



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Section: *Literature, Linguistics & Criticism*

The other trauma: A discussion of Khaled Hosseinni's *And the Mountains Echoed* (2013)

Faith Ben-Daniels , Jonathan Essuman & Rita Ndonibi

Akenten Appiah-Menka University of Skills Training and Entrepreneurial Development

Correspondence: fbdaniels@aamusted.edu.gh

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on building the argument that trauma goes beyond the popular definitions such as war experiences, rape, and many other known forms of trauma. As such, the discussion focuses on what the writers refer to as the 'other trauma,' which comes about as an experience of a situation that the human mind is unable to adjust to, in ways that creates acceptance, but rather erects barriers. The paper also argues that unlike previous discussions on trauma, which suggests that trauma returns in flashbacks, there are other traumatic experiences that victims live with on a daily basis, and as such, dictates the course of their lives. In stressing on this view of the 'other traumatic' experience, the paper makes reference to Khaled Hosseinni's characters in his novel, *And the mountains echoed*. The paper adapts the three parts of trauma posited by Freud in the discussion of the traumatic experience of certain characters in Hosseinni's novel. Freud's exposition on trauma is used to build and sustain the argument that trauma can equally be experienced as a result of mundane everyday human activities and decisions that also have the ability to destabilize the human mind. The paper concludes that the original event that has led to trauma is as traumatic as recalling the event itself, and that literature depicts how such events can distort human life and existence emotionally, socially, and psychologically.

KEYWORDS: dementia, literature, migration, psychoanalysis, trauma

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1.0. Introduction

Straussner and Calnan (2014), cite the 2013 Oxford Dictionary when they posit that the term trauma, “comes from the Greek language, meaning a wound or hurt” (p.323). In their authority as scientists, they explain further that “trauma can take a tremendous psychological toll that may not disappear even with the passage of time.” (p.323) Kleber (2019) also adds voice to the discussion on trauma by focusing on exploring psychological trauma. Kleber asserts that “psychological trauma has developed into a very popular concept in the scientific community, in the world of mental health care, as well as in common language and mass media...” (p.1)

In fact, Straussner, Calan, and Kleber are just a few of the many psychologists, psychiatrists, and other scientists who have always been at the forefront of the definition of trauma. This perhaps is due to the belief that trauma ought to be considered as a psychological or psychiatric situation, and is medically diagnosed. As such, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) defines trauma as a:

Direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one’s physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of another person; or learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate (Criterion A1). The person’s response to the event must involve intense fear, helplessness, or horror (or in children, the response must involve disorganized or agitated behavior) (Criterion A2). (p. 463)

The above definition by the APA also gives the criteria for trauma—the individual or victim must be in fear, must be helpless or horrified. The second criterion posits that the individual or victim must be hysterical or disoriented as a result of the event. The APA’s definition of trauma also provides us with situations that are considered traumatic. The traumatic situations according to the APA, are: natural disasters, mass interpersonal violence, large-scale transportation accidents, house or other domestic fires, motor vehicle accidents, rape and sexual assaults, stranger physical assault, partner battery, torture, war, child abuse and emergency worker exposure to trauma.

All of the above-mentioned situations are obvious potential situations that could pose or pose trauma to the victims. However, there are situations that could pose traumatic to the victims but do not necessarily fall under any of the aforementioned instances of trauma. And more often than not, literature throws light on these less noticed or mentioned situations. And this is in no way a challenge to the discovery of medical and psychological exposition of trauma, but as literature’s own way of dissecting the human story which creates trauma. For instance, The Centre for Nonviolence and Social Justice defines trauma as:

Experiences or situations that are emotionally painful and distressing, and that overwhelm people’s ability to cope, leaving them powerless. Trauma has sometimes been defined in reference to circumstances that are outside the realm of normal human experience. Unfortunately, this definition doesn’t always hold true. For some groups of people, trauma can occur frequently and become part of the common human experience. (p.1)

