



TRANSFERENCE PHENOMENA OF MEMORY IN VADDEY RATNER'S *IN THE SHADOW OF THE BANYAN*: A TRAUMA THEORY READING OF THE NOVEL

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Abstract

By critically examining transference phenomena and the connection between traumatic events and memory in Vaddey Ratner's *In the Shadow of the Banyan*, this study attempts to elucidate the ways in which the novels present Dori Laub's (1993) transference phenomena and their counter-intuitive roles in re-externalising Cathy Caruth's (1992) conceptualization of the "traumatic event," then grafting that event onto certain situations. In recounting the consequences of the violence and horrors in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge (1975-1979), *Banyan* portrays the suffering that the characters undergo during and after the war. This article identifies the traumatic events in the novel, examines how the traumatized characters store and retrieve traumas, then examines the literary narrative of the traumatic memory associated with trauma theory as a crucial dimension. The concept of transference phenomena proposed by Laub, supported by work on the concepts of traumatic events and traumatic memory, has been utilized in order to understand the characters' trauma and memory. The research findings show that the characters studied retrieve the memory of the traumatic events through transference phenomena. As a result, transference phenomena reveal the ability of literature to portray traumatic memory in narrative dilemmas through its engagement with the present.

Keywords: Transference Phenomena, War, Traumatic Event, Traumatic Memory.

INTRODUCTION

Vaddey Ratner, a Cambodian-American writer, wrote her novel *In the Shadow of the Banyan* in 2012. A review in *The Guardian* has this to say about the book: "Most remarkably, it depicts the lives of characters forced to live in extreme circumstances, and investigates how that changes them. To read *In the Shadow of the Banyan* is to be left with a profound sense of being witness to a tragedy of history" (Lee). This novel achieved stunning critical success; hence, it represents a milestone text in Cambodian American literature. The reason for this great success is the way in which Ratner transformed suffering into art.

Ratner describes unspeakable horrors experienced by the protagonist Raami and other characters struggling to bear the heavy burden of suffering perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge regime during its rule in Cambodia between 1975 and 1979. This was where the author was raised, and she and her family struggled to live through the horrors of the event. In fact, Ratner says "Raami's story is, in essence, my own" (Ratner Author's note 317). The story, as the author herself admits, is not merely an account of the genocide committed by the Khmer Rouge or even of loss and tragedy; it is a story of something more universal and indicative of human experience, resulting in psychological trauma. In *Banyan*, the transference phenomenon of the traumatic event is used to reveal the ability of a literary text to portray belated and repetitive trauma.

The features of a traumatic event, according to the benchmark for psychiatric diagnoses, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition (DSM-IV)*, involve "actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others" (1980, 427). Human responses involve "intense fear, helplessness, or horror" (1980, 428). With reference to the Khmer Rouge's genocide, Ratner demonstrates the existence of the traumatic events by portraying how the civilians were kept in work camps throughout the country, and how the children and adolescents were separated from

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their families, then put into camps according to their age, which created difficulty in contacting family. Furthermore, because the Khmer Rouge had a philosophy of depriving Cambodia of any Western or metropolitan influence, they executed any adult – including government officials, military officials, and Buddhist monks – influenced by a Western education or contacts. Consequently, those individuals who survived the terrible events through the Khmer Rouge years bear the heavy burden of their traumatic memories.

Recent studies on traumatic memory have shown that “traumatic memories influence cognitive and emotional processing and are related to numerous psychopathological symptoms, like depression, anxiety, anger, post-traumatic stress disorder and personality disorders, especially borderline” (Matos and Pinto-Gouveia 301). In this regard, Cathy Caruth (1995), in her book *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, lists the characteristics of a traumatic memory as follows: non-representational, non-symbolic, belated, and literal. The most significant feature of traumatic memory is that it “returns belatedly in the form of flashbacks, traumatic nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena” (Leys, *Trauma* 266). In this article, I am not concerned with flashbacks or nightmares but with the other repetitive form, the transference phenomena which Dori Laub and Nanette C. Auerhahn (1989) presented as a repetitive form of the traumatic memory in their article: “Knowing And Not Knowing Massive Psychic Trauma: Forms Of Traumatic Memory.” The transference phenomenon is defined as “The grafting of isolated fragments of the past onto current relationships and life situations which become colored by these memories” (Laub and Auerhahn 292-293).

