.

There is a wide range of understandings of this concept; it has often been revised by different schools of thought, each trying to define transference and its understanding according to their views. But one of its more common understandings refers to the classical view held by Freudian psychologists: "This view posits that transference is a re-experiencing of early intrapsychic conflicts centred on Oedipal issues. Oedipal issues refer to the Psychosexual conflicts experienced as a child deals with their wishes, fantasies, and fears in relation to their parents" (Grant and Crawley 8); and there is another view that "has emerged from the relational schools of psychoanalysis including object-relations, ego-analytic and interpersonal schools" (Grant and Crawley 8). Accordingly, transference phenomena are conceptualised more in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy.

However, Laub and Auerhahn conceive of transference phenomena as one of the forms of knowing or remembering. They claim that those forms of remembering differ as well:

The continuum of psychological distance from the trauma, also vary in degree of encapsulation versus integration of the experience and in degree of ownership of the memory –i.e. the degree to which an experiencing 'I' is present as subject. (Laub and Auerhahn 288)

It is not only the forms of remembering that vary pursuant to the distance from the traumatic event, but the transference phenomena itself also deviates from:

The psychotic delusional state to the mini-psychotic episode to more classical neurotic transferences that involve retention of the observing ego (the individual is cognisant of the present but nevertheless views the present in light of the past). (Laub and Auerhahn 293)

Laub and Auerhahn perceive that whereas the fragments of the traumatic memory enacted (due to its nature as a repetitive phenomenon) in different life themes (Laub and Auerhahn 296). In fact, “transference phenomena may be seen as roughly analogous to the role of plots in a novel, while a life theme is more analogous to the overall theme of a novel” (Laub and Auerhahn 296).

Laub and Caruth also explain a new function of trauma; hence, it becomes not only a reason for psychological destruction but also might become a reason for survival that is the cause of the traumatic memory considered by Laub and Caruth, an enigma. Thus, the place where the unspeakable memories stored the traumatic event paradoxically becomes the only place for experiencing the sense of survival for those traumatized individuals.

Traumatic memory as a concept in trauma theory first emerged as a notion of the psychological study of Holocaust survivors by Dori Laub and other psychiatrists. He collaborated with Shoshana Felman to publish a well-known book, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992), in which he discusses the question of the relation between memory, art and survival. Subsequently, Caruth utilized traumatic memory by exploring literature and the enactment of memory in her book *Unclaimed Experience* (1996). Laub and Caruth's work can also be used today to understand the enigma of the traumatic memory in societies torn by the violence of war. Today, traumatic memory along with its associated concepts, which are literal registration, black hole trauma, and transference phenomena can be used to

comprehend and bring to light the traumatized person's problems and the dilemmas that are caused by these conflicts and the events which created them.

Through the experiences of literary characters, writers today, more than ever before, are using literature as an authentic medium to discuss and address the real-life problems of people who are caught between the present and the past due to traumas. Two such writers are Ratner and Obioma, the authors of *In the Shadow of the Banyan* (2012) and *The Fishermen* (2015), respectively. Ratner is an American Cambodian. She has written an outstanding novel which has achieved finalist status in the PEN/Hemingway Award. Her book portrays unspeakable horrors of the civil war from inside Cambodian society, the people struggling to bear the heavy burden of its suffering. On the other hand, Obioma is a Nigerian writer and was called the heir to Chinua Achebe in a New York Times book review (Rocco). His novel *The Fishermen* was shortlisted for the Man Booker prize in 2015. Obioma also experienced traumatic events in Nigeria at one point in his life and was therefore able to translate his real-life experience into his work of fiction. By studying these authentic works of literature to find out whether transference phenomena exist in the main characters and whether or not they affect their survival, one can deduce what happens in real-life situations such as these.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The occurrence of traumatic memory in fiction creates a specific dilemma in the process of narration because under the dissociative mechanism, fictional characters emerge as non-representational, non-linguistic, but in contrast, as Caruth observed, trauma in fact returns belatedly in the form of flashbacks, traumatic nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena (Leys 266). These delayed forms of traumatic memory are used by scholars in the academic analysis of literature, as diagnostic tools in order to detect that a character is traumatised in a novel, or the novel's role as a particular narrative for trauma. An example of this pattern of studies is *Dreaming the Unspeakable: Hemingway and O'Brien's Soldier Narratives and the Traumatic Landscape* (2017) by Lisa Simone Kingstone. She studied traumatic nightmares and explored the traumatic nightmare as an alternative narrative for telling the experience of trauma.

