

Between Remembrance and Pain: Navigating Memory and Trauma in Haifa Zangana's *Dreaming of Baghdad* (2009)

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Abstract

This paper investigates the interrelation between trauma, memory, and the body in Haifa Zangana's *Dreaming of Baghdad* (2009). This paper utilizes Peter A. Levine's trauma theory regarding how such memories are scratched into both the mind and body, and as such, present a fractured past and present self. By taking Levine's notion of embodied trauma and sensory imprints as the driving idea, this paper shows how the protagonist's body retains the experience of political violence, imprisonment and exile through physical sensation triggering involuntary memories of fear, suffering and loss; or that trauma is not only a psychological issue but a multi-faceted embodied experience which confuses within the individual's cognitive and physiological system. This paper traces the far-reaching effects of trauma on identity via an analysis of the protagonist's sensory memories and bodily responses, demonstrating that the renegotiation of trauma can potentially be used to heal. Lastly, this paper contributes to our understanding about trauma being an embodied experience and emphasizes that the mind as well as the body need to be taken into account in the healing process. **Keywords:** Memory, Trauma, Violence, Exile, Suffering

بين التذكر والألم: مجازفة الذاكرة والصدمة في "حلم بغداد" لهيفاء زنكنة (٢٠٠٩)

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المخلص

يتقصى هذا البحث العلاقة المتشابكة بين الصدمة والذاكرة والجسد في رواية هيفاء زنكنة *حلم بغداد* (٢٠٠٩). يعتمد البحث على نظرية بيتر أ. ليفين في الصدمة، والتي تفيد بأن الذكريات تتحفر في كل من العقل والجسد، مما يؤدي إلى تشظي الماضي والحاضر لدى الذات. من خلال تبني مفهوم ليفين عن "الصدمة المتجسدة" و"البصمات الحسية" كفكرة محورية، يُظهر البحث كيف يحتفظ جسد البطلة بتجارب العنف السياسي، والاعتقال، والنفي عبر الأحاسيس الجسدية التي تستحضر ذكريات لا إرادية من الخوف والمعاناة والفقْد؛ أي أن الصدمة ليست مجرد قضية نفسية، بل هي تجربة متجسدة متعددة الأوجه تختلط داخل الجهازين المعرفي والفيسيولوجي للفرد. يتتبع البحث الآثار البعيدة المدى للصدمة على الهوية من خلال تحليل الذكريات الحسية والاستجابات الجسدية للبطلة، موضحاً أن إعادة التفاوض بشأن الصدمة يمكن توظيفها بوصفها سبيلاً إلى الشفاء. وأخيراً، يُسهم هذا البحث في تعزيز فهمنا للصدمة باعتبارها تجربة متجسدة، ويؤكد على ضرورة مراعاة كل من العقل والجسد معاً في عملية الشفاء. **الكلمات المفتاحية:** الذاكرة، الصدمة، العنف، النفي، المعاناة

1.Introduction

The psychological and emotional impact of trauma, exile and political violence are the main subject that Haifa Zangana presented in her novel *Dreaming of Baghdad*. Zangana explores the ways in which the memory of violence and exile becomes part of the fabric of trauma through the lens of an Iraqi woman who has survived imprisonment, torture, and the living death that is Saddam Hussein's oppressive dictatorship. The protagonist's struggle to reconcile her traumatic past with her present life highlights a central theme in trauma theory: a fractured relationship with the body, mind, and memory. Peter A. Levine's theory of trauma and memory (2015) provides an indispensable conceptualization of how trauma is stored, processed, and relived through body and mind (Levine, 2015, p.18) and how they might be applied to understanding what happens in Political violence and war.

In addition, Levine's work highlights trauma memories are not static, and are not simply processed, instead they are fragmented, embodied and deeply imprinted into the nervous system of the body. These come out involuntarily, distracting an individual from present self, getting lost between different versions of past, and present selves. Levine's theory will be applied in this paper to the protagonist's experiences in *Dreaming of Baghdad*, lightening on the role of memory in trauma, the fragmentation of identity, and the embodiment of traumatic memory. This analysis will look at how Zangana reads trauma through how the past is imprinted upon the body and mind of the protagonist and how renegotiation provides the possibility of healing.

