

Yin-Yang Concept of Healing in Tan Twan Eng's Trauma Fictions

Xia Hou^{1,2}, Noritah Omar¹, Hardev Kaur¹, & Ida Baizura Bahar¹

¹ Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia

² College of Foreign Languages, Zhoukou Normal University, 466001 Henan Province, China

Correspondence: Noritah Omar, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia. E-mail: nomar@upm.edu.my

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Abstract

Contemporary Malaysian literature not only provides a platform of lives, but also functions as an avenue for trauma expressions where writers utilize different narrative strategies to create characters with multiple identities. One of the prominent Chinese-Malaysian contemporary writers Tan Twan Eng deals with the traumatic impact brought by Japanese oppression to Malaya during the 1940s and he offers a traditional Chinese vision of understanding on healing of trauma. His writing offers a unique and compelling perspective on the complexities of identity, memory, and trauma, and has earned him a place as one of the most important contemporary writers from Malaysia. In his works, the Yin-Yang concept can also be applied to the healing of trauma, as it emphasizes the importance of finding balance and harmony between opposing forces in order to achieve wholeness and well-being. Deploying the Yin-Yang concept, he examines how the protagonists in *The Gift of Rain* (2007) and *The Garden of Evening Mists* (2012) deal with traumas of war and violence. This paper utilizes Lacapra's "work through", instead of merely attempting to ignore or repress the painful events, confronting them in a way that enables people to process and integrate them, Cathy Caruth's trauma theory about timelessness, relatedness, repetition and intrusiveness and Chinese traditional concept of Yin-Yang to analyze the ways of healing traumas. The transition from traumatic memory to narrative memory, in fact is the balance of forgetfulness and remembrance, and balance of mental pain and peace. His application of the Yin-Yang principles provides a potent metaphor for the process of achieving harmony and balance in the face of traumas. His Yin-Yang concept of trauma healing places a strong emphasis on the significance of confronting the past in a way that allows for the integration and transformation of traumatic events while also acknowledging the wider social and cultural settings of trauma. The research may provide a new and harmonious perception to understand traumas.

Keywords: trauma, Yin-Yang concept, healing, working through, narration

1. Introduction

Chinese-Malaysian novelist Tan Twan Eng (1972) was renowned for his books that examined issues of identity, memory, and the interaction between people and their surroundings. He was born in Malaysia's Penang and subsequently completed his legal education in the United Kingdom before practising law in Kuala Lumpur. After working as a lawyer for a while, he decided to focus on writing and released *The Gift of Rain*, a book that describes the maturation of a young Chinese-British man named Philip during the Japanese occupation of Penang. The Walter Scott Prize for Historical Fiction was awarded after it made the Man Booker Prize long list. *The Garden of Evening Mists*, Tan's second book, was released in 2012 and received positive reviews in addition to being named to the Man Booker Prize shortlist. The plot of the book is on Yun Ling, a young Chinese-Malaysian lady who first works as a Japanese gardener's apprentice before becoming a judge at the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

Tan was known for using exquisite prose and evocative depictions of the natural environment in his works. He also drew on aspects of Malaysian history and culture. Tan Twan Eng's writings are renowned for their varied cultural allusions, which take inspiration from a wide range of traditions such as Chinese calligraphy and art, Tang Dynasty poetry, Buddhism, and Taoism. Endo-san introduces Philip, the protagonist of his first book *The Gift of Rain*, to the art of Chinese calligraphy, and the practise of calligraphy comes to symbolize the bond between the two characters as well as serve as a metaphor for the process of self-discovery and personal transformation. Similar to this, Yun Ling, the main character of *The Garden of Evening Mists*, is greatly affected by the Japanese art of gardening and the Zen Buddhist philosophy, which she learns from her master, Aritomo.