In this work, on the other hand, I will explore a new form of traumatic memory resulting from transference phenomena. Transference phenomena was, before Laub, classified as a single transference phenomenon. It was merely a therapeutic tool used by psychiatrists or analysts such as Freud. However, I have thus far found vanishingly little evidence to indicate that any academic research in literature has undertaken analysis of my two selected novels in tandem, using trauma theory by Caruth and transference phenomena by Laub.

In terms of literary theory, past research into traumatic memory applied postcolonial, identity, historical, and feminist theories. In a study titled *Postcolonial Intersectional Feminism, Trauma, Whiteness, and Recovery in Michelle Cliff's Novels* (2017) by Begoa Vilouta Vzquez, she explores traumas of gender and race. Similarly, *Shadows of the Self: Trauma, Memory, and Place in Twentieth-Century American Fiction* (2006) by Michelle Satterlee addressed literary trauma theory regarding traumatic memory by examining the dimensions of trauma and its impact on identity, memory, and relation to its place in American fiction. She argued that traumatic events can shelter identity, eventually situating trauma within a cultural context that defines identity. In another study, Raquel Kennon, in her thesis *Transforming Trauma: Memory and Slavery in Black Atlantic Literature Since 1830* (2013), explored the interplay between remembering and forgetting in literary and cultural engagements with the trauma of trans-Atlantic slavery. Furthermore, the scholar Y-Dang Troeung examined iterations of war and its literary counterforces in Ratner's *In the Shadow of the Banyan*. However, I have not yet found any academic paper looking at Obioma's *The Fishermen* through the lens of trauma theory. Therefore, I argue that traumatic memory can be presented in literary form through transference phenomena which are capable of building safe boundaries around the traumatized individual and sheltering the self from the fear of trauma, leading eventually to a character's sense or feeling of having survived. This work delves deeper into the concept of traumatic memory to find out whether transference phenomena actually exist in the form of traumatic memory created from literal registration and black hole in *In the Shadow of the Banyan* (2012) and *The Fishermen* (2015). Moreover, it strives to investigate if the memories retrieved through transference phenomena are the cause for the survival (or sense of survival) of the traumatized characters in the novels.

It is worth noting that the previous studies on trauma have focused much more on Western countries. Many of the violent and horrific experiences that have been incorporated into texts, novels, and memories have been discussed in studies like "Bringing up the Body (Don't Mention the War): Traumatic Return in Dorothy L. Sayer's *The Nine Tailors*" (2017) by Bryonny Muir. As far as academia is concerned, accounts of horrific, mechanised wars and tragedies such as the Holocaust have gained much attention in the field of research, making these the basis for literary study of traumatic memory; hence, Laub and Felman utilize real stories of the Holocaust in the book *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (1992). However, the similarly terrible events in Cambodian civil war 1975 and the 1993 military cope in Nigeria have not been accorded the same appreciation and concentration in studies. These events are apparently viewed as insignificant in comparison with those of the Western world.

This study will investigate how traumatic events are stored in the minds of the characters in the novels, how the transference phenomena play their part in the process of retrieving the traumatic memory, and how the traumatic memory is transferred to the characters in the novels. Therefore, this research will

concentrate on the traumas experienced by selected characters in the two novels, specify each type of traumatic memory through the transference phenomena, and discover if the characters were 'attached' to their traumatic event for the purpose of survival.

In conclusion, it is important to mention that to date, no studies have used the concepts of transference phenomena, black hole trauma, and literal registration together in the analysis of *The Fishermen* and *In the Shadow of the Banyan*.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study intends to identify the literal registration of the traumatic events and the black hole effect in *The Fishermen* and *In the Shadow of the Banyan*, as the traumatic memory of the characters encoded in the form of literal registration inside the black hole as a source of pain and silence after experiencing horrific events. It examines how the novels present transference phenomena by focusing on their counterintuitive roles in conveying the traumatic events and grafting them onto other objects and relations in the present. It also analyses the effect of the transference phenomena on the survival function of trauma, whether the main characters are successful in surpassing the heavy burden of their traumatic memories. Therefore, numerically the objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the literal registration of the traumatic events and the black hole effects in the selected novels.
2. To examine the ways in which the novels present transference phenomena and their counter-intuitive roles in re-externalising traumatic events, then grafting those events onto present situations.
3. To analyse the effects of the transference phenomena on the survival function of trauma and whether the main characters manage to overcome the heavy burden of their traumatic memories by the survival function of the trauma.

