

ECHOES ACROSS THE GENERATIONS: INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF TRAUMA IN KHALED HOSSEINI'S *AND THE MOUNTAINS ECHOED*: A FANONIAN READING

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Abstract

This article examines Khaled Hosseini's And the Mountains Echoed (2013) as a meticulously constructed literary investigation of intergenerational trauma in postcolonial fiction. Drawing on Frantz Fanon's theorisation of collective and inherited psychic injury in The Wretched of the Earth (1961) and Black Skin, White Masks (1952), and supplementing Fanon with the trauma theory of Cathy Caruth (1996), Dominick LaCapra (2001), and Marianne Hirsch (2012), this article identifies five distinct mechanisms by which trauma propagates across generations in Hosseini's novel: the mythic-narrative mechanism (the Baba Ayub folktale and its re-enactment); the somatic mechanism (the inscription of colonial labour and grief on Saboor's body, read by Abdullah); the material mechanism (the tin feather box preserved across six decades); the onomastic mechanism (the naming of Abdullah's daughter after his lost sister); and the diagnostic mechanism (Abdullah's dementia as the catastrophic interruption of transmission at the moment of its possible completion). The analysis argues that Hosseini's most original contribution to postcolonial trauma literature lies in his insistence on a third possibility beyond successful transmission or complete severance, namely incomplete transmission, whereby subsequent generations inherit the shape of an absence without the resources to resolve it. Read through Fanon's framework of decolonisation as perpetual, unfinished labour, the novel emerges as a sustained demonstration of why, in the conditions of colonial dispossession, intergenerational trauma is never simply transmitted or simply overcome, but must be consciously taken up by each succeeding generation.

Keywords: Intergenerational Trauma; Postmemory; Postcolonial Inheritance; Afghan Diaspora; Trauma Theory; Somatic Transmission; Colonial Psychic Injury

1. Introduction

The opening pages of Khaled Hosseini's *And the Mountains Echoed* (2013) contain a folktale. A father, Saboor, tells his children (Abdullah and three-year-old Pari) the story of Baba Ayub, a man in a drought-stricken village called Maidan Sabz, who is compelled by a predatory creature, a *div*, to surrender one of his children. Baba Ayub chooses, suffers, and is eventually offered the chance to see the surrendered child flourishing in the creature's paradise: alive, well-fed, but irreversibly no longer his. The creature offers a magical draught of forgetting. Baba Ayub drinks it, returns to his village, and lives out his days. In old age, he is haunted by an inexplicable bell that returns at intervals, without source in the physical world, until he dies.

By the end of the novel's second chapter, the folktale has been revealed as a prophecy enacted in reverse. Saboor, having told the story, takes Pari to Kabul and sells her to the wealthy, childless Wahdatis. He returns to Abdullah and to the village, choosing the silence that is his potion of forgetting. The story he offered his children as entertainment was the story he was about to perform upon them.

This article argues that the folktale and its structural mirroring organise the thematic and formal concern of the novel as a whole: the propagation of trauma not merely within a single generation but downward, laterally, and forward in time, in ways that the originating generation cannot fully anticipate or control. Hosseini's novel is among the most precisely created literary inquiries of intergenerational trauma in present-day postcolonial literature. Its concern is not primarily with whether children suffer for what was done to their parents, but with the specific mechanisms by which that suffering travels, the carriers it requires, the registers in which it succeeds, and the conditions under which it fails.

The framework of interpretation used in this article is largely a Fanonian one. The systemic and colonial violence that Frantz Fanon describes in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) leaves a psychic wound that is greater than the physical wound suffered by a particular group and that may be passed down from one generation to the next through cultural transmission, family structure, and the inherited symbolic order. Three additional theoretical resources are added to this account: Cathy Caruth's (1996) theorisation of trauma as structurally belated, thus constitutively subject to its return; Dominick LaCapra's (2001) distinction between “acting out” (the compulsive symptomatic repetition of unassimilated trauma) and “working through” (the slow integration of trauma into a livable narrative); and Marianne Hirsch's (2012) concept of “postmemory,” the relationship of subsequent generations to memories they did not experience, but which nevertheless form their inner worlds.