Tan Twan Eng's connection to Taoism is clear in his writing, which frequently includes the ideas and precepts of this antiquated Chinese philosophy. He focuses on two ideas that are essential to Taoist philosophy: wu-wei, or "non-doing", and the interconnection of all things. For instance, Philip explores the idea of wu-wei and how it is employed in martial arts to reach a state of effortless motion in *The Gift of Rain*. Similar to how Yun Ling, the main character in *The Garden of Evening Mists*, muses on the interconnection of all things and the transience of existence, two important concepts in Taoist philosophy.

One of the core concepts of Taoist philosophy is the Yin-Yang concept, which represents the complementary and linked nature of all things. It is a fundamental concept in Chinese philosophy. In his writing, which frequently illustrates this concept, Tan Twan Eng explores

the equilibrium and interplay between opposing forces in his characters and their environment. For instance, Philip, the main character in *The Gift of Rain*, struggles between his attraction to Endo-san's Japanese culture and ideals and his commitment to his Chinese background. The Yin-Yang principle, which emphasizes the balance between opposing forces and the necessity to establish harmony and integration between them, is reflected in this tension. Similar to this, Yun Ling, the main character in *The Garden of Evening Mists*, is challenged with the landscape's contrast between cruelty and beauty while working in a Japanese garden. The garden itself is a representation of the Yin-Yang theory because it captures how opposing forces like light and shadow, stillness and movement, and order and chaos interact. Aside from those, narrations in the texts illustrate the process of recovering from trauma, which involves striking a balance between forgetting and memory as well as between agony and tranquility.

2. Literature Review

There are several studies on Tan Twan Eng's novels, which have focused on various themes and aspects of his works. One common theme that has been explored in his novels is the complex interplay between personal identity and historical events. In both *The Gift of Rain* and *The Garden of Evening Mists*, Tan Twan Eng explores how individuals are shaped by their cultural and historical contexts, and how their personal identities can be in tension with larger historical forces. The first is multicultural conflict and combination, which are the legacy and zen of Japanese Imperialism (Lim, 2015), Han racism in Malaysian contexts, and the cosmopolitan nature of global literary production obscuring the racial underpinnings of its cultural productions (Lee, 2019), colonialist conceptions of identity (Gabriel, 2016), and postcolonial Gothic entrapment. The second is about the global Malaysian novels' prospects and possibilities (Holden, 2007). The third one addresses identity, postcolonial pain, absence, and nostalgia. (Sing, 2010; Groppe, 2006; Holden, 2007). There are additional considerations as well, including the ethnicity and subjectivity (Qiao, 2019). As a result, the focus of the earlier studies was mostly on colonialism, identity, memory and trauma.

Another theme that has been explored in Tan Twan Eng's works is the role of memory and trauma in shaping individual lives. Both *The Gift of Rain* and *The Garden of Evening Mists* feature characters who are grappling with traumatic events from their past, and who must find a way to come to terms with these experiences in order to move forward. Tan Twan Eng's novels have also been noted for their richly layered characters, poetic language, and evocative descriptions of the natural world. Several studies have explored how Tan Twan Eng uses these elements to create a vivid sense of place and atmosphere in his novels, and how his writing reflects his deep connection to the landscapes and cultures of Malaysia. In terms of trauma, they only concentrate on the signs and symptoms of trauma brought on by war (Saxena, 2020).

Therefore, the studies on Tan Twan Eng's novels suggest that his works offer a unique and compelling perspective on the complexities of personal identity, memory, and trauma, and that his writing is deeply rooted in the histories and cultural traditions of the region. There isn't much research on the methodical analysis of relationships between Yin-Yang concept and trauma healing narratives.

3. Methods

3.1 Trauma Theory

Cathy Caruth argues the general knowledge of trauma depicted in literary works. She believes that trauma describes "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (1996) and causes a "breach" in the mind or an opening, so "it is not available to consciousness until it imposes itself" (1996), maybe in the form of dreams, flashbacks and image intrusions. Caruth proposes the characteristics of trauma, which are timelessness, relatedness, repetition and intrusiveness (1995). On the other hand, Dominick LaCapra has made a substantial contribution to our knowledge of the connection between trauma and recovery. He believes that trauma may "create a state of disorientation, agitation, or even confusion" (2014). The key component of LaCapra's trauma recovery strategy is dealing with the past in a way that enables people to integrate and change their painful experiences. One of his most important realizations is that "working through" painful events is the basis of trauma recovery. Instead of merely attempting to ignore or repress the painful events, this entails confronting them in a way that enables people to process and integrate them. According to LaCapra, overcoming trauma necessitates being prepared to face up to challenging feelings and memories and to interact with them in a way that promotes change and development. His works have made a substantial contribution to our comprehension of the intricacies of trauma and the difficulties of healing, and it has provided insightful information on how people and cultures might try to heal and recover.