This definition of trauma by the Centre for Nonviolence and Social Justice widens the definition spectrum of what can be identified as trauma. This suggests that traumatic situations vary and, in some situations, the victim’s reaction to the event is what qualifies the event as traumatic. The victim’s reaction to the event of trauma after it has happened or how the event of trauma affects the victim’s living conditions mentally and emotionally is referred to as psychoanalysis trauma (Heidarzadeh, 2015). This also suggests that, a person’s reaction to an event and how they cope with the aftermath of the event determines what event is traumatic. It also implies that an individual’s reaction to an event could determine whether or not it is a traumatic experience. If this is so, then it means that pointing out specific events as traumatic is just stating the obvious traumatic event. But there could be other events that are traumatic based on the reaction of the individuals who experience them. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to explore the varied human situations that literature unfolds, and how these human situations reveal the trauma their victims experience and endure.

2.0. Trauma Theory

According to Maurice Stevens (2009) trauma:

has been around in one form or another since the late nineteenth century and from the start, its meanings, subject to ideological and fiduciary struggle, have shifted and transformed. As one might expect, trauma has also been racialized, sexualized, gendered and classed from its inception (p.1)

The above statement by Stevens buttresses that notion that trauma as a concept has been in existence for centuries, and its meaning continually metamorphoses to meet the needs of diverse groups of people and situations. For instance, in Sigmund Freud's research into sexualities he discusses trauma.

Sigmund Freud's *Three Essays in Theories of Sexuality* (1953) takes an in-depth look of adult mental disorders, with a special focus on sexual experiences that causes the recipient a great deal of pain physically and mentally. Freud referred to this mental disorder as 'neurotic disorder.' (Freud, 1953) Freud goes on to elucidate that adult neurotic disorder comes about as a result of what he termed 'psychic shock.' This 'psychic shock' Freud explains, occurs as a result of three distinct processes—the first being the occurrence of a traumatizing event, this is immediately followed by the victim experiencing this trauma and the third being the victim creating some sort of psychological barrier as a means of either trying to forget the experience or trying to suppress the memory of recollecting the event. (Freud, 1953)

Whereas Freud focuses his investigations into trauma by looking into hysteria in adults who have lived through disturbing and harmful sexual experiences such as rape from childhood, Herman (1992) explores the occurrence of frequent trauma in the lives of individuals and argues that some of these traumatic events are not described as such because they are not happenings of every day life, but that some events are considered traumatic because they inundate their victims by destabilizing their victim's understanding of humanity and human existence (Herman, 1992).

Another scholar on Trauma, Michelle Balave (2008), in her analysis of trauma in literature delineates that trauma:

Refers to a person's emotional response to an overwhelming event that disrupts previous ideas of an individual's sense of self and the standards by which one evaluates society. The term "trauma novel" refers to a work of fiction that conveys profound loss or intense fear on individual or collective levels. A defining feature of the trauma novel is the transformation of the self-ignited by an external, often terrifying experience, which illuminates the process of coming to terms with the dynamics of memory that inform the new perceptions of the self and the world. (p.150)

The above analysis by Balaev is an indication of the presence of trauma in literature. It also describes how literature presents trauma through memory and how the recall affects human life. In clearer terms, Balaev explores the notion that when literature talks about trauma it exposes the reader to the human experience of trauma and living a traumatized life.

Therefore, this paper leans towards Balaev's definition of trauma as a much closer definition of how trauma is represented in literature. For the purpose of this research, the trauma under discussion would be referred to as the 'other traumatic experience.' The other traumatic experience or the other trauma refers to the experience of loss and pain that an individual is faced with and as such, creates a new kind of life as a way of coping with the aftermath of living with the trauma. This other trauma does not happen as a cause of war, natural disaster or even rape. This other trauma or traumatic experience could come about as a result of the most or least mundane of human decisions, actions and inactions, but cause so much pain to the recipient and alters the course of their lives emotionally, physically or psychologically for good.