1.4 Conceptual Framework

The main focus of this research is to explore the traumatic memory concept of literal registration, black hole trauma, and transference phenomena for the selected characters of the novels *The Fishermen* and *In the Shadow of the Banyan*. This will be further enforced by the aforementioned research objectives to provide a better understanding of this research as well as providing further insight into the use of trauma theory.

Trauma theory is a theory that is relatively contemporary, which has not been used as extensively as other known theories such as feminism and postcolonialism and gender studies in literary research. This theory can be applied to the chosen novels, *The Fishermen* and *In the Shadow of the Banyan*, as both deal with the horrors of civil war, violence, and carnage. According to Caruth, trauma can be defined as the event which is not “assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it” (*Trauma* 4).

Three concepts of traumatic memory have been chosen to be used in the textual analysis. These concepts are literal registration, black hole trauma, and transference phenomena, chosen to explicate the two literary works by Obioma and Ratner. As explained by Caruth, “literal registration of an event [. . .] appears to be connected, in traumatic experience, precisely with the way it escapes full consciousness as it occurs” (*Trauma* 152-153). Black hole trauma, according to Laub, adds a characteristic to the concept of traumatic memory which does not in itself represent memory. It swallows up all the past events, is not transformed into narrative memory, and effectively keeps the victims in silence. Dori Laub and Nanette C. Auerhahn believe that the traumatized victim is able to retrieve the unintegrated fragments of the past through transference phenomena by projecting them onto currently experienced objects and relations. It is also examined if, in case transference phenomena are found to be present, they have a role to play in the main characters overcoming the acute pain of traumatic memories and enhancing the survival function of trauma instead of its destruction (refer to figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework).

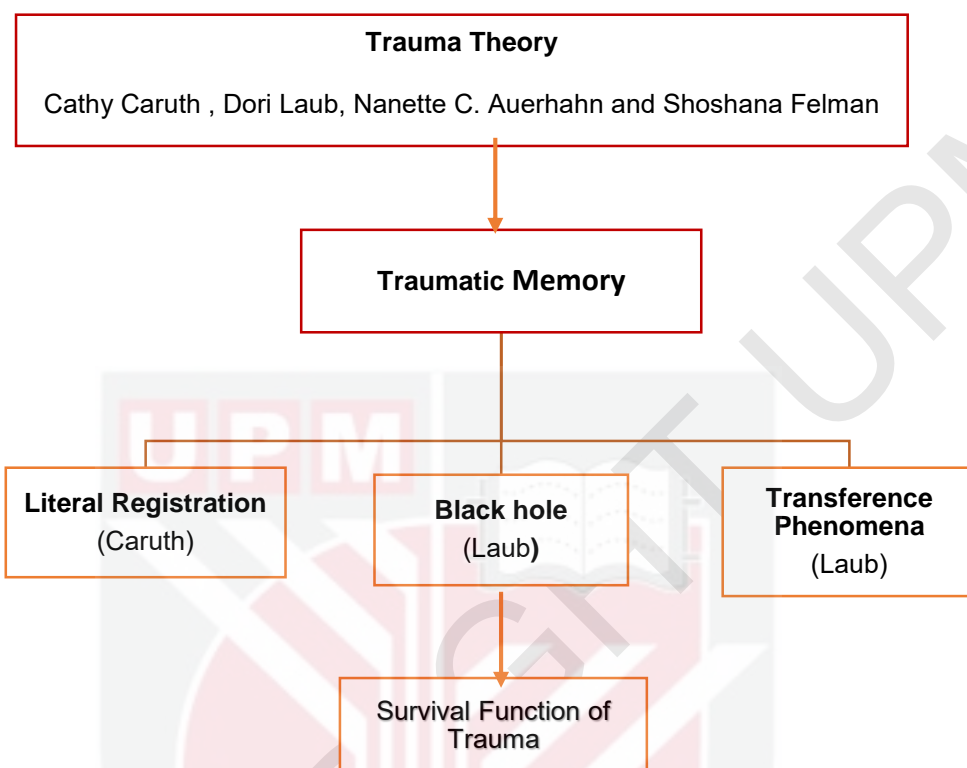


Figure 1.1 : Conceptual Framework

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study attempts to explore how traumatic memories affected the selected characters and focuses on identifying the concept of transference phenomena displayed by the characters in these novels and whether they managed to overcome their pains by transferring the terrifying memories to enhance the chances of the survival function of their traumas. It is hoped the use of a new form of traumatic memory, which is transference phenomena, will be expounded in trauma studies on Nigerian and Cambodian trauma literature.