2.Theoretical Framework

Foremost used in this paper is Peter A. Levine's trauma theory, which focuses on the body itself as the site of how trauma is experienced. Levine explains that trauma isn't only a psychological event; it is a body-mind experience, where traumatic memories are embedded deeply in our nervous system and body and mind (2015). According to him, trauma is stored in the body as 'memory imprints,' which translation into the involuntary physiological reactions like trembling, heart palpitations or heightened state of vigilance that continue to disturb the life of the person very long after the traumatic event has passed. Central to this view of trauma as an embodied phenomenon is the idea that it's the body, not the mind, which retains the trauma. Traumatic memories, according to Levine, are fragmented, perceived as "inchoate and indigestible sensations" (Levine 2015, p.25), that appear as sounds, smells and physical sensations migrating into the present which disturb and create disorientation and emotional distress.

Haifa Zangana's protagonist in *Dreaming of Baghdad* is a living instance of this theory in her subject to the effects of political violence and exile. Trauma is both a burden of the psychological and a weight of the physical, and sensory imprints—odor, noise, feeling—trigger memories of torture and fear. These sensory imprints go beyond recollection of old events and are, in fact, physiological responses that compel the protagonist to relive the trauma right then and there — as if it were happening again in the present. Pain and suffering are stored in the body of the protagonist, as Levine's trauma theory represents, by means of involuntary physical responses that are repeatedly rehearsed. The result is the embodied trauma that prevents the protagonist from experiencing any sense of continuity between past and present, and keeps her repeatedly in a state of physiological and emotional hyperarousal.

A major part of Levine's theory is 'renegotiation' or gradually processing and integrating traumatic memories by accessing the sensory and emotional elements of the trauma (Levine, 2015, p.57). The protagonist in *Dreaming of Baghdad* renegotiates this by way of a process of reflection, writing, and memory work that enables the protagonist to leap back into the trauma in a way that reorganizes the emotional responses and moves towards healing. According to Levine's theory of renegotiation, trauma recovery is about getting the nervous system back into balance and reestablishing emotional resilience and feeling safe in the present.

In addition, as Levine (2015), VanderKolk (2015) argues trauma is a bodily experience, and unresolved trauma leads to long term dysregulation of the autonomic nervous system (ANS). It is in these states that the trauma survivor is unable to feel emotional regulation and safety, as evidenced by the inability of Zangana's protagonist to cease struggling with fear and sensory imprints, and therefore unable to escape the persistence of trauma in the body.

In this paper, a framework of embodied trauma, as articulated here, supports the interpretation of how Zangana's protagonist's memories of torture, exile, and political violence speak not merely to cognitive but also to embodied memories. This understanding of Levine's renegotiation through the lens of a journey of healing can assist us in recognizing that what the protagonist underwent, the physical and emotional engraving of the trauma, and reintegrating them into a new narrative of survival. This paper applies Levine's theory to *Dreaming of Baghdad* to demonstrate how the body's responses to trauma are the key to understanding the

long-term effects of violence and the process of healing.

3. Trauma and Memory in Iraqi Fiction: A Literary Exploration

Contemporary Iraqi fiction provides profound insights in the psychological and socio political consequences of war through its representation of trauma and memory. Iraq has faced a bevy of conflicts that have caused lasting scars on its population: The Iran–Iraq War, the Gulf War, the 2003 invasion, the explosion of sectarian violence, and ISIS occupation. These themes are explored in Iraqi literature with a fervour that weaves in not only the pain of the past, but also the complexities of living in a post conflict society — a remnant of which carries over to Iraqi authors Dunia Mikhail and Sinan Antoon. This the exploration illustrates trauma to be fluid, multifaceted and inextricably intertwined with national history as well as personal experience.

