

The Transmission of Trauma: Post-memory entangled Dimas Suryo and Lintang Utara in Leila Chudori's *Pulang* Novel

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Abstract

The novel *Pulang* by Leila S. Chudori represents the experience of political exile following the 1965 tragedy, which profoundly affects the psychological conditions of its characters. This study aims to analyze the forms of psychological trauma experienced by the character Dimas Suryo as a political exile, as well as the impact of such trauma on Lintang Utara as the second generation. This research employs a descriptive qualitative method with a psychoanalytic and trauma studies approach, particularly focusing on the concept of generational trauma or postmemory. The data were obtained through an in-depth reading of the novel, examining its narrative, dialogues, and psychological descriptions of the characters. The findings indicate that Dimas Suryo experiences trauma in the form of anxiety, a loss of identity, and inner conflict resulting from alienation and his inability to return to his homeland. This trauma does not end with him, but is transmitted generationally to Lintang Utara through family memories, historical narratives, and the father–child relationship. As a result, Lintang Utara experiences an identity crisis and existential anxiety as manifestations of generational trauma, despite not directly experiencing the traumatic events. The implication of this study is that generational trauma is transmitted from Dimas Suryo to Lintang Utara, influenced by familial and nationalistic factors.

Key Words: trauma, psychoanalysis, post-memory, exile, *Pulang*.

Introduction

The novel *Pulang* by Leila S. Chudori is a literary work that not only narrates the physical journey of returning to one's homeland, but also explores the psychological and historical experiences of its characters following the 1965 political events in Indonesia. The novel portrays the lives of exiles who reside abroad, alienated from their country of origin, as well as the inner conflicts that arise from feelings of loss, dual identity, and historical trauma that never fully subsides within the consciousness of the main character and the subsequent generation. This kind of trauma is manifested through the representation of the experiences of central characters such as Dimas Suryo and his daughter, Lintang Utara, who live under the shadow of a traumatic familial and political history.

Several previous studies have examined various aspects of the novel *Pulang* from different theoretical perspectives, while remaining relevant to the focus on trauma and identity that underpins this research. For instance, a study conducted by Nurhayati and Sobari (2019) employs a literary psychology approach, particularly psychoanalysis, to explore the psychological dimensions of the character Dimas Suryo. The study reveals that he experiences psychological disturbances in the form of anxiety, trauma, stress, and depression as a result of inner conflict and his inability to return to his homeland. These findings reinforce the notion that the experience of exile brings about profound and enduring psychological impacts on the main character.

Another approach, which is more structural in nature, is presented by Rahman (2021) through a Freudian psychoanalytic framework, analyzing the id, ego, and superego of the characters in the novel *Pulang*. The study finds that Dimas Suryo predominantly exhibits the ego in navigating his psychological conflicts, while Lintang Utara demonstrates a dominance of the id, reflecting internal tension and complex psychological dynamics between the first and the subsequent generation. These findings can be utilized as a theoretical foundation to explain how traumatic experiences not only affect individual behavior but also shape the psychological structure of the characters.

A more recent study by Putra, Rahmawati, and Cao (2024) employs Marianne Hirsch's concept of post-memory to demonstrate that the trauma of exile does not only affect those who directly experience it, but is also transmitted to the second generation. This study emphasizes the process of trauma transmission through family memory and historical experience, suggesting that second-generation individuals, such as Lintang Utara, carry a similar psychological burden despite not directly experiencing the traumatic events. In this sense, the trauma of exile becomes a collective, cross-generational experience that shapes the characters' psychological identity throughout their lives.

Afterwards, several other relevant studies, although not directly focused on trauma, still provide a strong theoretical foundation for this research. For instance, a postcolonial study by Nensilanti et al. (2020) examines hybrid identity and the identity crisis experienced by exiled characters as a result of political processes and colonialism, which implicitly relates to historical trauma and the search for a sense of home. This approach enriches the understanding of the complexity of the characters' identities, which are shaped by historical and political conflicts.