Trauma theory, as opposed to postcolonial theory, has focused more on the specific historical events affecting human beings' psyche and behaviour. Unlike the latter, which has been extensively and exhaustively studied with regard to the effects of historical events on societies and their cultures in hybridity studies, this study is unique in the sense that it explores trauma in Cambodia and Nigeria together, using the traumatic memory concepts postulated by Caruth and Laub. It does not deal with linguistic retrieval. Consequently, transference phenomena,

which are classified as repetitive forms, play a centric role in re-externalising the protagonists' unintegrated fragments of traumatic memories and grafting them onto current situations.

The other topics of significance are the authors of the selected texts, Obioma and Ratner, because since they experienced trauma in their own lives, their novels reflect the concepts of this research.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study is conducted within the framework of literary trauma studies, in which trauma theory has been utilized to study the topic of traumatic memory. The study focuses on the belated return of traumatic memory and its effect on the survival in *The Fishermen* and *In the Shadow of the Banyan* with respect to Caruth and Laub's trauma theory. It is done in the light of Caruth and Laub's views, which focus on the repetitive phenomena of the traumatic memory as a vital form of memory in the process of healing from the destructive effect of trauma.

Ratner is the author of two novels, *In the Shadow of the Banyan* (2012) and *Music of the Ghosts* (2017). Her work is published in translations all over the world. Out of the two novels, I have chosen *In the Shadow of the Banyan*, as it deals with the concept of transference phenomena and is set in a very different time period from the other novel. Obioma's *The Fishermen* is similar in the civil war situation and concepts addressed, but not in terms of the location or era. These texts are selected because each one of them covers a certain era and civil war. The first text, *The Fishermen*, set in the civil war of the 1990s, portrays a constant threat of death placed side by side with horrific scenes of killings and violence. The second novel, *In the Shadow of the Banyan*, covers killing fields, starvation, violence, disease, and disappearance during the Cambodian genocide from 1975 to 1979.

The researcher selected two authors who live in different countries and different ethnic and cultural backgrounds to put forward wider contemporary psychological issues of individuals. These two writers discuss the issue of violence, which the victims bear silently. The idea behind selecting those authors is to suggest the universality of the painful experiences of civil war crimes. Life of the traumatized victims where it is believed that a traumatic memory leads to a highly depressed person, but also it might become a reason for externalizing a new bright side inside the personality. The analysis focuses on selected characters in the two texts: Ben in *The Fishermen* and Raami in *In the Shadow of the Banyan*. Moreover, this research focuses on the concepts of literal registration, black hole trauma, and transference phenomena.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

There are various concepts that are encompassed under the huge umbrella of trauma theory. However, this study has chosen to use the concepts theorized by Cathy Caruth in *Unclaimed Experience* and Dori Laub in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* and in collaboration with Auerhahn, *Knowing and not Knowing Massive Psychic Trauma: Forms of Traumatic Memory* to analyse the development of the characters in the novels. This is because Caruth and Laubs' concepts are believed to be the most applicable concepts that can be used in the analysis of the traumatic memories from these novels.

In addition, this study only concentrates on some selected concepts from Caruth and Laubs' that include literal registration, black hole and transference phenomena. This is because these concepts are important in the due course of the analysis to reveal the reasons behind the characters' ability to overcome the burden of their traumatic memories. Finally, the analyses and findings of this study are limited to the corpus of the two selected novels.

1.8 Methodology

The present study attempts to explore traumatic memory in Chogozie Obioma's *The Fishermen* (2015) and Vaddey Ratner's *In the Shadow of the Banyan* (2012). The selected novels represent various characters from different regions, genders, and social classes who are involved in common or different traumas according to their conditions. The relation between traumatic memory and the narrative in literature guide the theoretical framework of Cathy Caruth and Dori Laub. Three concepts have been selected for the study: literal registration, black hole, and transference phenomena.

Therefore, a textual analysis is conducted by trauma theory to study Caruth and Laub's concepts, which are applied to the selected characters, namely Ben in *The Fishermen* and Raami in *In the Shadow of the Banyan*, who witnessed traumatic events resulting from civil wars in Nigeria and Cambodia. Retrospectively, what these characters share is being victims of violence and killings of the civil wars and having the belated return of traumatic memory.