The traumatic event is not stored and retrieved through the normal mechanisms of human memory – known as declarative memory and implicit memory – for several reasons. One of these is that at the moment of the traumatic event the individual physically undergoes the “freeze response.” Psychologists refer to this as dissociation, defined as “an unconscious process by which a group of mental processes is separated from the rest of the thinking processes, resulting in an independent functioning of these processes and a loss of the usual relationships, for example, a separation of affect from cognition” (Stedmans Medical Dictionary, 1982, 416).

The other reason why the traumatic event is not stored and retrieved in normal memory is a psychological dissociative mechanism. This is the dissociative memory that occurs post-trauma because of the psychological helplessness generated by the event. The dissociative memory provides the victim with partial or complete psychological relief. I concur with Caruth “that massive trauma precludes all representation because the ordinary mechanisms of consciousness and memory are temporarily destroyed. Instead, there occurs an undistorted, material, and [...] literal registration of the traumatic event that [is] dissociated from the normal mental process of cognition” (Leys 266). Also, I concur with Dori Laub’s statement [Why do you concur?

What proof have you provided toward supporting this claim?] that the dissociative mechanism creates a black hole in the mind in which the traumatic event is stored. Under those circumstances, the traumatic memory becomes non-representational, non-linguistic, and literal. Thus it “cannot be known or represented but returns belatedly in the form of flashbacks, traumatic nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena” (Leys 266).

However, the fact that the traumatic memory is non-linguistic creates difficulty in the process of narration in fiction, in that the memories of the traumatic events are not stored as narrative. Moreover, the way that trauma belatedly returns in repetitive forms such as flashbacks or nightmares increases the dilemma relating to those memories in life at the present moment; as a consequence, those flashbacks and nightmares are still in the mind of the traumatized character, and the author of fiction can only show them in the mind of the character, while being unable to graft them onto the current relations or actions within the story. According to Caruth and Laub, the traumatic event, through the dissociative mechanism, stays contained within a wound or a hole in the mind. So, the limited forms available for the retrieval of the memories of the traumatic event create a barrier between the traumatized character and their memories; hence, there is difficulty in the process of retrieving those memories which exist in the wound or black hole. This is true to such an extent that these limited forms of retrieving or remembering memories, such as flashbacks and nightmares, cannot be drawn on by literary texts as a narrative form. As a final point, the belated and limited form of remembering trauma, as a result of its unique dissociative mechanism of retention of the memories of the traumatic events, produces a subjective internal experience of the trauma. Therefore, we cannot comprehend the source of the voice of the traumatized self in other characters who have not physically experienced the traumatic event in the past.

How can the traumatic memories be re-externalised unconsciously after the occurrence of traumatic events, thereby grafting them onto different situations or objects as well as playing a role in the



survival? A possible answer is that the transference phenomena which hinge on the enigma of traumatic memory and individual life need to be observed.

In this paper, I intend to utilize the characteristics of the traumatic events as defined by Cathy Caruth to identify them in the novel. I will also use the forms and features of Caruth's traumatic memory to elucidate how traumatic events are stored within the characters. Regarding the traumatic event and the traumatic memory, in this article I will draw on Caruth's books *Unclaimed Experience and Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. In addition, in order to study how traumatic memories are transferred through the characters as portrayed in the novel, I will make use of the transference phenomena in Dori Laub's book: *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992) and his article: "Knowing and not Knowing Massive Psychic Trauma: Forms of Traumatic Memory" (1993). This article will be based on a qualitative study of the novel *In the Shadow of The Banyan* by Vaddey Ratner, supported by trauma theory. Supplementary information from other theorists and researchers will be employed to strengthen the textual analysis achieved. The horrific setting during the regime of the Khmer Rouge, the killing, violence, and suffering will significantly contribute to the analysis.

TRANSFERENCE PHENOMENA

A traumatic experience is encoded in a different way from a non-traumatic event. During a traumatic experience, the victim senses extreme stress, which leads to "impaired explicit processing but leaves intact implicit processing," despite the associative mechanism (Black, *Psychological trauma* 46). As a consequence, "the storage of the event [is] to be (primarily) in perceptual form and to include a flood of intense emotions".

(Black, *Psychological trauma* 46). This perceptual form is a literal registration of the traumatic event for repeated retrieval or remembering.