The central argument of this article is that *And the Mountains Echoed* anatomises five distinct mechanisms of intergenerational transmission, each with its own logic and its own limitations: (1) the mythic-narrative mechanism, by which a story told to children encodes the trauma the storyteller is about to enact; (2) the somatic mechanism, by which a body marked by colonial labour communicates that history to the next generation below the threshold of verbal articulation; (3) the material mechanism, by which an object preserved across decades becomes the inherited form of an absence; (4) the onomastic mechanism, by which a name itself becomes the daily carrier of an unresolved relation; and (5) the diagnostic mechanism, by which the loss of the transmitting subject through dementia produces a particular kind of inheritance in which the receiving generation must reconstruct what the transmitter can no longer pass on.

2. Theoretical Framework

The use of phrase “colonial violence is not only physical” is Fanon's first observation about the collective trauma of which he speaks: Fanon writes, in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), about how the colonial system in the colonised subject engenders a condition of devaluation, not just in dramatic circumstances, but in the daily life of the culture and family, a structural condition of devaluation, Fanon calls it, “the epidermalization” of inferiority. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Fanon extends this analysis into the case of the second generation, as they come into the world with the symbolic order already devalued by the first. Children of the colonised do not have to be the victims of violence personally for their violence to be a part of them, as children are bearers of violence. Violence is already inscribed into the emotional form of family life: in a father's silence, a mother's depression, a sibling's absence, in the way the child's selfhood is generated.

Fanon identified many mechanisms of this transmission. First, the internalisation of inferiority is passed on through the parents' bodies, their habitual self-suppressions, and the small humiliations absorbed without protest. Second, the colonised child is formed within the symbolic order of the coloniser, including the coloniser's language and normative categories, without necessarily being aware of this formation. Third, cultural narratives such as folktales, family stories, and religious teachings carry the prior generation's experience forward to the next in encoded forms. Fourth, and most relevant to the present analysis, trauma reshapes the emotional structure of family life in ways that the next generation inhabits as the very conditions of its own existence. These four mechanisms together constitute what Fanon understands as the collective dimension of colonial trauma: an injury that cannot be localised in any individual psyche because it is distributed across the entire social formation that colonialism produces.

Cathy Caruth's (1996) account of trauma's structural belatedness provides the first supplement to the Fanonian framework. Caruth argues that trauma is not locatable in the

original violent event but in the event's very failure to be assimilated at the moment of its occurrence: trauma is "not the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available to us, but of a wound that cries out precisely, we might say, because it cannot know itself" (Caruth, 1996, p. 4). That is why trauma is recurrent in symptoms, recurrent in dreams, repeated in compulsions and passed on over generations. If it had not been fully assimilated, it can be metabolised or stored, but not so, and it returns to them in altered form, in the form that it assumes as it emerges in the psychic lives of those who did not live through it.

The second supplement is provided by Dominick LaCapra (2001), who distinguishes between "acting out" and "working through. For LaCapra, acting out is the repetition of the trauma in behaviours, relations and compulsions that are symptomatic but lack assimilation. The laborious task of weaving trauma into a loose thread that one can tie up and catalysing a narrative without letting it suck one in is working through. Working through doesn't equate with "mastering" or "resolving" in any resolution, says LaCapra, but rather learning to live with the wound in a way that enables life to go on. The difference has an analytical value for the exploration of Hosseini's characters, some of whom are definitely acting out and others who, if at all, are only beginning to work through. The body-behavioural aspects of transmission, left unexplicit by LaCapra, can be further explored with Gabor Maté's (2019) complementary research on how trauma is transmitted to the next generation through the body and behaviour.

The third strand is provided by the concept of postmemory by Marianne Hirsch (2012). Hirsch defines postmemory as "the relationship that the generation after bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before, to experiences they 'remember' only by means of the stories, images, and behaviours among which they grew up" (p. 5). The term was developed to describe the children of Holocaust survivors, but its application extends to other contexts of transgenerational trauma. Postmemory is not memory in any direct sense; it is the relation of subsequent generations to an experience that constitutes them but that they did not live. Hirsch emphasises the role of material and narrative mediators such as photographs, objects, and family stories in transmitting what cannot be directly passed on through lived experience.