As mentioned before, according to Caruth, the massive trauma restrains all the representations; however, she refers to the literal material encoded in a trauma victim's mind. To achieve the first objective, the study concentrates on the characters' responses to traumatic events according to trauma theory. The selected characters respond to traumatic events on two levels; the first level is psychological, represented by dissociation state of mind; and the other level is

physical, represented by freeze response. To a deeper degree, the study depends on these two levels, which are used in the analysis as diagnostic tools for identifying the literal registration.

Since the characters operate within these two levels, traumatic events are encoded in the form of literal registration in their minds inside the black hole. Dori Laub believes that traumatic events create a black hole in the conscious mind that swallows up all past events; as a result, the victims will suffer pain and silence of these traumatic memories. The current study highlights the significant impact of the black hole effect and traces the struggle of the selected characters when they lose the ability to speak about the horrors of violence.

The occurrence of traumatic memory in fiction causes a specific dilemma in the process of narration because under the dissociative state of mind the characters emerge as non-representable and non-linguistic. On the other hand, Laub believes that the traumatized victim is able to retrieve all traumatic memories by belated return in the form of transference phenomena; therefore, the study utilizes transference phenomena in order to externalize the unintegrated fragments of past events and project them onto the current objects and situations in the present. Consequently, as transference phenomena are the designers of the framework through which a subject perceives a new understanding of the traumatic memory, the present study analyses the characters' sense of survival through the transference phenomena effect. Likewise, the transference phenomena enable the characters to recover from trauma and create their new realities.

At the end of the textual analysis, for the purpose of proving the efficiency of the role of transference phenomena and its effect on survival, a comparison is conducted between the characters witnessed the same traumatic events but their memories belatedly return in the other forms like traumatic nightmare and the main selected characters; Ben and Raami, that their memories belatedly return in the form of transference phenomena.

The analysis chapter is based on the framework that each concept is to be applied to the selected novels starting with Caruth's literal registration, then Laub's black hole and transference phenomena, and concluding with the transference phenomena effect on survival. This structure is significant in tracing each character's traumatic memory and how the traumatic memory impacts the victim to develop a new understanding of what happened in the past, and the role of transference phenomena in turning the destruction of this memory into a reason for survival. Structuring the analysis in this manner would give a comprehensive reading of each character's traumatic memory (refer to Figure 1.2: Methodology).