Transference is one form of remembering and "one of the most significant concept[s] in Psychoanalysis" (Szasz, "The concept of transference—I. A logical analysis" 432). Transference was first identified by Freud (1905), and it is generally "a process in which individuals displace patterns of behavior that originate through interaction with significant figures in childhood onto other persons in their current lives" (Zinn, "Transference phenomena in medical practice: Being whom the patient needs" 293). Freud (1905) defines transference phenomena in the following way: "What are Transferences? They are new editions or facsimiles of the tendencies and fantasies which are aroused and made conscious during the progress of the analysis, but they have this peculiarity, which is characteristic for their species, that they replace some earlier person by the person of the physician. To put it in another way: a whole series of psychological experiences are revived, not as belonging to the past, but as applying to the physician at the present moment" (Freud, *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* 3).

Laub and Auerhahn observe that there are distinctive forms of remembering trauma: not knowing, "fugue states," retention of the experience, undigested fragments of perceptions and transference phenomena (Laub and Auerhahn 1993, 292-293). According to Laub and Auerhahn, "When unintegrated fragments from the past are enacted on the level of object relations, the survivor's knowledge is in the form of transference experiences. This form of knowing involves the grafting of isolated fragments of the past on to current relationships and life situations which become coloured by these memories" (Laub and Auerhahn, "Knowing and not knowing massive psychic trauma: Forms of traumatic memory" 292-293).

Psychologists emphasize "the importance of using the transference to interpret the traumatic event" (Black, *Psychological trauma: A developmental approach* 276). In addition, psychoanalysis strongly affected the study of literature; in particular, Dori Laub made a valuable contribution to the examination of the nature and the function of the traumatic memory in literature, in his book *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psycho-analysis, and History* (1992). In the same way, I intend to study transference phenomena in literature; specifically, in Vaddey Ratner's *In the Shadow of The Banyan*.

The objectives of this study are:

1. To explore how the transference phenomenon plays its unique role in re-externalizing the traumatic event and grafting it onto current situations in fiction.
2. To explore the narrative of the traumatized author, Vaddey Ratner, through the conditions of the transference phenomena for the traumatic memories retrieved by the author.

Psychologists have emphasized "the importance of using transference to interpret the traumatic event" (Black, *Psychological trauma: A developmental approach* 276). But transference is not only a psychotherapeutic tool utilized by psychologists, but is also a form of repetitive remembering. In this regard, this paper is dedicated to the study of the transference phenomenon of the traumatic event in



fiction in the way that it transfers the nonlinguistic memory into narration. More importantly, transference plays a unique role as a model for grafting the traumatic memory—a literal registration of the traumatic event—onto the individual's current life, which will be colored by those memories. Transference is also a phenomenon that helps to retrieve the traumatic event stored in the unknown, or wound, or black hole in the mind, and thus to manifest new actions or relations within the fiction. By exploring the transference phenomenon, we will be better able to comprehend the voice of the traumatized self in other characters who have not experienced the traumatic event.

TRAUMATIC EVENT AND LITERAL REGISTRATION OF THE PROTAGONIST

The main events of Vaddey Ratner's *In the Shadow of the Banyan* largely revolve around the daily lives of a Cambodian family, Raami and her parents, who are influenced by the Cambodian civil war in 1975. Although this war had consequences all over Cambodia, the novel concentrates on the everyday strife of the main character, Raami, since she suffers traumatic experience of the events in 1975.

The opening scene of *In the Shadow of the Banyan* begins by depicting Raami's reaction as the war entered her life. Raami pressed her ears to the door of her parents' bedroom and listened to the conversation between her parents. Her father said with a deep sigh: "the streets are filled with people, Aana. Homeless, hungry, desperate . . ." (1). Ratner portrayed the horrible, chaotic scene of terrified and frightened Raami's house:

This year, because of the fighting, Papa didn't want us to celebrate. New Year's was a time of cleansing, he reminded us, a time of renewal. And as long as there was fighting in the countryside, driving refugees into our city streets (3).

It became clear at what point Raami heard the horrific sounds of war. "My heart thumped a bit faster" (4). Ratner narrates: "Pchkhoo! An explosion sounded in the distance" (4). Raami froze in shock and fear, as it became clear to her that there was a direct threat to her life.

Cathy Caruth mentions in *Violence and Time: Traumatic Survivals*, "The breach in the mind—the awareness of the threat to life—is not caused by a pure quantitative amount of stimulus breaking through the body [...], but precisely by 'fright', the lack of preparedness to take in a stimulus that comes too quickly" (Caruth, *Violence and Time* 25).