In the discussion of this other trauma, the paper will take an in-depth look at some characters who experience trauma in Khaled Hosseini's *And the mountains echoed*. Their experience of trauma would be discussed using Freud's three processes of the psychic shock which leads to trauma. Specifically, the first being the occurrence of a traumatizing event, which is immediately followed by the victim experiencing this trauma and the third being the victim creating some sort of psychological barrier as a means of either trying to forget

the experience or trying to suppress the memory of recollecting the event (Freud, 1953). This paper would psychoanalyze the behavior of chosen characters from the text in order to highlight their traumatic experiences.

3.0. *And the mountains echoed*—Synopsis

The novel follows the lives of two siblings, Pari and Abdullah, who lived in one of the rural areas of Afghanistan with their father and stepmother until poverty separates them painfully in the early 1950s, just before the outbreak of war. The plot chronicles the lives of the two siblings as adults, living in two separate continents after their fateful separation as children. At the end of the novel, the siblings are reunited, but the brother, Abdullah, has no memory of his sister.

4.0. The other trauma

Khaled Hosseini, begins his story by first telling his audience a story through his character, Saboor. Saboor tells his children, Pari and Abdullah the story of a peasant family, Baba Ayub's family, who lose their child to an evil *div* who visits their village with the purpose of taking a child. The rule is that once the *div* taps on your door, you must give up one of your children as a sacrifice to him or else he destroys your entire family. So, when the *div* taps on Baba Ayub's door, his family, after shedding tears, and with a broken heart, offers their youngest child, the favorite of Baba Ayub, Qais, to the *div*. However, Baba Ayub is unable to contain his grief and one day, goes in search of the *div* who took his son. When he finally meets the *div*, he discovers that not only did the *div* not eat his son, but also, his son is living well, looking healthy and is being tutored by the best educators of the land. But the *div* tells Baba Ayub that if he takes his son back home with him, both can never return and all his children would be cursed. But if his son remains with the *div*, his future is bright and positively certain. When Baba Ayub finally decides to return home without his son, the *div* gives him a dark liquid in a glass flask, and instructs him to drink it on his way home. Baba Ayub drinks the liquid and returns home. He does not remember that he lost a son. He lives many years, happy and able to provide for his other children.

According to Mambrol (2018), Cathy Caruth, Geoffrey Hartman and Shoshana Felman pioneered a traditional trauma model in the 1990s. Mambrol (2018) deduces from Caruth's theoretical explanations that even if one cannot put into words the situation or events that is causing trauma, "it acts like a tumor in consciousness that wounds the self." (2018) In other words, trauma inflicts physical and psychological harm on the individual who experiences it. It can be deduced from Mambrol's statement on how trauma "acts like a tumor," that Saboor, in telling his children this story, is preparing them psychologically for what is about to happen. Although the reader might not perceive this initially, while reading Saboor's story (because the reader is yet to enter the actual plot of the novel), his final words to his son, Abdullah, are that he has "nothing more to say. And now it is really late and I am tired, and your sister and I have to wake at dawn. So, blow out your candle. Lay your head down and close your eyes. Sleep well, boy. We'll say our good-byes in the morning." (p.18) These final words from Saboor triggers an alarm in the reader's mind and the reader is curious about the journey and what it means for Saboor and his two children.