Based on the foregoing literature review, it can be understood that psychological trauma and identity are central issues in the novel *Pulang* that warrant in-depth analysis. This study positions trauma as its primary focus, employing a literary psychology and trauma studies approach, particularly the concept of postmemory, to explain how traumatic experiences are not only embedded in individual lives but are also transmitted across generations. Through this analysis, it is expected that readers will come to understand that the trauma portrayed by Leila S. Chudori in *Pulang* is not merely an internal conflict, but a historical experience that continues to persist within the psychological structure of the characters, profoundly shaping their identities and familial relationships.

To examine trauma as a complex inner experience, an approach that is capable of exploring the psychological dimensions of characters in depth is required, one of which is literary psychology. Literary psychology is an interdisciplinary approach that studies literary works by emphasizing the psychological aspects of characters, authors, and readers. According to Endraswara (2019), literary psychology views characters in literary works as representations of complex and dynamic human psychological conditions. Literary characters do not merely function as narrative elements, but also as psychological subjects who experience inner conflict, anxiety, trauma, and processes of identity formation.

In the context of the novel *Pulang*, a psychoanalytic approach is particularly relevant, as the novel explicitly portrays the inner struggles of its characters shaped by historical and political experiences. The characters of Dimas Suryo and Lintang Utara are not only depicted through their actions, but also through their memories, emotions, and inner reflections, which indicate the presence of sustained

psychological pressure. Therefore, psychoanalysis serves as a primary framework for uncovering the psychological conditions of the characters as a result of their traumatic experiences.

Previous research conducted by Nurhayati and Sobari (2019) demonstrates that a psychoanalytic approach is effective in uncovering the inner conflicts and psychological pressures experienced by the character Dimas Suryo as a political exile in the novel *Pulang*. While the study focuses on the psychological experiences of the main character, it does not specifically address trauma as a cross-generational phenomenon. Therefore, this study seeks to complement previous research by situating trauma within the framework of postmemory.

To understand trauma as a complex and enduring psychological experience, a conceptual understanding of psychological trauma itself is required. Psychological trauma refers to a mental condition that arises from extreme experiences that disrupt an individual's emotional stability. Trauma does not always emerge immediately after a traumatic event; rather, it may persist in the form of fragmented memories, prolonged anxiety, a sense of loss, and difficulties in establishing social relationships.

In literary studies, trauma is often represented through non-linear narratives, repetitive memories, symbols of loss, and recurring inner conflicts. Literature functions as a medium for representing traumatic experiences that are often difficult to articulate rationally. Therefore, trauma in literature is not only understood as an individual wound, but also as a reflection of collective trauma and social history. In the novel *Pulang*, the trauma experienced by Dimas Suryo is not solely related to personal experience, but is also rooted in historical trauma resulting from the political events of 1965. This trauma is manifested in feelings of alienation, longing for the homeland, and the inability to reconcile with the past. Such trauma is continuous and unresolved, thereby shaping the character's personality and life choices.

When trauma is not only experienced personally but also transmitted through narratives, memory, and familial relationships, a conceptual framework is needed to explain this mechanism of transmission. The concept of collective memory was introduced by Maurice Halbwachs, a French sociologist, who argues that individual memory never stands alone but is always shaped by social frameworks. According to Halbwachs, personal memory is influenced by family, social groups, and the context in which an individual exists. Thus, memory is not merely an individual psychological phenomenon, but also a social construct.

Collective memory functions as a means of preserving group identity and transmitting past experiences to subsequent generations. In the context of historical trauma, collective memory allows the traumatic experiences of one generation to persist within social memory, even after the events themselves have passed. Halbwachs' concept is highly relevant to understanding the novel *Pulang*, as the trauma experienced by its characters cannot be separated from the collective memory of the 1965 events. Dimas Suryo carries not only personal memories, but also collective memories of political violence, state betrayal, and the loss of citizenship. These memories then become part of a familial narrative that is transmitted to Lintang Utara (Halbwachs, 1992).

The concept of trauma provides an essential foundation for understanding the inner experiences of characters; however, it does not fully explain the mechanism through which traumatic memories are transmitted across generations. This limitation indicates the need for a conceptual framework capable

of explaining how the traumatic experiences of the first generation persist and influence subsequent generations. It is within this context that the concept of postmemory, developed by Marianne Hirsch and theoretically rooted in Maurice Halbwachs' notion of collective memory, becomes relevant. Postmemory refers to the condition in which the second generation "remembers" traumatic events that they did not directly experience, but which are transmitted through stories, photographs, family memories, and intense emotional relationships. In postmemory, the trauma of the first generation is powerfully present in the lives of the next generation, shaping their identity, emotions, and worldview. As a result, the second generation often experiences feelings of loss, alienation, and anxiety toward a past they never lived through, yet perceive as deeply personal.