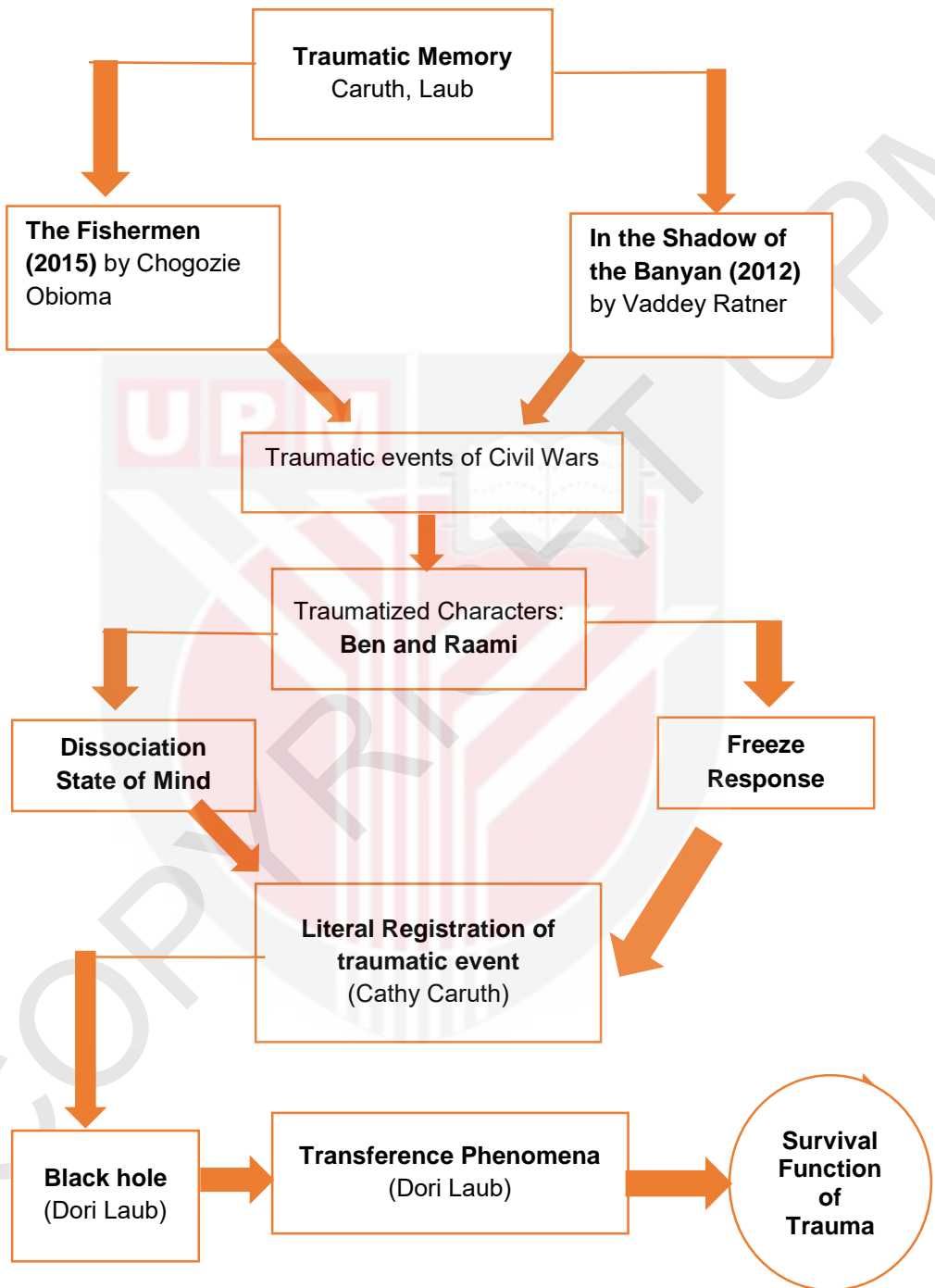


Figure 1.2 : Methodology

1.9 Definition of Terms

Trauma war Literature is the literary texts embodying trauma and post-traumatic disorder resulting from wars or civil wars in the troubled countries like Nigeria and Cambodia. Also, this literature can present precise aspects of the war including the victim's traumatic memory effectively.

Literal registration belongs to a system of traumatic memory different from that of ordinary memory due to the reason that dissociated from the normal mechanisms of memory and consciousness but returns belatedly in the literal form of 'flashbacks', traumatic memory or other repetition phenomena.

Black hole is a post-traumatic wound on the conscious level of mind resulting from not integrating traumatic memory into consciousness and failure to create a narrative memory leads into the intrusions of unintegrated fragments from the past into consciousness as frightening perceptions, anxiety and silence.

Transference phenomena are a process of grafting the unintegrated fragments of traumatic events onto the present life of the individual; since this literal registration is non-linguistic and non-symbolic, the transference phenomena play a pivotal role in transferring the traumatic memory onto other objects or persons in the present time and place.

Dissociation is the response of the mind to the traumatic experience of an unexpected event causing the mind to be dissociated from its conscious state. Psychological dissociation may be divided into two dimensions. The first one is related to PTSD such as anxiety or isolation from society, while the other dimension is a related encoding of the memory in the mind at the moment of the traumatic experience. Additionally, it is considered as the main predictor of the post-traumatic disorder.

Freeze response is a physical dissociation that tends to be more concerned with the bodily response to the traumatic experience where the victim fails to escape or defend from the life-threatening event.

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PUBLICATION

Journal

AL Mubarak, Ahmed Dhakaa, Kaur, Hardev, Bin Noor, Rohimmi. "TRANSFERENCE PHENOMENA OF MEMORY IN VADDEY RATNER'S *IN THE SHADOW OF THE BANYAN*: A TRAUMA THEORY READING OF THE NOVEL". *Journal of International Social Research*, vol 12, no. 65, 2019, pp. 24-30. *The Journal of International Social Research*, doi:10.17719/jjsr.2019.3420.

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AL Mubarak, Ahmed Dhakaa, Kaur, Hardev, Bin Noor, Rohimmi. "TRANSFERENCE PHENOMENA AND SURVIVAL FUNCTION OF TRAUMA IN CHIGOZIE OBIOMA'S *THE FISHERMEN* (2015)". 5th SOCIOINT 2018- 5th International Conference on Education, Social Sciences and Humanities. Dubai, UAE. 2-4 July 2018.



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