However, the question raised in the reader's mind is that—is this story enough to prepare the young children's mind for what is about to happen? The reader receives an answer in the next chapter. It is morning and Saboor and his three-year-old daughter, Pari, are setting off for the journey he talked about the night before, after telling them the story of Baba Ayub and the *div*. When Abdullah insists on accompanying them, Saboor smacks him on the face twice and the author narrates that "father had never before hit Abdullah." (p.19) Pari is also crying "out his name, her voice high, shaking with apprehension. "Abollah!" (p.20) Although Saboor throws a rock at Abdullah and threatens him, the boy follows at a distance until Saboor realizes that he "won't give up." (p.20) And allows him to get close to the wagon and walk with them. Abdullah's insistence on accompanying his sister is the reader's initial introduction to the bond between him and Pari. The two are inseparable, because according to the author, Abdullah was the one who took care of Pari, after their mother died "giving birth to Pari three and a half years earlier." (p.23) the narrative also reveals to readers, Pari's love for feathers and Abdullah's assistance in helping her collect feathers into "an old tin tea box" (p.22) that he had given her. Abdullah goes to the extent of walking to another village and exchanging his shoes for a peacock feather for Pari. And on his way back home and bare foot, "his heels had split open and left bloody smudges on the ground. Thorns and splinters had burrowed into the skin of his soles. Every step sent barbs of pain shooting

through his feet.” (p.23) And Abdullah was aware that trading his shoes for a peacock feather was reckless, but on seeing Pari’s excitement when he gives her the feathers, “his feet didn’t hurt at all.” (p.26) As they draw closer to Kabul, the reader is anxious as to what awaits them there. The journey does not turn out to be one for work as Saboor tells Abdullah. It actually turns out to be a journey to give away Pari, to the rich couple, Mr. and Mrs. Wahdati, in exchange for money.

This act by Saboor begins the onset of the trauma that he and Abdullah go through. Freud states that trauma begins with a traumatizing event. The event that occurs is the first process of trauma. However, the narrative does not recount the separation scene between brother and sister. It only explains that when Abdullah realizes that they have come to Kabul to give Pari to the Wahdatis, “Abdullah turned his face up to the sky and wailed.” (p. 51) Perhaps Hosseini himself finds it difficult to narrate the event because narrating a traumatic event causes the individual to relive the event and recalls the pain as though it is unfolding in the present. Kihlstrom (2005) in his discourse on trauma and how it affects memory posits that when an individual is faced with an event that shocks and disturbs them emotionally; depending on the amount of stress the victim experiences, there is the tendency to create mental blocks as a defense mechanism to inhibit recall of the event. The victim represses or dissociates from the event (Kihlstrom, 2005). Although Hosseini as the writer recounts these events from an omniscient narrator’s view point, he dissociates himself from the fateful day Abdullah and Pari are cruelly separated by simply not narrating how it unfolds to the reader. He only briefly mentions how Abdullah wails when he gets the hint from Mrs. Nila Wahdati of what is about to happen.

Likewise, Abdullah, does not recount the events of the fateful separation in his mind at any point in the plot, neither does Saboor. When the event of separation happens, the reader fully understands the essence of Saboor’s story at the beginning of the novel. The reader also understands why Saboor was determined not to let his son accompany them. Saboor, in his own small way, was trying to prevent his son from witnessing the event that might cause trauma for him later on. It is perhaps for this reason that neither Hosseini, Saboor nor Abdullah describe in details the traumatic event itself. The writer and his two characters try to dissociate themselves from the event by not recalling it. This suggests that sometimes, people who have experienced a traumatic event, try to dissociate from the experience by avoiding a recall. For instance, in Faith Ben-Daniels’ novel, *A quarter past midnight*, the protagonist, Pearl Asare, responds to the trauma of discovering that her fiancé has gone ahead to marry her closest friend; by crashing her car in a frenzy, and losing all memory of her life with her fiancé and friend before the crash. By losing her memory, Pearl lives in oblivion, unaware that she once had a fiancé and close friend, who both broke her heart in a most despicable way. In this instance, the mind finds a way to suppress the traumatic experience by shutting down memories of the event.