3.2 Yin-Yang Concept

Both eastern and western cultures have continued to show a great deal of interest in Yin-Yang theory and practise. The way people see their surroundings indicates the coexistence of a variety of dualistic ideas, including heaven and earth, day and night, up and down, cold and heat, sun and moon, men and women, life and death, and opening and closing (Haahr, Jensen, & Humaidan, 2020). Liu and An (2021) contend that these occurrences are not merely antagonistic interactions, but rather are founded on the "either/and" paradigm, which frames the paradox into a duality that is partially complimentary and partially hostile. Li (2021) claims that the essential premise of Yin-Yang is that everything in the cosmos, including cultures, is dynamic. The environment, context, and time all play a role in the forming and reshaping of the paradoxical value orientations.

However, the popularity of Yin-Yang started to rise with the work of the Chinese school of Yin-Yang that studied philosophy and cosmology in the third century BC. The concept was proposed by the cosmologist Zou Yan. The yin-yang school of thought originated

from the observations made by the Chinese ancients that involved looking up and surveying the world from which they made analogues, which facilitated the abstraction of the yin. According to Chinese mythology, the turmoil that resulted from the earth's original genesis gave rise to Yin-Yang. Their accomplishment of the cosmic egg's equilibrium during creation led to the birth of Pangu (P'an ku), the first person to ever live on earth (Leung, 2020). Catastrophes like floods, plagues, and droughts are made possible by the imbalance between yin and yang. Because of this, in Yin-Yang thinking, explanations of how Yin and Yang imbalances lead to disruptions in efforts to restore equilibrium receive more focus.

Li (2021) asserts that the Yin-Yang paradigm, which depicts the dynamic interplay between two opposing sides, includes the presence of contrary components in the same environment. Similar to this, Li (2011) observed that the interaction of Yin and Yang creates a dialectical equilibrium that represents the fundamentals of coexistence, which feature forces that are complimentary rather than antagonistic to one another. According to Fang & Faure (2011), Yin symbolizes feminine energy, whereas Yang symbolizes masculine forces. Li (2021) asserts that the Yin-Yang paradigm, which depicts the dynamic interplay between two opposing sides, includes the presence of contrary components in the same environment.

The Yin-Yang principle may also be used in a variety of ways to aid in the healing of trauma. First of all, it emphasizes how crucial it is to strike a balance between conflicting energies and discover harmony in order to achieve completeness and well-being. This refers to the process of integrating internal conflicting forces, such as unpleasant memories and a desire for development and healing, in the setting of trauma. The Yin-Yang idea also emphasizes the connectivity and interdependence of all things. In the case of trauma, this entails understanding that the trauma is impacted by a wider framework of social and cultural variables in addition to being a purely personal experience. People may recognize the complexity of their trauma and strive towards a greater comprehension of the underlying causes and contributing elements by comprehending the interconnection of all things. The Yin-Yang idea also highlights how everything is dynamic, with opposing forces always in motion and changing. This entails understanding that the road to recovery from trauma is a dynamic and continual one rather than a static or linear one. With this viewpoint, people can accept the ups and downs of the healing process and understand that obstacles and setbacks are a normal part of it. The Yin-Yang idea, in general, provides a potent metaphor for the process of recovering from trauma by stressing the significance of striking a balance and harmony between opposing forces, acknowledging the interconnection of all things, and accepting the dynamic character of the healing path. These issues are frequently explored in Tan Twan Eng's literature, and his application of the Yin-Yang principles provides a deep and complex viewpoint on the complexity of trauma and recovery.