Moosavi (2015) states that memories of war are not shared by Iraqi society to the same extent, but Moosavi claims they are divided by politics, ethnicity, and social status. These divisions generate conflicting narratives, making it difficult to make peace with war trauma. Moosavi contends that these divergent memories set up a tension between official, or collective, historical accounts and lived experience and that the lived experience of trauma typically produces psychological dissonance. For example, Sunni, Shiite, and Kurdish Iraqi memories of war are quite different, and authorial experiences of war are key to understanding how trauma is marked in Iraqi fiction. These differences are explored by authors in their narratives in order to demonstrate how trauma is personal and collective, and bound by historical and socio-political contexts.

Adwan and Mohaisen (2024) demonstrate that war trauma in *Frankenstein in Baghdad* manifests through repression and psychological fragmentation, as characters are unable to process their traumatic experiences and remain trapped in cycles of violence and emotional numbness. The study reveals that the persistent state of fear and instability in post-war Baghdad leaves lasting psychological scars that distort identity and make healing an insurmountable task.

Mousa & et al (2022) make a parallel argument that trauma in Iraqi fiction cannot be disentangled from the larger trends of socio-political and historical conditions. According to Mousa, the traumatic experiences of Iraqi characters relate to national events of the Iraq – Iran war, Gulf War, the 2003 invasion, and the subsequent civil wars. For example, the novels of Sinan Antoon are at once private and historical accounts of the aftermath of these conflicts. Mousa argues that contemporary Iraqi fiction serves as a historical documentation, which relays psychological and emotional aspects of war, meets the criticism of official historical narratives formulated in the post war period. Along with others in these works, trauma is not only represented as an individual psychological experience but as a national and communal curse marking Iraq's social fabric (Mousa, et al, 2022).

The works of Sinan Antoon occupy the vanguard of Iraqi fiction, exploring the difficult relationship between trauma, memory, and history. According to Hamdan (2023), Antoon's writing is intricate because the effects of trauma are articulated through the convolution of Antoon's personal recollections with the broader contextual material. The Iraq War and post-2003 invasion landscape is explored through the frustrated memories of Antoon's characters and the national history that they form part of. According to Hamdan, Ya Maryam, on the fluidity of memory where the characters clash between their own personal memory and the regime overall historical narrative that they live by. the understanding of trauma by intertwining personal recollections with the broader historical context. Antoon's characters grapple with the painful legacies of the Iraq War and the post-2003 invasion landscape, questioning both their memories and the national history they are part of.

Antoon takes up the psychological effect of war and its linger-ing trauma in *The Book of Collateral Damage* (2010). Ashraf Abu-Fares (2023) investigates how the novel questions how suffering, and individuals themselves, can be commodified through media and global politics, if the reasons that lead to the trauma do not endure. According to Abu-Fares (2023), Antoon's characters are haunted by violence and cannot overcome it, still feeling haunted by war effects of the latter. Memory is not a static record of past events in the novel, but an active, disruptive force which affects the present. Relentlessly, the characters wrestle with how to reconcile personal experience with the immense political narratives that currently define post war Iraq.

The Bird Tattoo (2017) by Dunia Mikhail offers a poignant exploration of the Yazidi genocide, demonstrating how trauma and suffering are transmitted across generations. In Dunia Mikhail's *The Bird Tattoo*, Awfa Hussein Al-Dory (2024) deals with the topic of how Mikhail's work interacts with the notion of multidirectional memory, which indicates how various communities remember and process trauma in an associative yet unilateral manner. According to Al-Dory (2024), Mikhail's depiction of the Yazidi genocide reinforces the marginalized memories of Iraq's national narrative for the sake of understanding. Through this

novel, Mikhail takes on the silences and erasures of mainstream histories of trauma in Iraq by concentrating on a specific community that experienced great loss.

Iraqi fiction centres on the psychological dimensions of trauma. Mushtaq & Awan's *Trauma and War: The Psychological Implications for Survivor-Victims in Iraqi Fiction* (2023) investigates how Iraqi writers present the long-term psychic effects of war. According to Mushtaq & Awan (2023), Iraqi fiction trauma is prevalent and many times expressed in the form of chronic conditions including, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and depression. These psychological afflictions are not short-lived, but rather are portrayed as permanent features of post-conflict life. In novels like *The Corpse Washer* (2013), Antoon describes how the shock of war not only affects individuals, but does so to areas. However, the violence and loss he witnesses deeply scar the protagonist, who cannot escape from the emotional blizzard, which is understood to become locked with the destruction of Iraq's social and political structures (Mushtaq, & Awan, 2023).