As Ratner goes on to describe, Khmer Rouge forces invaded the city, and they broke into houses. Frightened, people stayed in their houses and locked the doors. Khmer soldiers came close to Raami's house, and Raami said: "All of a sudden I heard loud banging a few houses away. My heart skipped" (27). Raami was frightened as she glimpsed the soldiers raiding the house. One of the soldiers intimidated her and her parents. He pointed his pistol at them, and said, "If you stay, you'll be shot! All of you! Understand?" (29), and warned them to get out of their house. Immediately, Raami's parents decided to leave because, as Raami states, "If the revolutionary soldier came back, he would shoot us" (29). As Raami and her parents live through the brutal reign of the Khmer Rouge, her mind engraves indelible memories resulting from the literal registration of the traumatic events; consequently, her childhood world is no longer as it was. Because of the transference phenomenon of the traumatic memories being encoded differently, before the end of the novel, Raami's life is changed. There is a possibility of retrieving these memories, but only through projecting them onto other situations or objects at the present moment; consequently, the transference phenomena stimulate the survival function of trauma instead of its destructive impact on the victims.

Yet, before the transference phenomena, the picture of Raami reacts with freeze response to the traumatic events, and how that had done a shock to her. Reflecting back on the aftermath of the shocking invasion of her home by the Khmer Rouge soldiers that caused her to freeze with dread, Raami said "I felt my heart beating once more. Still, for a moment, there was only silence" (29). In addition to the freeze response at that terrifying moment, she entered into a state of dissociation; thus, the memory of these events was stored in her unconscious mind. Caruth points out that "the shock of the mind's relation to the threat of death is thus not the direct experience of the threat, but precisely the missing of this experience, the fact that, not being experienced in time, it has not yet been fully known" (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 62). According to Pierre Janet, the ordinary mechanism of the conscious memory lowered or limited its integrative capacity, leading to a failure to integrate traumatic experiences (Janet, *The major symptoms of hysteria* 332). When Raami confronts the event of witnessing the horrors of Khmer Rouge forces, and witnessing thousands of panicked people running for their lives, the dissociation of her personality manifests in dissociative symptoms such as silence and a feeling of numbness. As she recounts, "I lowered my head and then lifted it back up as a group of Khmer Rouge soldiers passed" (39). Raami's dissociated



state of mind and her freeze response are clear-cut evidence of her traumatization.

The intense terror that Raami felt as a result of the Khmer's threat to her life was connected to the disappearance of her home's servant, Om Bao. That morning, Om Bao had gone out to the market near the airport, which was known to be dangerous, but no one was able to stop her. She insisted that she needed to go there to get some supplies. When she didn't return for some time, Raami's father went searching for her; however, after a little while he returned and said that "There was still no sign of her" (18). Raami, very worried about Om Bao, asked him "Where do you think Om Bao is?" (18). The family did not see Om Bao again. Such an incident of someone going missing is recognized as a traumatic event; as far as Raami was concerned, "Absence is worse than death" (20). After Om Bao, a dear friend to her, went missing, Raami began to develop a fear of being killed by Khmer forces. Om Bao's disappearance augmented her fear and shock. Witnessing people's extreme fear, disappearance, and death brings about a break in the human psyche. The sadness and fear of Om Bao's possible death that Raami expressed demonstrated her trauma: "To say Om Bao was missing, that she was suddenly absent from our life, was to deny she had ever existed. So everyone treated her 'being gone' as a kind of death, a moving on into the next life" (20). A couple of days later, a funeral for Om Bao was held at a temple, and Raami's father and his servant attended it. Raami's father brought home an urn with a lid and said, "the cinder remains of her most cherished belongings" (20). The servant carried a bag, and her father ordered him: "The achar tossed them into the fire, in lieu of a corpse" (2). Suddenly, he realized that Raami was watching, so started talking about a different subject because he didn't want this experience to disturb his daughter psychologically. Raami couldn't understand what was happening around her, as that was the first time she had witnessed a funeral, and she had no prior knowledge of funerals. This was evident when Raami expressed bewilderment after she heard her father saying, "She is fated to be an absent ghost" (21). Raami thought to herself: "I stopped in my tracks. Absent ghost? How much more absent could you be if you were already a ghost? Invisible to the world?" (21). Raami's confusion is clear-cut evidence of her traumatization, as she is unable to fully understand the severe events and the terrible scenes happening around her. Consequently, while she is in the undissociated state of mind, this traumatic event is literally registered in her mind, whereas the experience of the corpse is unintegrated in that moment.