Together, these four theoretical resources constitute the interpretive apparatus this article brings to Hosseini's novel. Fanon provides the structural-political account of why intergenerational transmission occurs at all in conditions of colonial dispossession. Caruth provides the psychic mechanism that makes transmission possible, namely the unintelligibility of the original wound. LaCapra provides the vocabulary for evaluating how different characters respond to what they have inherited. Hirsch provides the framework for understanding the specific role of material and narrative mediators in the transmission process. The five mechanisms the article identifies are each illuminated by a different combination of these resources.

3. Critical Context

Existing scholarship on Hosseini's fiction has engaged productively with themes of trauma, memory, and historical displacement, but no extended analysis of the specific mechanisms by which trauma is transmitted across generations in *And the Mountains Echoed* has appeared in the critical literature. Schwab (2010) provides the most sustained theoretical treatment of violent histories and transgenerational transmission in postcolonial contexts, arguing that the children of survivors occupy what she calls a "haunted" psychic space constituted by memories they did not live. Schwab's framework is directly applicable to Hosseini's work, and the current research article draws on it to support the Fanonian analysis

where Fanon's focus on the political dimensions of transmission leaves the psychic and relational dimensions underspecified.

A few critics who have focused on Hosseini have referenced the novel's themes regarding intergenerational relationships; however, without a systematic examination. Within the context of Afghanistan's historical traumas and diasporic condition, Mitra (2016) reads the novel as a reflection on nostalgia and loss across generations and the role of postcolonial textuality in representing these. Intergenerational aspects of gender oppression are discussed in relation to patriarchal and colonial frameworks of Hosseini's female characters by Imran and Ismail (2022) without, however, theorising transmission as a specific process. As the scholarship on Afghan-American literature more generally has developed, it has centred on issues of diaspora, memory, and cultural identity in Hosseini's fiction, but without a continuous focus on the mechanisms of intergenerational transmission.

For this analysis, there are some useful benchmarks in the comparative literature on intergenerational trauma in post-colonial fiction. Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) and Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) have been the most extensively theorised literary explorations of inherited colonial trauma, while Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) is a formally distinct, but thematically cognate, investigation of cyclical family trauma in a postcolonial Latin American context. The present article argues that Hosseini's novel is unique among these works because it focuses in a patiently "machine-like" way on the ways in which trauma is passed on – in this case made visible by the Fanonian and trauma-theoretical apparatus – and produces a reading that existing criticism has not produced.

It is not to say that *And the Mountains Echoed* is alone in depicting intergenerational trauma or that Hosseini's depiction is quite realistically sociological in any specific way. It does not argue that the Fanonian framework is a complete account of the meaning of the novel; psychoanalytical, gender-theoretical, and historical frameworks would reveal aspects which the present analysis ignores. This claim is more specific: When the Fanonian and trauma-theoretical framework is applied to the five transmission mechanisms of the novel, a reading is produced that is analytically precise and critically productive and has not yet been offered in the existing literature.

4. Methodology

Intergenerational trauma in postcolonial fiction can offer some useful comparative frameworks for the purposes of this analysis. The article then moves on to a close examination of selected passages, organised under the 5 transmission mechanisms outlined in the introduction. Each analytical section examines one mechanism, explores the textual evidence for that mechanism in detail and then builds the theoretical implications using the Fanonian and trauma-theoretical framework introduced in Section 2. It is productive to connect across mechanisms; the main agreement is that they will be analysed separately, as they are treated in the novel.

The text citations are all from the primary source, Hosseini (2013). Secondary critical and/or theoretical sources are used as needed throughout. Organising by mechanism and not by character or chapter is also methodological because the thesis of the article is that the intergenerational trauma that is explored in *And the Mountains Echoed* is not one that is repeated across settings, but rather is a series of operations with their own logic and consequences. This differentiation is apparent when the analysis is organised by mechanism but hard to see when organised by character, or by the sequence of a story.