Radwa Ramadan Mahmoud (2016) argues in *War and Violence in Sinan Antoon's The Corpse Washer* that Antoon represents the physical and mental results of war through the body. According to Mahmoud (2026), Antoon's showing of the main character as a corpse washer entails that trauma is also carried in the body. The traumas embodied, carried by, and passed down by survivors, are represented by the protagonist's physical labor in preparing bodies for burial. Trauma is thus not just approached as a mental condition but is seen as something that can be visited upon the body itself.

Finally, Iraqi fiction provides a rich and multilayered investigation of trauma and memory. Trauma is not only an individual psychological event but also a collective experience that manifests itself as part of collective memory, and thus as a central force informing national narratives of identity and history in Iraqi literature. Iraqi fiction reflects the long-lasting effects of war on both individuals and the whole society through the fragmented narratives of memory and the complex interrelation between personal and collective histories.

4. Discussion

4.1. Trauma as a Body-Mind Experience

In his theory, Peter A. Levine underlines the critical interrelation of the body and mind in the processing and memorizing of traumatic experiences. Levine explained that trauma is not only a psychological event; it involves the body and American mind equally, and leaves imprints on the brain, as well as the body. Levine (2015) writes that "trauma becomes inscribed as memory imprints in body, brain, and mind, as well as in psyche and soul" (p.18). The central idea is that not only are these traumatic memories merely cognitive memories, but they are also enmeshed in the nervous system of the very substance of the entire body.

Levine believes that trauma lives in the body's physical reactions to it—trembling, sweating, a racing heart—that's all involuntary response, years after the trauma is over. As a result, trauma impacts the mind by disturbing the usual functioning of memory, and the body in the form of sensory imprints that can invade the present. Also, Ahlers (2020) looks into how trauma is not something that happens only in our minds, but something that is exceedingly embodied, influencing our bodies and brains in such a way.

Dreaming of Baghdad by Haifa Zangana depicts this body-mind experience of trauma through the protagonist's ongoing battle with the continued effects of violence, exile, and imprisonment. It is Zangana's recounting of the protagonist's traumatic memories as something newly lived, bodily, and visceral. Zangana (2009) writes: "my body recognizing fear before fear reaches my brain, recognizing images of torture, stored not in memory but in my body's cells" (p.16). Levine's central concept here is that trauma is not just a mental event, but actually is physically stored in the body.

The protagonist's unconscious body remembers before her conscious mind can understand, reacting to an image of fear and violence as if it were now in the present. After years of violence and mental duress, the nervous system becomes a vessel for lasting traumatic memory. Levine asserts that trauma "imprints" itself into the body and nervous system, making it impossible to escape the effects of trauma, even after the trauma has ended.

Scaer (2005) also explains that trauma subsequently becomes lodged deeply in the nervous system as chronic emotional dysregulation and a myriad of physical responses, long after the external threats are over. In that same sense, Shapiro (2010) also mentioned that Trauma is contended to often lead to disruption to memory processing and fragmented and unprocessed memories continue to haunt the survivor (p. 88). Similarly, Trauma rewires brain circuits — particularly those affecting memory and the regulation of emotion. It disrupts them, causes fragmented memories with intrusive recollections or emotional numbing, that survivors have trouble making sense of themselves now and their past (Spiegel, 1997, p. 103).

Levine's trauma theory also includes the idea that the body is not a passive storage of traumatic memories, but rather works actively toward preserving and reliving incidents that impact it. This embodied experience is reflected in the memories of Zangana's protagonist, whose memory is not simply recalled in a thought or in a verbal narrative, but in physical sensations that she has no control over. According to Zangana, the protagonist feels the "residue of human feeling" (Zangana, 2009, p.14) after fleeing Iraq, a residue that is embedded in the body and mind. The pain, fear and suffering of her traumatic past remains in the body of the protagonist, which reminds her of the violence she's been through.