The trauma and its impact, involving Raami forming a traumatic memory, "the gaping, vertiginous black hole" (qtd. in Felman and Laub, *Testimony* 64) that is an iconic memory for these traumatic events. Raami feels separated from her world and at a loss for words; hence, she faces difficulty in articulating her traumatic memories to others. Felman and Laub describe the effect of trauma silence through Nadine Fresco's words quoted in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* as "a silence that swelled up the past, all the past..." (Felman and Laub, *Testimony* 64). Obviously, the silence can be detected in the following scene between Raami and her mother which happened after she witnessed the horrific crimes while they were on the road to a shelter: "'Are you all right?' she asked, lifting my face to hers. I nodded, wanting her to keep talking. Her voice calmed me, chased away the fears that lingered at the edge of my waking" (46).

Because of the unique encoding of traumatic memories as literal registration, Raami senses her inability to speak out the horror memories.

As Felman and Laub state, "[the] impossibility of speaking through this black hole both of knowledge and of words corresponds to the impossibility of remembering and of forgetting" (Felman and Laub, *Testimony* 65). After Raami's experience of witnessing traumatic events in the street, its silencing effect was also apparent when Raami tried to escape from the pain she felt over losing Om Bao:

I headed straight for the citrus garden in the back. Papa said that when he wanted to escape from something unpleasant or sad all he needed was to find a crack in the wall and pretend it was an entry way into another world, a world where all that was lost—yourself included—would again be found (22).

Through Raami's suffering and struggle with her inability to speak out, Ratner depicts the effect of the silence and the feeling of pain in Raami's mind after leaving her house and witnessing the killings on the street and the death of Om Bao: "Again, I thought I heard an echo. A ghost whispering in my ear, or maybe my own thoughts ripping through the silence" (68). This is similar to what Nadine Fresco said "The forbidden memory of the death manifested itself only in the form of incomprehensible attacks of pain" (qtd. in Felman, and Laub, *Testimony* 64). Thus, it is essential to look at Raami's traumatic memory as enforcing itself belatedly in a repetitive form.

With regard to the repetitive form, Raami's transference phenomena are emerging from the



witnessed traumatic events in which she was frightened at the time of hearing the sounds of the explosions near to her house when Khmer forces siege the city. During the time of sleeping in their new shelter, all the family are asleep. Raami was scared by the sounds of thunder: "Again lightning flashed, followed by what sounded like a mountain ripping in half. I jumped up and squeezed myself" (156). According to Laub and Auerhahn's interpretation to the concept of transference phenomena, traumatic memories belatedly return "through retention of fragments of unintegrated memories in transference phenomena" (Laub and Auerhahn, "Knowing and not knowing massive psychic trauma: Forms of traumatic memory 290). The unintegrated fragments of Raami's literal registration can be seen clearly in her expression of the sound of thunder as that of "a mountain ripping in half," that is transferred from her experience of hearing explosions. Because the memory storage affected by the dissociation which altered the process of storing memories. Therefore, those unintegrated fragments are very intense. The evidence of transference phenomena resides in the congruence between what Raami has literally registered about the traumatic event and the sound of thunder in the present moment, resulting in the retrieval of the same fear and horror that she felt when she heard the sound of explosions many years before. This exemplifies the transference phenomenon, which is one form of traumatic memory. The belated return of the unintegrated fragments through the transference reaction to the explosions is what made Raami's emotional reaction to the sound of thunder so intense.

Again, this transference phenomena is seen when Raami was listening to her parents talk after Om Bao's funeral, but couldn't understand what her father meant when he described Om Bao as an "absent ghost" (21). That is because of the event not having been "within the schemes of prior knowledge" in her mind (Caruth, Trauma 153). Raami was confused as to which world Om Bao had moved into. Thus, the transference phenomenon involved grafting fragments of Raami's memory about Om Bao on to the current situation, which became colored by these memories; Raami illustrates how she saw Om Bao's new world:

Then I saw it! this other world of which Papa spoke, where the lost was found, where a part of you always resided. It was quiet and lush, at once earthy and ethereal. There were no rockets or bombs exploding, no people crying or dying, no sadness, no tears, no mourning (22-23).

It seems Raami is apprehensive of the present but nevertheless views the present in light of the past. "This work of reconstruction actually transforms the traumatic memory, so that it can be integrated into the survivor's life story" (Herman, Trauma and recovery 175). This shift is made evident at last, the mysterious capacity of the traumatic memory to literally transfer out the reality, and replay and re-enact traumatic incidents that are not acceptable through the normal mechanism of memory.