5. Analysis

5.1 The Mythic-Narrative Mechanism

The first transmission mechanism is mythic-narrative, which involves the encoding of trauma into the stories that are passed down to subsequent generations by a storyteller who may not have intended or controlled. The novel's best example is the Baba Ayub folktale. On the eve of Pāri being given to the Wahdatis, it is told to Abdullah and Pāri. Saboor tells it as a bedtime tale, a legacy of the Persian culture. Using the hindsight of the novel's later chapters, the reader realises that the narrative is threefold: confession, rehearsal, and warning, one that Saboor can't give as explicitly as he can later in the novel because he can't fully explain, even to himself, what he is about to do.

The structure of the story is clear and effective. A father (under irresistible external pressure) gives up one of his children. The rest of the family is saved by the surrender. The surrendered child is absorbed into a world of comfort and care; she grows up and thrives, but she's not the same child anymore – not the child that was surrendered – and the father is no longer able to reach her. The father receives the gift of forgetting and takes it. This is a forgetting which lasts throughout most of his life. Then, in his old age, he is haunted by an inexplicable bell that looms and won't go away, crying out for what the forgetting was meant to cover up.

The folktale is a short structural narrative of the condition of the colonised subject, which is summarised in its Fanonian structure. The colonial-economic order is the irrefutable pressure that explains why surrendering children is a means of family survival. The coloniser's world, the place of comfort and care, is where the surrendered child is absorbed, at the expense of cultural and relational identity. The gift of forgetting is the ideology of the cultural narratives, religious consolations and enforced silence that enable the colonised parent to remain in operation within the colonial order. The bell that comes back with old age is the reappearance of that which that apparatus may have quelled, but not snuffed out. In Fanonian terms, the folktale is a structural narrative of the incomplete metabolism of the trauma of the colonised, and the return of its effects in a transformed state within the colonised family.

Saboor's telling this story to his children on the night before enacting it opens up several possible interpretations. One interpretation of this is that Saboor is training his children, teaching them what he will soon do in a way that will be deciphered only when he is gone. The second is because Saboor is getting ready, practising the ethics he will need to perform the act without breaking down totally. The third reading, the Fanonian-Caruthian reading, is that the story, quite simply, is not a story that is strategically selected but rather the form cultural that emerges when it is needed most, when it suits it best; Saboor is not just saying the story, he is saying it to himself.

The relevance to this account of trauma's "belatedness" by Caruth (1996) is immediately apparent. The Baba Ayub story emerges from Saboor's mouth because a culturally traumatic memory emerges at the time the content of that memory is most pressing to come to the forefront of Saboor's consciousness. The story is the prior generations' unworked-through experience returning through his speech. It is not, in any simple sense, Saboor's story; it is a story being told through him by the long history of Afghan families who have surrendered children for economic survival, who have drunk the potion of forgetting, and who have been haunted in old age by what the forgetting was meant to bury. As Schwab (2010) observes in her analysis of violent histories and transgenerational transmission, the stories through which traumatised communities make sense of their experience carry that experience encoded within them, so that each new telling is simultaneously a transmission and a return.

The mythic-narrative transmission extends across three generations. Abdullah is old enough to remember the folktale; he will spend his life trying to understand why it was told to him on that night. When, decades later, Pari II receives Nabi's confessional letter through Markos, the folktale Saboor told becomes one of the keys through which she is able to interpret

what she is reading. The story has craftily transmitted the trauma across three generations of characters, despite the fact that they have repeatedly tried to bury it. What is distinctly Fanonian about this mechanism is the way in which it demonstrates trauma operational through cultural forms that the carrier does not author: Saboor did not choose to be visited by the Baba Ayub story; it, nonetheless, visits him. The cultural form does its transmissive work whether or not the speaker is aware that it is happening.

5.2 The Somatic Mechanism

The second mode of transmission is somatic, that is, it is passed on, universally, through the body of the previous generation to the next. The point of the novel is a bit made clear by Abdullah's conception of his father. Hosseini is successful in depicting Abdullah's gaze on Saboor: Abdullah imagines that his father had been a boy, happy and carefree; he sees only a man whose hands have been scarred and whose face has been stitched with the deep lines of weariness, a man who could have been born with a shovel in his hand and mud under his nails (Hosseini, 2013, p. 15). The passage is polyvocal. In terms of characterisation, it lays the groundwork for Saboor as a labourer. On the social level of commentary, it demonstrates the loss of imagination when people grow poor. At the level this article is concerned with, it presents a moment of intergenerational reading: Abdullah looks at his father's body and reads it as a text whose meaning is the impossibility of a different life.