This "residue" is not just 'emotional' it is 'bodily' we actually feel it in our bodies as sensations, muscular tension and hyperarousal in the nervous system which is on constant high alert. In this way, Zangana's narrative is reflected vividly in Levine's notion of trauma as a body-mind experience that heavily rests upon the protagonist's body and constitutes a complex and ongoing work of healing. One of the qualities noted by van der Kolk (2015) in healing from trauma relates to the body as part of the healing process. He points out how a lifetime of physical manifestations of unresolved trauma can exist if not dealt with properly. Secondly, fate is often an uncertain certainty often sinking in the execution given to imprisonment. Zangana often reflects on the incomprehensible, unpredictable nature of her experience, such as when she is transported by armed guards with no explanation:

The place was unusually silent. The prisoners did not wave good-bye because they did not guess what was going to happen to me. If the authorities were going to release me, as they said they would, why did they send three armed men to accompany me? My whole body was wracked with pain as sound filled my head. What is happening? Where are they taking me? (p. 65).

The uncertainty that this creates is physical and emotional, and speaks to a frequent disorientation amongst survivors of political violence. Oftentimes, we find trauma survivors disassociated with reality, not trusting their perception of what is going on, and always expecting the next moment of suffering. Again, Zangana's body reacts involuntarily, an indication that the trauma has been internalized, and this time it changes her experience of every moment. The uncertainty of the future mirrors the trauma's enduring effect: After surviving violence, every moment is rife with fear and doubt, this utter disconnection with all that exists, including yourself and the outside world.

4.2. *Embodied Memory and Sensory Imprints*

Understanding how trauma invades the present is facilitated by Levine's concept of embodied memory through which traumatic memories reside as sensory imprints. Levine (2015) reports that traumatic memories are not cognitions but rather inchoate and indigestible sensations, emotions, images, smells, tastes, thoughts. These sensory fragments frequently appear unexpectedly, undermining the person's current sense of reality, and preventing the trauma from being integrated into a coherent narrative. The hallmark of traumatic memory occurs when these sensory imprints overwhelm the individual with fragmented fragments that re-enact the trauma, rather than one coherent event. Furthermore, Neisser & Hyman (1999) mention how memory is created, how trauma can distort our memories, and how memories are themselves both physical as well as psychological.

As an example, it can be described that such phenomenon is being illustrated in Zangana's *Dreaming of Baghdad*, in which the protagonist is always being overwhelmed by fragmented memories through the sensory experience. One such example is when the protagonist recalls the "peculiar smell" of the area she once lived in: "a mixture of orange blossom (there were orange trees on either side of the main street), roses, gardenias, and carnations placed in the Turkish martyrs' cemetery, and the phenol and antiseptic from the forensic laboratory" (Zangana, 2009, p.31). In this quote here details of senses of smell and sight, which are in fact innocent in everyday life, become a gap to traumatic memories. Flowers and antiseptics juxtaposed create images of death, suffering, and hungers for bodily responses of the violence of the past. This passage perfectly reflects Levine's theory of sensory memory imprints that the protagonist's body continues to react to the scent and images of violence long after the events themselves have passed. Therefore, Zangana's account offers instances of how people under the most dehumanizing circumstances do resist, internally and externally. For example, the women in the prison create small rituals of resistance to maintain their sense of dignity:

For years, the women had been cutting up old blankets and clothes for use as curtains. They hung them up in the afternoon when the prison governess left, and took them down in the morning before she arrived for inspection. With endless determination, they persisted in the same ritual, as if proving to themselves and the others that, in enjoying some privacy, they could still defy the system (p. 70).

This is what a resistance to fossil fuels looks like, a symbolic resistance. But it's not just about physical privacy, it's about keeping a sense of self and a sense of humanity alive in the face of the relentless dehumanization. The women assert their autonomy even in the smallest of ways by holding on to this small act of normalcy. These rituals, in part, are an emotional buffer against the ever-present fact of surveillance and violence, allowing the women to maintain a feeling of an identity.