4. "Working Through" Trauma by Yin-Yang Concept and Narration of Selected Novels

Themes of identity, memory, trauma, and the complexity of cultural and historical backgrounds are frequently explored in Tan Twan Eng's literature. In the Second World War, Philip Hutton, a young man, finds himself torn between his attraction to a troop of Japanese invaders and his family's devotion. His experience is told in the book *The Gift of Rain* which is a moving examination of the complexities of allegiance and identity as well as how historical events may affect a person's life. In *The Garden of Evening Mists*, Yun Ling Teoh, a young lady, takes refuge in a Japanese garden as she struggles to cope with the tragedy of her past. The book offers a compelling examination of memory, trauma, and the therapeutic effects of nature. These books provide a compelling look into the history and complexity of the region and are strongly anchored in the landscapes and cultures of Malaysia. The writings frequently use aspects of Chinese calligraphy, Tang Dynasty poetry, Buddhist, and Taoist philosophy, demonstrating local spiritual and cultural traditions.

Tan Twan Eng frequently writes about the subject of recovering from trauma, and he employs the Yin-Yang principles to provide understanding of this procedure. For instance, Philip, the main character in *The Gift of Rain*, is forced to face the pain from his past and the shame he feels about his part in it. He learns to establish equilibrium and acceptance in the face of these challenging feelings through his connection with his mentor, Endo-san, and to integrate the competing forces inside himself in order to feel whole and at peace. Similar to this, Yun Ling, the main character in *The Garden of Evening Mists*, must accept the pain of her experiences during the Japanese occupation of Malaya. She has the ability to discover harmony and balance between the conflicting forces of beauty and cruelty via her labour in the Japanese garden, and she learns to use this harmony as a way of healing and change.

These texts utilize experiential mode which represents the past as lived-through experience (Heinen & Sommer, 2009). The Experimental mode acting as narrative of face-to-face communication, allows the victims to reorganize the traumatic events in an assimilated way in consciousness and the listener to be "a participate and co-owner of the traumatic event" (Laub, 1995). To be "addressable other" (Laub, 1995) is a way of working through trauma, because the listener come to "partially experience the trauma himself" (Laub, 1995) through his listening. According to LaCapra, healing after trauma may not be fully complete; it has only been accomplished to a relatively limited degree, similar to the essential idea of Yin-Yang, continually changing and interacting till attain a balanced state.

Trauma brings out in a striking way the importance of affect and its impact on memory, pointing both to traumatic memory in the form of post-traumatic effects (repetition compulsions, startle reactions, overreactions, severe sleep disorders, including recurrent nightmares, and so forth) and to the challenge to work through them in a viable but perhaps never totally successful fashion. (LaCapra, 2016)

Similar to how Yun Ling reveals her secrets to Aritomo and Frederick and writes down her past memories, Philip tells his traumatized life story to a Japanese visitor named Michiko. With her support and participation, Philip is able to reveal the nearly half-century hidden secrets and release dissociative negative emotions like alienation, hatred, sorrow, and numbness. Reading the narratives as well as

listening to them might cause the contagion or transfer of trauma.

4.1 Philip's Healing of Trauma Through Monologue Trauma Narrative

Philip, the main character, is cured through a monologue trauma narrative. In this context, monologue refers to a direct or indirect listener. As a result, the meaning is more exactly dialogic. The victim's "telling" role is highlighted in this monologue.

Philip's destiny is marked by a magic. He was given to the world as a gift of rain and was born on a day when it rained. It was a coincidence that it rained every time something significant occurred. Philip had endured years of living with guilt. Through his monologue trauma narratives to a Japanese woman named Michiko Murakami, who paid him a delicate rainy nighttime visit, he was able to heal from his trauma. "On this one evening the rain had momentarily lessened to an almost undetectable mist, as though preparing for her arrival" (Tan, 2007). She identified herself as Endo-san's previous girlfriend from their early years in Japan. Philip first refused to discuss Endo-san. She could relate to him since she had also gone through the agony of losing someone special. After 55 years of marriage, her spouse passed away. Likewise, every member of Philip's family passed away.