Fanon's account of how colonial conditions inscribe themselves on the body of the colonised subject is precisely relevant here. The economic order under which Saboor has laboured, as did his father and his father's father, has produced a body that is itself a transmission medium. Abdullah does not need to be told that his father has suffered; he reads the suffering in the hands and the face. What he reads is not only his father's individual experience but the cumulative experience of generations of men broken by the same structural conditions. Saboor's body is, in this sense, a collective body, and Abdullah's reading of it is a reading of collective trauma.

The somatic transmission is consolidated in the scene of the slap. In the desert, when Abdullah refuses to be taken in the wagon and demands to walk with Pari, Saboor strikes him. The novel presents the slap as an explosion of paternal frustration; read through Fanon, it is the moment at which Saboor's somatic inheritance, a body that has internalised generations of poverty, suppressed grief, and patriarchal authority, is discharged into Abdullah's body. Abdullah never cries. He gets up, tightens his face and then walks away. He has been given a lesson beyond the physical: he's been taught to hold his pain, to wait and suffer without words, to bear what cannot be said. The body is where language leaves behind what it cannot say, and the body is where consciousness fails to speak what it has to say (Maté, 2019).

The somatic mechanism differs from the mythic-narrative mechanism in that it operates in a register. Trauma can be passed down in the body, below the level of language, where the folktale is encoding trauma, and where it can, in principle, be consciously decoded. Abdullah can't express what his father's body has spoken to him; he can only bear it. LaCapra's (2001) separation of "acting out" from "working through" is immediately relevant; throughout the novel, Abdullah acts out the transmission of his father's body, in his unprocessed grieving over Pari, in his obsessive holding on to the feather box, and in his eventual emotional detachment from his American daughter. He does not start to deal with his inheritance until perhaps the end of his conscious life.

5.3 The Material Mechanism

The third way in which transmission happens is material: the preservation of an object across decades, whose meaning is the inherited form of an absence that has to be read by the next generation. The main story is the collecting of feathers by young Pari from a peacock, a rooster, a sparrow and anything else she can find, under her pillow in Shadbagh. Abdullah is

the protector of the box's secret, and he is also an occasional contributor to the box, placing his box money for her to buy her a peacock feather; selling his shoes to get her a peacock feather is both a gesture of love and a form of deposit she will never collect directly. The box is left behind with Abdullah when Pari is brought to Kabul. His storehouse of remembrance keeps it for a hundred years.

This goes directly to Hirsch's (2012) notion of postmemory. The material objects that remain behind the scenes in the wake of displacement, like photographs, clothing, household items and letters, in Hirsch's formulation, serve as "mediators" through which postmemory can be passed down; they carry the affective weight of the original experience that can be physically held by the second generation, even when the original experience itself is not available to them. The feather box is just such an object. Growing up in a family where her father's experience with a box of feathers creates the emotional climate of their home, Pari II finds herself the emotional centre of the family. However, over time, this is no longer necessary since she has been watching the box and the father's use of it all her life.

What Pari II receives through the box is not the trauma of Pari I's surrender as a lived experience. She is, after all, three generations removed from the original event. What she receives is the shape of the trauma: the knowledge that her father grieves a sister he lost, a loss whose dimensions she cannot reconstruct but whose contours she has been mapping since childhood. This is precisely Hirsch's account of postmemory, a relation to an absence that constitutes the receiving generation's inner world without being directly available to them as memory.

The Fanonian dimension of the material mechanism lies in what Fanon's broader theoretical work suggests about the role of material culture in the preservation and transmission of colonial injury. Objects of pre-displacement culture preserved across the cut of displacement carry within them both the original relation they were made to commemorate and the loss that their preservation registers. The feather box is such an object: it holds simultaneously the sibling bond between Abdullah and Pari I and the surrender that severed that bond. When Pari II inherits the box, he inherits the bond and the loss as well, first emotionally and then physically. They are inextricably linked, and the box is not just an heirloom; it is a transmissive instrument.