Also, dissociation could occur while the traumatic event is unfolding. There is an example of this in Ukamaka Olsakwe’s novel, *Ogadinma*. When Ogadinma, the protagonist, is raped by the spiritual leader, Onye Ekpere, who:

lifted her legs, stroked himself and thrust into her, she did not resist him...She shut her eyes. She imagined her body slipping from under him and fleeing from this place, to somewhere so far away from here, somewhere safe. She returned to her room and Kano, locked herself in her small room that looked into the compound, until the horror was over, before she came back to this room. (p.195)

Ogadinma’s response to the traumatic experience of rape is to dissociate from it as it unfolds. The use of the word ‘horror’ reiterates the event and experience as traumatic. In order to survive the ordeal, Ogadinma must return home to Kano and to her “small room.” The small room in Kano serves as her fortress for dissociation. This suggests that in order to successfully dissociate from the traumatic experience, the victim must have a safe place. Hosseini seems aware of the coping mechanism of dissociation when trauma occurs. Therefore, he takes the reader through how Saboor and Abdullah cope with their own traumatic loss of Pari. This suggests that when individuals experience trauma, they find avenues to cope with it.

The effort to cope with the event that happens is what Freud describes as the second process of trauma which has to do with experiencing the trauma. According to Freud, victims experience trauma after the negative event has happened. This is why it is on Saboor and Abdullah’s return home that the reader experiences with both characters the effect of the event that happened in Kabul. Saboor wakes up one morning, and with the

help of some men from the village, attacks the oak tree from which Pari's swing hung. Although Saboor "told Abdullah they needed the firewood for winter," Abdullah noticed how he "swung his ax at the old tree with violence, with his jaw firmly set and a cloud over his face like he couldn't bear to look at it any longer." (p.52) This recount reveals how Saboor experiences trauma. His experience of trauma leads him to cut off things that remind him of Pari. Although Hosseini does not inform the reader of how it was done, nobody in the village of Shadbagh ever talked of Pari or asked about her. And "it astonished Abdullah how thoroughly she had vanished from their lives." (p.53) In Saboor's eagerness to suppress his pain by numbing himself of Pari's loss, he does not only experience trauma through his actions but also contributes to the trauma Abdullah experiences as a boy who is just a little over ten years old. Saboor's warning that no tears should be shed and that Pari's name should not be mentioned does not make the pain and experience of their traumatic separation any less. Saboor's stance rather reinforces trauma, forcing Abdullah to wake up one day and just "walk as far from Shadbagh as his feet would take him." (p.56)

Abdullah never returns to Shadbagh. Hosseini on his part, does not talk about Abdullah again from an omniscient narrator's point of view. The bits and pieces of information the reader gets about Abdullah and Saboor, after the fateful event which shatters their lives, are from the narration by other characters. In fact, later on in the plot, it is from Nabi, that the reader learns of how traumatic the separation of Abdullah and Pari had been for the children, their father and even Nabi. This information is provided in a letter that Nabi writes to Mr. Markos, his tenant. In his letter he writes that: "I will never forget the sudden emotional mayhem. Pari slung over my shoulders, panic-stricken, kicking her legs, shrieking, *Abollah! Abollah!* As I whisked her away. Abdullah screaming his sisters name, trying to fight past his father." (p.117) Nabi's letter gives the reader a little bit of information on the traumatic event. In the letter, he tells Mr. Markos: "there is little point in recounting it in detail, Mr. Markos, the scene that did unfold precisely as I had feared. But all these years later, I still feel my heart clench when the memory of it forces itself to the fore... It weighs on me. All this time has passed, Mr. Markos, and it still weighs on me." (p.116-117) A moving viewpoint on the long-lasting effects of trauma is expressed in this statement. Nabi acknowledges that it would be pointless to relive the horrific event in detail because the main events of the scene were just as was anticipated. The emotional impact of the recollection lingers, despite the passage of time, and Nabi describes it vividly, highlighting how it continues to affect their emotional state. The phrase "it [still] weighs on me" which has been repeated highlights how enduring and terrible the trauma is. This shows that Nabi's heart still clenches years after the occurrence, indicating that the emotional fallout still has a big impact. The statement sums up how trauma may remain deeply ingrained in a person's mind, impacting both the present and memories of the past.