In the novel *Pulang*, the concept of postmemory is clearly reflected in the character of Lintang Utara. As the child of a political exile, Lintang inherits her father's trauma through stories, attitudes, and repeatedly transmitted family memories. Although she does not directly experience the events of 1965, she nevertheless feels their impact in the form of an identity crisis and a continuous search for meaning regarding both Indonesia and herself. The concept of postmemory, as proposed by Marianne Hirsch, explains how the second generation can "remember" the traumatic experiences of the previous generation through narratives, images, and emotional transmission so intense that they are perceived as personal experiences (Hirsch, 2008; 2012).

Several previous studies have examined the novel *Pulang* using various approaches, including psychoanalysis and postmemory studies. However, most of these studies focus primarily on Dimas Suryo as an individual character or on the broader issue of exile identity. This research differs in that it specifically examines the relationship of trauma between Dimas Suryo and Lintang Utara as a father-daughter relationship, emphasizing the process of cross-generational trauma transmission. Thus, this literature review demonstrates that a psychoanalytic approach combined with theories of collective memory and postmemory provides a comprehensive analytical framework for understanding trauma in the novel *Pulang*. This theoretical framework, in turn, necessitates a research method capable of conducting a deep, contextual, and interpretative reading of the text, particularly in tracing the representation of psychological trauma and its transmission across generations.

Based on these considerations, this study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical method, as the data analyzed consist of literary texts and their inherent meanings. This approach is chosen to facilitate an in-depth understanding of the representation of psychological trauma and its cross-generational transmission in the novel *Pulang* by Leila S. Chudori, particularly through the characters Dimas Suryo and Lintang Utara.

Results and Discussion

1. On the Discourse of Trauma in *Pulang*

Based on the perspective of Narratology, Dimas's trauma is represented through the disruption of temporal order within the plot structure. The novel *Pulang* is not arranged linearly; rather, it employs a mixed narrative structure that shifts back and forth between the past and the present. The frequent use of flashbacks functions to reveal Dimas's traumatic memories, which continuously resurface in his consciousness. This nonlinearity reflects the very nature of trauma, which does not appear as a coherent and complete memory, but rather as fragmented and recurring recollections.

In terms of duration, Dimas's traumatic experiences are often expanded through extensive and in-depth narrative descriptions. Events from the past that are chronologically brief are given substantial narrative space, while the everyday experiences of exile are often condensed. This technique emphasizes that the traumatic past carries a far greater psychological weight than the present life lived by the character.

In terms of frequency, memories of Indonesia and the political events of 1965 repeatedly appear throughout the narrative. This repetition indicates that trauma never fully disappears, but is continuously reproduced within the character's consciousness. Such narrative repetition serves as a representation of trauma as repetitive and unresolved. This condition becomes particularly evident when Dimas reflects on his position as a political exile who has been uprooted from his homeland and original identity, as illustrated in the following statement:

"kami menjadi sekelompok manusia stateless. Sekelompok orang tanpa identitas. Kejadian ini begitu mengejutkan hingga aku tak mempunyai waktu barang sedikit pun untuk berpikir, betapa jauh nya hidupku dari tanah air, dari ibu, dan dari aji ; dari Jakarta, dari Solo, dan dar segala kehidupan yang baik dan buruk." (Chudori,2012,p. 72)

Meanwhile, the focalization in the novel is predominantly centered on Dimas's point of view, allowing readers to experience the world through the consciousness of a traumatized subject. This internal focalization enables readers to understand trauma not merely as a historical fact, but as a subjective and emotional psychological experience.

2. The trauma of Dimas Suryo

The character of Dimas Suryo in the novel *Pulang* represents a traumatized subject whose life is shaped by historical and political events beyond his personal control. The trauma experienced by Dimas does not solely stem from the political violence of 1965, but also from the prolonged experience of exile, namely the physical and emotional disconnection from his homeland. This condition is reflected when Dimas realizes that his return to Indonesia is nearly impossible, as he and his companions are forced to live as exiles in France, unable to return due to the political accusations imposed during that period.