The material mechanism differs from the mythic-narrative and somatic mechanisms in another key point: It is the mechanism which allows for the most conscious intervention. Saboor did not choose to pass on his somatic inheritance to Abdullah, and Abdullah did not choose to get it. The story of Baba Ayub was not intentionally passed on from generation to generation. Abdullah, however, keeps the box on purpose, for sixty years, knowing exactly what is therein, and why he is keeping it. His failure to engage the box's contents and to make them a part of a habitable story is the core tragedy of his character and the most obvious example of LaCapra's difference in the novel.

5.4 The Onomastic Mechanism:

The fourth mode of transmission is onomastic: giving a child a name from a loved one who is no longer alive, thus, from birth, putting a relation to an absence in the child. The main example of this in the novel is the naming of its central character's daughter, who was raised in California by her father, after the aunt she never knew, who was the primary referent of her loss. Many cultures and many circumstances of loss have a tradition regarding naming in the name of a lost relative. The novel, therefore, provides the material for analysis, the particular form of the psychic structure into which the particular naming is installed. From infancy on, the name of Pari II is the bearer of the primary referent that is not present. If she is alive, she resides in Paris under a modified name (which is similar but also differs from her name); if she is dead, it is unclear to me if her name is still used, and what its current name would be; and if

she is not alive, then of course she doesn't reside in Paris under a modified name. If she is alive, she lives in Paris under another name (which is similar but also differs from her name); if she is dead, I don't know if her name is used anymore, and if it is, what is it called? And if she is not alive, then, of course, she does not live in Paris under a modified name. The naming of a child as Pari is thus the installation of a relation to a figure that exists on a supposition and an indisputable basis, that is being missed and unmeetable.

Caruth's (1996) discussion on the delayed trauma provides some particularly clear illumination of the onomastic mechanism. The name is meant to deliberately embed the 'return' in the child's name from the start: each time Pari II hears her name, each time she writes it, she is reminded of the loss and the calling in of the aunt, who is not assimilated. The name is not simply a reminder of the loss, but also a reminder of the loss as it happens every day in the life of the named child. In Fanon's terms, the naming is the most formal possible expression of the way in which the colonised family's symbolic order is constituted by what it has lost: the child grows up within a name that marks her as the inheritor of an absence she did not choose.

The onomastic mechanism is distinguished from the others by the particular form of its compulsion. The child has no agency in the matter of her name; the relation it installs is constitutive before she is capable of questioning it. By the time Pari II can ask why she has this name, the name has already shaped who she is. Her eventual decision to inquire into the family history, to find out who the Pari was for whom she is named, is, in LaCapra's (2001) vocabulary, the beginning of her attempt to work through what the naming has bequeathed her. The novel's late chapters, in which she contacts Markos and receives Nabi's confessional letter, mark the point at which Pari II actively begins to take up the postmemorial inheritance her name has been transmitting since her birth.

The transmission, however, remains incomplete. By the time Pari II reaches her aunt in Paris and accompanies her to California to visit Abdullah, Abdullah no longer recognises either of them. The reunion that the name has been promising, the reuniting of the two Pari figures with the brother who has loved them both, cannot be consummated. The name has transmitted the absence; it has not been able to transmit the presence.

5.5 The Diagnostic Mechanism:

The fifth transmission mechanism is, in a structural sense, the failure of all the others. As an old man in California, Abdullah starts to suffer from dementia. When Pari I and Pari II return to him, he cannot recognise his sister. After hundreds of pages of the novel building toward a big reunion, the moment of most mutual unintelligibility comes down to a quiet scene in which Abdullah is kind to the women who come to visit him at his home, but doesn't know any of them.

The dementia faced by Abdullah isn't just a personal tragedy; it's also a structural one, as the transmission is being interrupted just when it could be finished. Abdullah has known the trauma of Pari I's loss all his life: he is the one who still keeps the feather box, he has named his daughter after his sister, and he has carried the grief of Saboor's potion of forgetting. He has been faithful in passing it on from generation to generation over the course of six decades. The act that would have constituted the working-through in LaCapra's terms, the recognition of Pari I when she finally returns, has been foreclosed by the disease.