Nabi's confession to Mr. Markos explains why Saboor decides to go on without ever mentioning Pari and why he expects Abdullah to do same. As earlier stated, Hosseini shares in the trauma of his characters by not taking advantage of his place as an omniscient narrator to describe the scene of the separation because it is too much even for him to bear, just as it is too much for his characters to bear. Hosseini also does not force his way into his characters' minds because doing so would make them relive the traumatic event.

However, the question remains—does not talking about it or pretending it never happened make something bad that one has experienced go away? The answer cannot be a straight yes or no. This is because people respond to bad situations differently. Some individuals can process the evil that happened to them, and come to terms with it, and move on, just like the characters, Roshi and Thalia (a part of Roshi's head had been sliced off by her bitter uncle who was jealous of her father. The uncle killed all the members of Roshi's family. Only Roshi survived with the ghastly wound on her head. Thalia also had half of her face chewed off by her step-father's dog) do; because the reader sees them living their lives and coming to terms with their situations. Roshi gets a surgery and becomes an author. Thalia lives with Mr. Markos's mother, Odelia, on their island village, Tinos, where she works as a handy woman and is content with her life. She accepts her disfigurement as part of her identity, and lives a peaceful life in Tinos. Her refusal to be traumatized by her past and succumb to letting it suppress her mentally is one half of the reason Markos becomes a plastic surgeon. He explains that he: "chose his specialty to even out the odds for people like Thalia, to rectify, with each slice of my scalpel, an arbitrary injustice, to make a small stand against a world order I found disgraceful, one in which a dog bite could rob a little girl of her future, make her an outcast, an object of scorn" (p.378) In a metaphorical sense, the statement implies that Markos' choice is viewed as a way to counteract injustice and unfairness in the world.

The character uses his medical knowledge to try to level the playing field, since it is compared to a game of chance in which some people are at a disadvantage. For the surgical procedures the character does, “Each slice of my scalpel” also serves as a metaphor. It transcends the actual surgical procedure and takes on the meaning of righting perceived wrongs. The scalpel becomes an instrument not only for treating superficial wounds but also for addressing underlying systemic imbalances and wounds. Thalia and Roshi are brave. But can everyone be a Thalia or a Roshi? For this, the obvious answer is no.

Caruth (1996) answers the above question when she states: “trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual’s past, but rather in the way its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely not known in the first instance--returns to haunt the survivor later on” (Caruth 4). It can be inferred from Caruth’s exposition that the bad event does not necessarily lead to trauma, but the aftermath and how the victims respond to the memory of it could either be traumatic or not. Caruth’s statement explains why characters like Roshi and Thalia can move on without the weight of the traumatic event bearing heavily upon them, but characters like Abdullah and Saboor fail to do same. Saboor spends the remaining short days of his life working from dawn to dusk until his hands bled. His guilt gnawed heavily at him and he dies while working to provide for what is left of his family.

Similarly, in Khaled Hosseini’s novel, *The kite runner*, the young Sohrab is raped and abused during his stay at the orphanage. In fact, the orphanage in Kabul, serves as a place to keep children who only end up being abused by whatever military junta is in charge. Sohrab is therefore relived when his uncle saves him from the orphanage and the Taliban Lord who used him as a sex slave. But when his uncle hints that in order to get him out of Afghanistan into America, he might have to stay a while in an orphanage, Sohrab becomes afraid and attempts to end his life by cutting himself. Before his uncle’s arrival, he had overcome the trauma of watching the Taliban murder his father for defending his former master’s house. He had survived the orphanage and his place as a sex object. His uncle’s arrival spelt hope. Moving to America ignited hope in his young heart. The hint of a possible return to the orphanage shatters that hope and drags him down into an abyss of trauma. Sohrab stops talking. His uncle, Amir, narrates to the reader: “his eyes were still lightless, I saw, vacant, the way I had found them when I pulled him out of the bathtub.” (p.323) Later at the hospital he tells Amir that he is “tired of everything.” (p.324) After this conversation it takes over a year before Sohrab speaks again. For Sohrab, the event that causes trauma is not his initial sexual abuse or the murder of his father, but the announcement that he would not be leaving with his uncle to America until much later. On hearing this, he recalls all other events from the past and is unable to see himself coping with his present situation. Sohrab’s reaction attests to Caruth’s exposition that trauma cannot always be known in the first instance. But when the event is recalled later on in the future, and it distresses the individual psychologically and emotionally, then it can be concluded that one is experiencing trauma.