Philip always harbored the guilt that he was the one who had brought ruin upon the entire family. As a result, he kept to himself and was unwilling to let anybody disturb the meticulously planned out framework of his existence. To be able to hear and smell the rooms as if they were fifty years ago, Philip preserved them in their original condition. The following is a summary of Philip's life as told in his monologues.

Memories—they are all the aged have. The young have hopes and dreams, while the old hold the remains of them in their hands and wonder what has happened to their lives. I looked back hard on my life that night, from the moments of my reckless youth, through the painful and tragic years of war, to the solitary decades after. (Tan, 2007)

In the days that followed, Philip gradually allowed himself to remember each significant time in his life that included his family and friends. After meeting Michiko, who had previously met Hayato Endo-san, sentimental sentiments were stirred, but Philip made an effort to suppress them. Narrating is a really severe and difficult task. His alteration was noted even by his secretary. Before he faced Michiko, he was reluctant and felt pressure to narrate the past memories. Therefore, he went to the St. George's Church first. For a while, he was peace, but he had to open his eyes to live at present. Philip experienced greater comfort during their second conversation, as if they had been friends their entire lives. Michiko enquired into Philip and Endo-san's lives.

Fifty years I had wanted to tell my tale, as long as the time Endo-san's letter took to reach Michiko. Still, I hesitated like a penitent sinner facing my confessor, unsure if I wanted another person to know my many shames, my failures, my unforgivable sins. (Tan, 2007)

The letter that Endo-san sent to Michiko was folded, just like Philip's life. His life was chronicled from his mother's death when he was a youngster to working for a Japanese company as an adult to living alone in his latter years. There were difficulties at every level. When he was 7 years old, his mother passed away. Except for a few pictures that were in the home, he had only hazy memories of her. The letter that Endo-san sent to Michiko was folded, just like Philip's life. His life was chronicled from his mother's death when he was a youngster to working for a Japanese company as an adult to living alone in his latter years. There were difficulties at every level. When he was 7 years old, his mother passed away. Except for a few pictures that were in the home, he had only hazy memories of her.

Childhood traumas were lessened by Philip's temporary peaceful connections with his father and other family members. More than a week after Michiko had visited him, they had established an unspoken rhythm, "with me telling her more and more of my history every night after our meal had been consumed" (Tan, 2007). By sharing mine, Philip felt that his narration "could distract her from her own pain" (Tan, 2007). The contacts with Michiko weren't as challenging as he had initially believed. He admitted to Michiko that he was responsible for countless deaths. Hatred, guilt, grief, helplessness, and despair are all there in the words which are also numbing. Because "they would never be sufficient to extinguish the pain of his loss" (Tan, 2007), he detested hearing "I'm so sorry" (Tan, 2007). For many years, Philip had struggled with the unpleasant feelings brought on by numerous experiences. Every member of his family (brothers, sister, parents, aunt, grandfather) as well as several friends were lost. He had to face the images of Japanese killings of Malaysians.

I never genuinely decided to keep my involvement in the Japanese Occupation a secret. My memories had naturally stagnated, and I had been reluctant to talk about them. This had happened over the years as a result of a mixture of remorse, loss, feeling of failure, and the conviction that no one would ever truly comprehend what I had gone through. (Tan, 2007)

Philip was strengthened by Michiko's compassion, consolation, and encouragement; as a result, Philip took care of her this time rather than fleeing and hiding. Philip was reminded of the day his mother was in bed because of Michiko's sickness. The atomic bomb in Japan claimed the lives of Michiko's whole family as well; this shared trauma brought them together and improved their understanding of one another. Philip examined the purpose of narrative carefully. What does it mean to think back on those hurtful and regretful days?