The transference phenomenon holds such power to stir the survival function of trauma. Although someone may be traumatized by the manifold atrocities of war (killing, forcible emigration and imprisoning), making the memories a constant source of agony, the transference phenomenon leads to survival through the destruction that traumatic memory bears. Cathy Caruth tries to solve the enigma of trauma by saying: "The surprising emergence, from within the theory of the death drive, of the drive to life, a form of survival that both witnesses and turns away from the trauma in which it originates" (Caruth, "Parting words: Trauma, silence and survival" 7). The survival function of trauma is present in the action and plot of Ratner's novel, helping to bridge these divergent discourses. In explicating the survival function of trauma, the "drive of life" of which Caruth speaks becomes more explicit. The transference phenomenon supports Raami's efforts to build up a safe boundary which is necessary for her survival. It is evident that the traumatized Raami finds relief by projecting the traumatic memories onto some person or object.

Having experienced all of the Khmer's horrific crimes, Raami was listening to the temple's sweepers who were telling stories of killing committed in the temple to her father while the sweepers "fought back the tears" (78), and he has built arise after he reveals these memories. Raami was fully depicted to listen to the sweeper, but overcame them as she says, "I blinked the image away" (78). Raami numbed herself from the heavy burden by transferring these memories into objects as she transferred the memories of dead victims into engraved letters on the wall of the temple: "Here was a tale I could literally see and run my hand across, its message explained to me countless times: peace comes to one who understands" (77). Projecting the fragments of the traumatic scenes onto the spiritual journey, she saw the dried blood stains on the wall of the temple. Unlike other forms of traumatic memory such as flashbacks, the transference phenomenon brings understanding to the survivor, as Raami states "that the disappearance of those whose presence I could still feel were a kind of nippen, a passing from this life into a place as desirable as the gods' celestial realm" (77). Similarly, Laub and Auerhahn emphasize that



the fragments of the traumatic memory through transference phenomena are “essential in order to facilitate reconstruction of the ‘unknown’ traumatic event and comprehension of its meaning” (Laub and Auerhahn, "Knowing and not knowing massive psychic trauma: Forms of traumatic memory" 300). It is as if Raami is giving voice to the absent narratives of the killed people. According to Cathy Caruth, it is the incomprehensible act of surviving – of waking into life – that repeats and bears witness to what remains ungrasped within the encounter with death. The repetition of trauma, therefore, is not only an attempt or an imperative to know what cannot be grasped that is repeated unconsciously in the survivor’s life, it is also an imperative to live that still remains not fully understood (Caruth, “Parting words: Trauma, silence and survival” 10-11). In reassessing these memories, she realizes the meaning of the death journey of these victims through Buddha’s spiritual journey; as a result, the traumatic memory which belatedly returns in the form of transference phenomena provides not only an understanding of past events, but also the building of safe boundaries for survival through which they can see their life. This form of traumatic memory sustains her psychological stability as she overcomes those crucial and frightening events.

CONCLUSION

Through the experience of Raami, the protagonist of *In the Shadow of the Banyan* who has survived and coped but suffered, this article discusses how the transference phenomenon is a concept utilized in psychoanalysis, but at the same time it can transfer the traumatic memory into the present in narrative. Throughout the story, Ratner calls upon the reader to witness the traumatic events experienced by Raami through the Khmer Rouge’s crimes committed during the civil war. In *In the Shadow of the Banyan*, Ratner presents transference phenomena as a form of knowing, explaining that traumatic memory can be narrated in symbolic form. The presentation of *In the Shadow of the Banyan* as trauma fiction and its memory reminds the reader that the novel does not give an account of the author’s experiences, but shows a way of witnessing and externalizing traumatic memories through transference phenomena.

The most pitiable aspect of Raami’s role is represented by her inability to speak out about her traumatic memories when her mind enters the state of silence. She is haunted by the literal registration of the Khmer’s crimes in the street and Om Bao’s death. In the end, she has chosen to shelter herself from the destruction of trauma.

The Khmer regime changed not only cultural, social and political aspects of Cambodia, but also the lives of the people who were there. Through close reading of *In the Shadow of the Banyan*, I bring up Dori Laub’s transference phenomena to invoke and interrogate a new form of traumatic memory, the transference phenomenon. To tell the truth about one’s experience, to assert one’s subjectivity in the face of the enigma of trauma, is profoundly important not only for the traumatized individual but for traumatized countries as well. The survival function of trauma can open opportunities for healing reconnection and protection.

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