From the Fanonian perspective, what Abdullah's dementia enacts is the interruption of the decolonising work at the moment of its potential completion. Fanon (1961) insists that decolonisation is not a single decisive act but a prolonged, collective, generational labour. The novel has been building toward a symbolic gesture of decolonisation. This recognition would have sealed the wound, and it is foreclosed at the moment of its occurrence with what Hosseini renders as terrible precision. Schwab's (2010) account of "haunting legacies" is directly

applicable: the haunting does not cease because the carrier loses his ability to articulate it; it simply changes form.

The half-bridge at Avignon, which Pari I sees with Pari II shortly before they travel to California, is the novel's governing emblem for this condition. The bridge is halfway across the river, and it extends its arms out towards the other side, and falls short (Hosseini, 2013, p. 386). The recognition that would have closed the transmission is lacking, and the transmission therefore lives on a life that is not guided by the one who carried it for 60 years.

What follows on once the dementia has passed is Pari II's relationship to the materials her father can no longer read for her, the letter from Markos, and the old aunt who can only partially fill the void. The third generation finds an incomplete archive: objects that are no longer comprehensible to their original carriers, narratives without chief protagonists or key witnesses, and names without original referents. The transmission has accomplished the first part, but it hasn't yet accomplished the second: the resources for working through the trauma. This incompleteness is Hosseini's most original contribution to the literature of postcolonial intergenerational trauma, the article argues.

5.6 A Note on the Diasporic Generation

After a brief note on the second-generation American characters Zabi and Lemar, the sons of Idris and Nahil, respectively, in the novel's Idris chapters, the reader is warned that the two characters will be of secondary importance in this analysis. A brief supplementary note is warranted here on the second-generation American characters Zabi and Lemar, sons of Idris and Nahil, respectively, in the novel's Idris chapters; the two characters will not play a major role in this analysis. The boys themselves have long complained about their Afghan names and are quickly turning into "imperious American children" like those their parents said they would never raise (Hosseini, 2013, p. 129). The event is over, but in the context of this article, it is important analytically.

Pari II is the opposite of a failure of transmission in the sense of Zabi and Lemar. The story of Zabi and Lemar is the story of too little: too little retransmission of Afghan culture from the parents to the children, who are surrounded by the American context. Whereas Zabi and Lemar receive too little, a name weighted with grief, a feather box freighted with six decades of preserved loss, and a father's grief structured around an absence. Both outcomes are forms of intergenerational damage, but they take structurally opposed shapes. The novel's brief but pointed inclusion of Zabi and Lemar suggests that Hosseini is aware of this symmetrical failure as a constitutive feature of the diasporic condition.

The article does not develop this material extensively because the novel itself does not. Zabi and Lemar are sketched rather than rendered. But their presence in the text is a reminder that the mechanisms of intergenerational transmission this article has identified operate, in attenuated or distorted forms, across all the families Hosseini depicts. The question of what gets transmitted across the cut between origin and exile, and what fails to be transmitted, organises the inner lives of every generation the novel portrays.

6. Discussion

The five transmission mechanisms examined in this article operate not in isolation but in combination. All five are engaged, in different registers, in the transmission of the single originating event, the surrender of Pari to Abdullah, and through Abdullah to his daughter. The Baba Ayub story is the mythic-narrative carrier; the slap and the wagon journey are somatic; the feather box is material; the naming of Pari II is onomastic; and the dementia is diagnostic. The article does not suggest that any one mechanism is primary; it is rather a novel way to illustrate that intergenerational trauma can flow through any number of channels at the same

time, each with its own logic, with its own power of transmission, and with its own capacity to fail.

This analysis suggests the following three larger propositions. The novel first makes it clear that intergenerational transmission is not up to the transmitting subject's choice. Saboor decides not to embed his surrender in the Baba Ayub story; it is his cultural form, which comes to him at the most critical moment. Abdullah does not opt for his father's somatic inheritance; it is transmitted by the medium of everyday family life. Even in what seems to be the most conscious transmissions, like the caring of the feather box by Abdullah or the naming of Pari II, they are bespeakings whose meaning is not fully under the control of the transmitter. This is the same as what Fanon describes as a collective colonial trauma, which is not passed down because it is decided to pass it down, but because it is passed down due to the conditions of colonial dispossession.