It was painful, yes, but in recalling the days of my childhood for her and the events that had compelled me to take the steps from boy to man, I felt myself throwing off the ballast of age, rising and breaking free from the lashings of time, so that I could look down, look back, and marvel at the path my life had taken. (Tan, 2007)

The right approach to recall events is through narration, after which they should be fully forgotten—this includes the effects of the traumas. According to Philip, "by telling Michiko about Endo-san, I could let the echoes in my mind expand beyond the boundaries of my

memory, so that their strength would finally weaken and fade forever into silence” (Tan, 2007).

When Philip finally attained Nirvana, “a state of enlightenment” (Tan, 2007), he was liberated from misery, time, and desire. Through narrative and meditation, Philip was brought back to life. Philip was shown the core of recollection through Michiko’s comments. “Having memories, whether happy or sad, is a blessing because it demonstrates that we have lived our lives without hesitation.” (Tan, 2007) The phrases in the literature, “movement in stillness, and stillness in movement.....the hidden mixture of regret, sorrow, and hope” (Tan, 2007), describe how Yin and Yang coexist as antithetical things with differing properties. Similar to this, Philip was taught by Endo-san to balance opposites in life. “It was a procedure that gave me the chance to reconcile the opposing aspects of my life and achieve harmony.” (Tan, 2007)

The whole text’s conclusion and trauma recovery may be summed up by the Taoist philosophy held by Philip’s grandpa, which is “the ability to bring all of life’s disparate elements into a cohesive whole” (Tan, 2007). “The heart will always remember; the intellect forgets. And what is the memory of the heart except love?” (Tan, 2007) “I knew that everyone had found serenity at last. Now, nothing could harm us.” (Tan, 2007) Philip began to feel lighter as he stood up, and the calmness never left him again.

4.2 Yun Ling’s Healing of Trauma Through Monologue Trauma Narrative

The process through which Yun Ling recovers from traumas depends on her ability to remember the past and then let it go. In fact, the preamble to the chosen work by author Tan Twan Eng discusses their interactions right away. Menemosyne, a goddess of memory, is there, but Forgetting is not. However, there should be given that they are twin sisters and twin forces who stand on opposite sides of us and compete until death for control over who we are and what we do. Thirty-six years after Yun Hong first told her the tale of the Japanese Emperor’s gardener, Yun Ling narrated or remembered what had transpired. The voices of Aritomo provided the opening narration. “Memories I had locked away have begun to break free, like shards of ice fracturing off an arctic shelf. In sleep, these broken floes drift towards the morning light of remembrance.” (Tan, 2012)

Her writing down the things she didn’t want to forget was advised by his friend Frederik. Even if it will offer a chance, Yun Ling discovered it to be pointless. The key issue is not forgetting, but rather how to convey the entire narrative, how to connect everything, and how to fully comprehend them. “Sitting at Aritomo’s desk, I realize that there are fragments of my life that I do not want to lose, if only because I still have not found the knot to tie them up.” (Tan, 2012)

Yun Ling shared with Magnus her post-war employment experiences. She uses it to organize and remember herself. She started off as an assistant researcher, which is akin to a clerk at the Kuala Lumpur War Crimes Tribunal. She became aware, thanks to her employment, that so many people had been killed or injured throughout the war that there had been a staffing deficit when the Japanese surrendered.

Recording the testimonies of the victims of the Imperial Japanese Army affected me more badly than I had anticipated, however. Watching the victims break down as they related the brutalities they had endured, I was made aware that I had get to recover from my own experience. (Tan, 2012)

Yun Ling understood that trying to execute war criminals or exact revenge on them as a judge would not be able to lessen the depth of hatred. She yearned to escape the agonizing confines of her recollections and prior experiences. Magnus escorted her to the outside room for that reason. A pair of marble statues stood facing each other in the middle of a well-kept grass on their own plinths. The goddess of memory, Mnemosyne, is represented by the person on the right, according to Magnus. The goddess of forgetting, her identical twin sister, is the other lady.