Dimas Suryo's psychological trauma is manifested in the form of anxiety, a loss of national identity, and social alienation. His status as an exile places him in a liminal condition, situated between two spaces that he does not fully belong to: Indonesia as his homeland, which he cannot return to, and France as his place of residence, which he does not entirely consider home. This condition generates continuous inner conflict and shapes Dimas's personality as reflective, melancholic, and strongly attached to the past. This emotional attachment to his homeland is not only present as memory, but also as a persistent sense of loss that haunts his attempts to construct a new identity abroad, as reflected in the following statement:

"Aku mencoba terlahir kembali sebagai manusia baru, tetapi aku masih merasa ada sesuatu yang tertinggal di tanah air, mungkin ada hatiku yang tertinggal pada ibu, aji, mungkin juga pada surti dan anak anaknya."(Chudori,2012,p. 80)

This trauma also affects Dimas's interpersonal relationships, including his interactions with fellow exiles and his family. He tends to form relationships that are defensive and cautious, as a psychological defense mechanism against unresolved emotional wounds. Thus, trauma within Dimas is not merely

an emotional experience, but also becomes a structural force that shapes the way he thinks, feels, and acts in his daily life. This condition is particularly evident in his experience of maintaining emotional distance from his family for the sake of their safety, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

“Aku masih mencoba mencari cara untuk menghubungi Mas Hananto dan Surti tanpa membahayakan mereka. Tetapi kawan-kawan di Havana mengatakan segala macam hubungan dan koneksi ke Indonesia bisa membuat keluarga kami semakin diburu tentara. Lalu jatublah bom berikutnya: paspor Indonesia kita dicabut.” (Chudori, 2012, p. 72)

It can be concluded that the trauma experienced by Dimas significantly influences the way he perceives and responds to life’s challenges. His traumatic experiences shape him into an individual who tends to avoid forming close relationships with others. This reaction indicates that trauma has led Dimas to develop avoidant tendencies, as he seeks to prevent causing harm to others through his own condition. Consequently, he engages in self-imposed isolation. Trauma, therefore, renders Dimas Suryo alienated both subjectively and objectively, as he not only becomes distanced from others but also actively distances himself from those closest to him under the pretext of protecting them.

3. Dimas Suryo as The Body of Trauma and Collective Memory

Dimas Suryo’s trauma cannot be separated from the concept of collective memory as proposed by Maurice Halbwachs. His recollections of the 1965 events do not exist merely as personal memories, but are shaped through social frameworks, including the exile community, historical narratives, and relationships among fellow victims of political displacement. In this context, Dimas’s trauma constitutes part of a broader collective trauma experienced by a particular social group.

This collective memory is continuously reproduced through gatherings, conversations, and social rituals carried out within the exile community. The novel *Pulang* illustrates how such social spaces function as a medium for preserving traumatic memory. Thus, trauma does not only persist within individual consciousness, but also lives within social structures that shape the collective identity of Indonesian exiles.

From a narratological perspective, this collective memory is represented through dialogues between characters and the recurring depiction of shared social experiences. This technique demonstrates that traumatic memory is not confined to a single character, but is collectively shared and reinforced through narrative representation.

4. Transmitted trauma and the becoming post-memory to Lintang Utara

Lintang Utara represents the second generation that experiences trauma indirectly through her father’s experiences. From the perspective of postmemory, Lintang “remembers” traumatic events that she never directly experienced, but which are transmitted through stories, emotional attitudes, and family memory. The trauma endured by Dimas Suryo manifests in Lintang’s life as a shadow of the past that shapes her identity and worldview.