Zangana performs this resistance in the way she interacts with memory. In her reflection of people, she has lost as she writes about the past, she is still defiant, in the erasing of her history. It becomes a fight, the fight they tried to crack, and the writing is an act of survival not just to keep her personal memory but also to keep the fight going.

According to Levine (2015), "Traumatic memories are implicit, and are carried in body and brain as a patchwork of sensations, emotions, and behaviors" (p.17). While in the case of Zangana's protagonist, sensory imprints cause memories of violence and fear to feed back onto the protagonist, causing her to recall pieces of the trauma, piecemeal, each fragment being one of the fragments of her history that have not been processed. Imprints are left everywhere the protagonist goes, as her body reacts to them in a way that muddles past and present for the protagonist. Levine believes trauma is embedded in sensory senses, and that the past continues to 'haunt' us – through the body.

4.3. The Role of Body in Trauma Response

Levine notes that not only does trauma affect the mind, but it also affects the body, and that traumatic experiences alter the autonomic nervous system (ANS) response so that it becomes dysregulated, giving rise to hyperarousal (overreactivity of emotional and physiological response), or hypoarousal (dysfunctional compromise of emotional and physiological response). Whether this takes place in an inactive or an active state, the body is dysregulated and the inability to process or integrate the trauma follows. Levine (2015) posits that "traumatized individuals are stuck in chronic contraction" (p.69), where the body maintains a state of alert or shut down long after the traumatic event has ended. This "fixation" in a state of hyperarousal or shutdown prevents somebody being able to return to 'normal' functioning or relaxation.

Zangana's protagonist suffers from this chronic dysregulation of the autonomic nervous system, which is what sustains her ongoing battle with fear and anxiety. She explains that; "Fear is our friend and comrade; we grew up with it. It is closer to us than anything else. We have lived so long with fear, we cannot live without it" (Zangana, 2009, p.15). the protagonist's chronic fear has a physiological component as well; her body is incapable of finding peace or relaxation, always at a state of hypervigilance. Levine's description of "chronic contraction" in trauma victims finds great resonance in the protagonist's condition about which there is only acquired knowledge: her body is in constant contraction, always in a state of readiness and being unable to find peace being unresolvable trauma in her history.

The body can also have hyperarousal and then dissociation or shutdown, a form of trauma response that takes an emotional or physical lever away. Individuals will do almost anything to avoid feeling their bodies, proposes Levine. Levine suggests that "individuals will do almost anything to avoid feeling their bodies. The body has become the enemy" (Levine, 2015, p.69). The avoidance of the body can show up as emotional numbness or physical detachment. Zangana's protagonist embodies this avoidance – her struggle to make contact with her body again after years spent in torture and exile. On the one hand, she wants to distance herself from her bodily sensations, the embodied markers of trauma; on the other, she can reintegrate into her body, and heal, only so far as to connect with these sensations. This internal conflict between avoidance and reconnecting shows how deeply both mind and body are affected by trauma, and is one of the recurring motifs through-out Zangana's memoir; the painful silence during visits between her and her family. In the scene where her parents visit her in prison, their conversation is filled with ordinary questions, masking the unspoken fears and concerns that lie underneath:

My mother was seated on one of the benches, and my father paced back and forth in the yard. During the visit, the questions we could not utter haunted us... We exchanged banalities... 'Are you all right?' 'Yes.' 'Do you sleep well?' 'Yes, I am all right and sleep well (pp. 60-61).

The visit's silence says more than the words spoken. The inability of the parents to ask direct questions about her suffering shows the emotional and psychological effects of trauma. What is not said reflects the degree to which they share an experience of these complexities, amplified by loss and uncertainty, and separation created by torture, imprisonment, exile. Zangana's narrative is also a narrative about the trauma of silence because her family, and many other families, cannot speak the truth, for their survival and for their protection, as it is

unbearable what has happened.