“Mnemosyne’s features were defined, her nose and cheekbones prominent, her lips full. Her sister’s face looked almost blurred; even the creases of her robe were not as clearly delineated as Mnemosyne’s.” (Tan, 2012) Even the name of the goddess of forgetting was unknown. It’s only her existence that people have forgotten. Yun Ling frequently had flashbacks to her time in the detention camp. The odours of the adjacent forest, the moon, the bats, and many other things that emerged in the camp would constantly bring back bad memories. She continued to follow the camp programme even after more than five years. Every morning, she had been woken early. Even after being imprisoned for so many years, there were times when it was hard for her to accept that the war was ended and that she had survived. (Tan, 2012) These recollections, though, are jumbled. She made an effort to collect all of the memory fragments so they might be put back together.

Yun Ling resembles the lost souls. Her thoughts vacillated between the past and the present. Keeping the balance between remembering and forgetting is one method to calm her mind. Yun Ling would be brought to life in concentration camp as a result of Aritomo’s commands, bowing to her, and the sitting motion. “Aritomo bowed to me but I did not return it: it brought back too many memories of the times when I had been forced to do it, how I was slapped when I did not bow quickly or low enough.” (Tan, 2012) Yun Ling focused on Aritomo and her sister when speaking with Magnus and Frederik. She was furious and ashamed, knowing that if her father brought the entire family to Magnus’ mountains, Yun Hong would still be alive and her mother would not be lost within her head. She feared every dawn as a prisoner since it meant another day of cruelties that she couldn’t foresee. When she was free, she was terrified to fall asleep because she worried that she might have nightmares. She studied various Buddhist texts for that purpose. “I put the book down and close my eyes. Emptiness: it appealed to me, the possibility of riding myself of everything I had seen and heard and lived through.” (Tan, 2012)

How can you reach true forgetfulness and emptiness? Two teardrops representing the positive and negative aspects of a Taoist sign for harmony known as the “yin-yang symbols” were referenced by Yun Ling (Tan, 2012). Yun Ling made an effort to capture the stories

associated with her prior recollections in writing. She frequently had to pause before continuing. Narrating is a demanding and arduous procedure. Many details, especially her sister, have been muddled through the narratives of the passage. She had spent the most of her life attempting to forget, but now she was narrating because she needed to recall. She can ultimately “work through” of traumas through the process of rearrangement of memories. Natural forgetfulness could erase certain memories of places and individuals, but it was more difficult to completely erase the sense of anger and loathing.

Memory is like patches of sunlight in an overcast valley, shifting with the movement of the clouds. Now and then the light will fall on a particular point in time, illuminating it for a moment before the wind seals up the gap, and the world is in shadows again. (Tan, 2012)

After Anitomo went lost in the mountains, and Yun Hong was buried at a mysterious location in the bush, Yun Ling has experienced years of feeling abandoned. The only way to get over the hurt is to avoid anything that has to do with them. But she was tormented by old recollections. She was able to completely let go of her bad feelings through narration. Finally, Yun Ling’s life became calm and tranquil. She would likely recall memories, but she might not be afraid of them. “Something is stirring in my memory, and I remain completely still in my chair, so whatever it is that is emerging from hiding will not be frightened off. It takes shape slowly, like clouds forming.” (Tan, 2012) According to her sister’s wishes and expectations, Yun Ling set up a garden. She set up a plaque beside the Pavilion of Heaven that detailed Yun Hong’s life as she got ready to welcome visitors to the park. The garden would serve as a tangible reminder of the things Aritomo has created. The turbulent heart of Yun Ling will also become calm. They were the recollections of the past that became moonlight to light her path.