Secondly, the novel shows that there is no one single mechanism of transmission. Both have a certain "side" of the original trauma, but not the entire trauma. The mythic-narrative mechanism is used to carry the story and lacks the historical background information needed to interpret the narrative. The somatic mechanism transmits the knowledge but not the verbalisation that would make it available for conscious reflection. The object is passed on, but not the relational reality that it was also indexed at one time. Onomastic mechanism: installation of a name but not the person the name represents. In fact, it is the failure of the diagnostic mechanism itself that is the failure of completion, in a way: the carrier is lost at the time it would have been most likely to be present, if it were to be present at all. Only fragments, a small shape or form, only a part of a form, are passed on.

Third, and most importantly, the novel offers as an alternative the idea that the task of the inheriting generation is not to repeat the trauma but to start the labour of working it through. Saboor drinks the potion of forgetting; he cannot metabolise what he has done. Abdullah preserves the feather box for six decades, but cannot integrate the loss it represents into a livable story. It falls to Pari II to begin, tentatively and incompletely and without adequate resources, the work that neither Saboor nor Abdullah could perform. The novel does not depict her completing this work. It depicts her beginning it: contacting Markos, receiving Nabi's letter, travelling to Paris to find her aunt, accompanying that aunt to California to face what remains of Abdullah.

This is the Fanonian argument about decolonisation rendered at the level of the family. Fanon (1961) insists that decolonisation cannot be completed in a single generation; it is a collective, multi-generational, and perpetual labour. *And the Mountains Echoed* is a sustained fictional demonstration of this argument. The work of decolonising, of metabolising the colonial trauma that Saboor's economic subjugation, Pari I's displacement, and Nabi's self-erasure have produced, has not been completed by Saboor, who acts out his trauma in silence; nor by Abdullah, who acts out his trauma in preservation; nor, at the novel's close, by Pari II, who has only just begun to ask the questions that working through would require her to answer. The most accurate description of the novel's texture, from a Fanonian perspective, is its refusal to close the work.

7. Conclusion

And the Mountains Echoed is commonly read as a novel about the effects of historical violence on families and their long struggle toward reconnection and healing. This article has argued that its formal processes, the specific mechanisms through which trauma is transmitted from one generation to the next, are as distinctive and as worthy of analysis as its themes, and

that it is through these mechanisms that the novel makes its most original contribution to postcolonial trauma literature.

Reading the novel through Frantz Fanon, supplemented by Cathy Caruth's account of trauma's belatedness, Dominick LaCapra's distinction between acting out and working through, and Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory, this article has identified and analysed five distinct transmission mechanisms: the mythic-narrative (the Baba Ayub folktale); the somatic (Saboor's body and Abdullah's reading of it); the material (the feather box); the onomastic (the naming of Pari II); and the diagnostic (the failure of recognition produced by Abdullah's dementia). Each mechanism transmits a portion of what was lost when Pari was surrendered to the Wahdatis; none transmits the whole.

What the third generation, Pari II's generation, inherits is therefore an incomplete archive: the shape of an absence whose materials they have received but whose meaning they must reconstruct without the witnesses who could have explained it. This, the article has argued, is Hosseini's most original contribution to the literature on postcolonial intergenerational trauma. The novel refuses both the consolation of successful transmission and the despair of complete severance, insisting instead on a third possibility, incomplete transmission, that more accurately describes the conditions under which the children of the displaced actually live.

In Fanon's terms, the labour that remains is the labour of decolonisation. The novel does not show that labour is completed. It shows it being initiated: in Pari II's late and tentative inquiries into her father's history, in her decision to find her aunt, and in her willingness to receive and read the letter Markos has sent her. The work continues past the last page. The bell that began ringing for Baba Ayub in old age, and that has been ringing throughout the novel in its various transmissive forms (the slap, the feather box, the name, the dementia), continues to ring after the book is closed. Hosseini's gift is to render this situation not sentimentally but with patient accuracy: the intergenerational trauma of colonial dispossession is not a single dramatic wound but a series of distinct mechanisms, each passing on a fragment of that wound, and all of them together constituting the inheritance that each new generation must consciously take up. This article has aimed to make those mechanisms visible. The work of inheriting the inheritance, as in the novel, belongs to those who come after.

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