The trauma of the prisoner's condition follows up on the theme of silence. Her family, too, is too uneasy to discuss her suffering directly. It's this silence that heightens the emotional alienation and isolation she feels in her captivity and the need for her expression and contact. She also has physical scars sores on her face, inflamed skin because what torture and violence leave on her body has left its mark to this day. The trauma is so deeply physiological, and Zangana's body then becomes a tangible physical marker for the violence she has endured. Her mother's silent sadness captures a complete helplessness from within, because her daughter's physical transformation is a reminder of a brutality of the regime undesirable. The weight of the past held by the body in this disfigurement, unspoken but understood.

Levine's theory shows how a person 'holds' his past in the body, suggesting that this move sits in accord with Zangana's description of the materiality of trauma, seen not as a memory that is recalled but as one that is embodied. The way she reacted to her mother's grief (her heart "bursting") stresses the depth of the emotional pain that couldn't be reduced to words, and this, it seems, points to the fact that trauma is so much as much physical as it is psychological.

another prominent theme in Dreaming of Baghdad is physical manifestation of trauma. Zangana frequently talks of her body as site of pain and of remembrance, where the scars of imprisonment and violence and the marks of torture can be seen in her flesh. In one passage, she reflects on the emotional toll of her mother's sadness:

My mother hugged me and whispered in a quavering voice, 'Have they treated you badly?' 'No, everything is all right.' She looked suspiciously at my face covered in inflamed sores. I was alarmed by her calm sadness, her wet eyes, her silence. They were much harder to bear than crying would have been (p. 61).

in this quote, the trauma is talked about in the physical; in her sores on the face as the physical reminder that she was part of the violence done to her. The narrative of trauma and memory is one which suggests that the body keeps its own narrative, a narrative often beyond language. For Zangana, her body functions as a living archive of her suffering in which memory is not only a series of recallable mental images but becomes the basis for a series of bodily, often painful, and involuntary responses. The inability to use words to completely tell the depth of pain for herself and her daughter is what she plays back to her mother's "calm sadness", which her mother finds more unbearable than just crying.

This embodied trauma illustrates a broader conception about how the brain and body collaborate in dealing with traumatic memories. In many cases of severe trauma, the body doesn't only react to a trauma, it absorbs it, and often in such a way that the pain is stored, sometimes in ways that are not easy to verbalize or even understand. Zangana's narrative reflects this theory: her memory is not just the thing she carries in her mind, but the scars and reactions of her body: her body that always trembles in fear, sweats with anxiety, and finally breaks down with physical pain from the act of remembering.

So for Zangana, writing was a necessary tool with which to exorcise trauma. She regains the ability to tell her own story by talking about her memories. In one passage, she writes:

The pencil moved faster and faster. Page after page, words, sentences, paragraphs. She traveled far from the present to remote lands. The sound of the past became as loud as the present (p. 82).

Writing is both act of escape and act of confrontation. Writing itself makes past a living force as vivid and powerful as is the present. It depicts the trauma's recurrence to consciousness no matter how far one tries to escape it. But, contrary to this, Zangana uses writing to go through her pain and not become a story of pain, but of survival, resistance, healing.

Writing as both catharsis and preservation fits Levine theory that a need exists to protect against oblivion and keep memory intact, especially if it is painful. Writing again protects self and memory from dissolving.

5. Conclusion

The theory of trauma of Peter A. Levine confirms the embodied memory of the traumatic experiences has a very important place in imagining the character's experiences in Haifa Zangana's Dreaming of Baghdad. It is clear that Levine's contention that trauma is written onto both the body and mind is illustrated in the protagonist's narration, in which her body is the inscribed trauma. The capacity of trauma is not just as mental memories, but is imprinted in Zangana's protagonist's body that involuntarily reacts to sensory reminders of the violence and fear. Levine's work shows us that the body is implicated in trauma storage and reliving, and healing entails a renegotiation of the body's relationship to traumatic encounters.

The trauma of the character is renegotiated via writing and reflection. By revisiting her memories in a way

that is controlled and reflective she is able to reintegrate these memories through a new narrative of survival that paves the way for healing. Zangana's *Dreaming of Baghdad* so effectively demonstrates the body—mind connection in trauma, it is fundamentally linked—body's response to trauma and the mind's attempt to process it.

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