Lintang experiences an identity crisis as she exists between two cultures and two conflicting historical narratives. She does not fully feel that she belongs to Indonesia, yet she is also unable to detach herself from the traumatic history embedded in her father’s identity. This condition generates an existential anxiety that characterizes generational trauma, as reflected in Lintang’s personal reflections presented

in the following excerpts: *“Perlamban-lamban aku paham: aku tak akan pernah bisa mengunjungi Indonesia bersama Ayah.”*

This awareness of disconnection is further reinforced by Lintang’s understanding of her father’s political background, which is marked by repression and state violence, rendering their family history distinct from that of others in general:

“Sudah lama aku menyadari, perbedaan keluarga kami tidak berhenti pada perkawinan campur belaka. Latar belakang ayah penuh drama politik yang melebihi absurditas peristiwa politik dalam novel-novel rusia.” (Chudori,2021,p. 146)

From a narratological perspective, Lintang Utara’s experience is presented through a shift in focalization from the first generation to the second. This shift in perspective enables readers to observe how trauma transforms from a direct experience into an inherited one. In terms of time order, Lintang’s narrative frequently intersects with flashbacks that do not originate from her own memories, but from her father’s, which she subsequently internalizes.

In terms of frequency, stories about her father’s past repeatedly appear in Lintang’s life, indicating that the trauma is continuously reproduced and never fully resolved. Meanwhile, the relatively extended narrative duration devoted to Lintang’s inner reflections highlights the psychological intensity of the generational trauma she experiences.

5. Familial relations as the space of transmitting trauma

The relationship between Dimas Suryo and Lintang Utara serves as the primary medium for the transmission of trauma across generations. This trauma is not inherited through direct experience, but rather through language, silence, and recurring family narratives. In the novel *Pulang*, this relationship illustrates how the family functions as the central space for the preservation of traumatic memory.

From a narratological perspective, the father–daughter relationship is reinforced through dialogue and reflective narration, positioning readers to grasp the depth of the inherited trauma. This pattern of transmission becomes particularly evident when Lintang realizes that her understanding of Indonesia is entirely mediated by her father’s experiences and memories, as reflected in the following excerpt:

“Aku tak pernah menginjak Indonesia karena keluarga tak akan bisa menginjaknya-betapun ayah merindukan tanah airnya. Aku mengenal Indonesia dari tangan ayah, kawan-kawan ayah: Om Nug, Om Tjahjadi, Om Risjaf, dari buku-buku, film dokumenter, dari seluruh pertengkaran ayah dan maman dan berbagai peristiwa, baik dan buruk, yang akhirnya bisa membawa pada ketegangan antara ayah dan aku hari ini” (Chudori,2012,p. 137)

Thus, the novel *Pulang* affirms that trauma is not merely an individual experience, but a continuous one that persists within the narrative structure and the relationships between characters, particularly within the family as the primary space for the transmission of traumatic memory.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the novel *Pulang* by Leila S. Chudori, it can be concluded that psychological trauma constitutes a central theme that shapes character construction, narrative structure, and the

relationships among characters within the novel. The character of Dimas Suryo is represented as a traumatized subject who endures psychological suffering as a result of the political events of 1965 and his status as a political exile. The trauma he experiences is not temporary, but continuous, influencing his identity, worldview, and social relationships. Feelings of loss toward his homeland, alienation, and unresolved inner conflict emerge as the primary forms of psychological trauma embedded within Dimas Suryo.

This trauma is not only present as an individual experience, but also as part of collective memory, as proposed by Maurice Halbwachs. Dimas's recollections of historical events and political exile are shaped and sustained through social frameworks, particularly the exile community and familial relationships. Thus, trauma in the novel *Pulang* cannot be separated from its broader social and historical context. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that Dimas Suryo's trauma is transmitted to Lintang Utara as the second generation through the process of postmemory. Lintang experiences trauma indirectly through family narratives, emotional attitudes, and inherited memories from her father. Although she does not directly experience the traumatic events, she nonetheless feels their impact in the form of an identity crisis, existential anxiety, and an ongoing search for meaning regarding her family's history. This finding confirms that trauma operates across generations and significantly influences the formation of identity in subsequent generations.

From a narratological perspective, trauma in *Pulang* is represented through a non-linear plot, the repetition of memories, the expansion of narrative duration in past events, and internal focalization that allows readers to access the characters' consciousness in depth. These narrative strategies reinforce the representation of trauma as fragmented, repetitive, and never fully resolved. Therefore, the novel *Pulang* affirms that trauma is not merely an individual psychological wound, but also a historical and collective experience that continues to persist within memory, narrative, and familial relationships. The integration of a psychoanalytic approach with theories of collective memory, postmemory, and narratology proves to be effective in revealing the complexity of trauma and identity in this literary work.

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