4.3 Harmony of Balance to Heal Traumas

The link of remembering and forgetting is entwined with that of Peace (Healing) and Pain (Trauma). “Trauma can never be ‘healed’ in the sense of a return to how things were before a catastrophe took place, or before one witnessed a catastrophe; but if the wound of trauma remains open, its pain may be worked through in the process of its being ‘translated’ via art.” (Kaplan, 2005) According to Dori Laub, listeners are crucial to the process of witness and healing because they not only help the victims to comprehend their traumas but also provide them the chance to take part in the events (1995). Studies recently have focused on the dialogic aspect of traumatic tales. Traumatic experiences cause sufferers great physical and psychological suffering, leading them to try to flee from them. However, the memories of the trauma repeatedly resurface, torturing the victim each time. It would rather depress and horrify the sufferer than aid in the healing process for this unassimilated, fixed, fractured memory. The therapy of remembering via appropriate telling and reliving the events in the process of understanding can help one achieve lasting peace of mind. In order to grasp the circumstances and let go of the victims’ negative dissociation, dialogue between victims and audiences (including fictitious readers) may be beneficial. They interact with one another and have an influence on one another rather than being just binary opposites. Learning to keep a balance is the ultimate objective of surviving terrible situations. Flashbacks of traumatic memories would result from the numbing process or amnesia of the events; the victims would experience agony each time they were reminded of their traumas due to their inability to forget their unabsorbable anguish. To attempt to recall accurately horrific experiences is to utterly forget such experiences. In contrast to unconscious flashbacks, this memory involves a deliberate organization of the events.

Tan Twan Eng points out how his works strike a balance between amnesia and memory. The goddess of memory and forgetting is described by Tan Twan Eng as demonstrating the link between “Yin-Yang symbols” (2012), “the Taoist symbol of harmony... the two teardrops of its positive and negative elements forming a perfect circle” (2012). It is shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

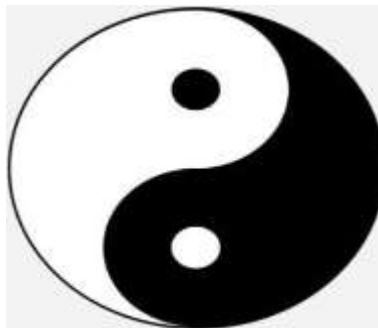


Figure 1. The Yin-Yang model (Source: Li, 2011)

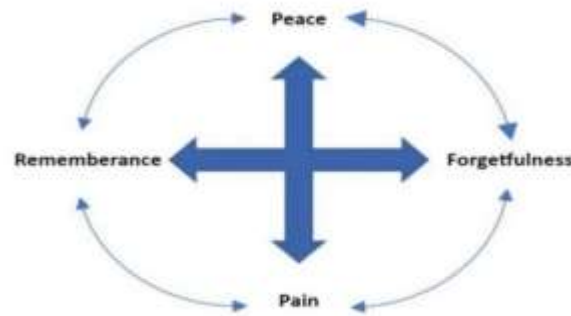


Figure 2. Yin-Yang balance: balance of remembrance & forgetfulness / Pain & Peace

5. Conclusion

Tan Twan Eng's works display his interest in Chinese philosophy and culture. Drawing on the cultural and historical backdrop of his home Malaysia, Tan frequently examines issues like as identity, memory, and the interaction between people and their surroundings. Tan Twan Eng's writing frequently shows his interest in the arts, literature, and philosophy of Southeast Asia, and his works show a profound understanding for the diversity and depth of those cultures. Tan Twan Eng shows a great regard for the Taoist tradition's knowledge and insights throughout his writing, and he employs its teachings to delve into the complexity of human experience and the connection between people and their surroundings. By referencing this antiquated idea, he is able to give his writing a timeless, universal quality that appeals to readers of all ages and cultural backgrounds. Tan Twan Eng's approach to the Yin-Yang idea is marked by a profound understanding of the interdependence of all things and the necessity to establish balance and harmony in the face of conflicting forces. His investigation of the Yin-Yang idea has helped to a deeper understanding of the complexity and nuanced aspects of human experience.

Finally, Tan Twan Eng's examination of the subject of recovering from trauma demonstrates his profound comprehension of the intricacies of the human experience from traumatic memory to narrative memory (Whitehead, 2014), and his application of the Yin-Yang principles provides a potent metaphor for the process of achieving harmony and balance in the face of difficulties. His method of trauma healing places a strong emphasis on the significance of confronting the past in a way that allows for the integration and transformation of traumatic events while also acknowledging the wider social and cultural settings of trauma.

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