As earlier stated, people experience trauma differently and react to it differently. For instance, in Francesca Ekwuyasi’s novel, *Butter Honey Pig Bread* (2022) when Kambirinachi’s husband, Banji, is murdered by highway robbers, “grief wound its tense muscles around Kambirinachi’s mind. It squeezed, squeezed until it split a hairline fracture that ran the length of her—” (p.323) Kambirinachi almost loses her mind after the death of her husband, and she never returns to her normal self before his death. She is unable to protect her daughter from a cruel rapist, and she looks on helplessly as her twin daughters’ relationship disintegrates. In the end, she returns home to drown herself.

Another example is E. L. James’ character, Christian, in her novel series, *Fifty Shades* (2012). Christian is a millionaire with a somewhat strange sexual appetite. In this first series, Anastasia, his young lover, discovers that he reaches orgasm by inflicting pain, and is disgusted by this. The reader is equally disgusted. However, it is not until one reads the next two books, and discovers that Christian lived a life of pain in the hands of his mother’s pimp and stayed in the room with his mother’s corpse for four days before she was discovered, that the reader begins to identify that the character, as a child, and later on, a teenager, experienced trauma in different forms, and is living his adult life based on series of traumatic experiences. For instance, in *Fifty Shades Freed* (2012) Anastasia describes how Christian cringes with discomfort and something resembling fear when Gia Matteo, the architect designing their home, “touches his arm in a small, flirty gesture.” (p.160) Gia, a blonde woman, reminds Christian of his mother’s friend, Elena, who, in *Fifty Shades Darker* (2012), Anastasia describes as a woman with “a penchant for beating and fucking underage boys.” (p.278) As such, Christian,

associates blonde women to the traumatic experience of sexual abuse.

The above examples of the traumatic experiences of characters like Christian and Kambirinachi are an attestation to why Saboor and Abdullah are unable to overcome the harrowing experiences that are causing them to live in trauma as adults. And because they live in trauma as adults, they try, in their own ways, to shield themselves from the trauma. The effort to shield oneself from trauma is what Freud refers to as the third process of trauma. Freud explains that in this process, the victim creates some sort of psychological barrier as a means of either trying to forget the experience or trying to suppress the memory of recollecting the event. (Freud, 1953) On the part of Hosseini, as earlier stated, he does not recount the events so as not to relive its traumatic experience. Likewise, his character, Abdullah, does not recount the experience of separation from his sister. But it does not stop him from reliving it all through his life. The reader gets to know of the story of how the two were separated from his daughter, Pari, who he names after his lost sister, Pari. Even Pari's account of the separation are in bits and pieces. Nonetheless, it is from Pari's personal account of events that the reader discovers how deeply traumatized Abdullah was. For instance, Pari narrates how when she was in sixth-grade, her classmates went for "an overnight field trip to the Monterey Bay Aquarium" (p.413), but she did not join them. She stayed home and watched a motion picture film with her parents. Abdullah was always uncomfortable about her staying away from them. It could be interpreted that he was afraid of losing her just as he had lost his sister. His trauma affected the life of his daughter in many ways, and actually destroys her social life. But Pari recounts that her greatest desire for her father was to be able to "take away his sadness." (p.401) Unfortunately, by the time Pari is able to take away his sadness because she has finally found his lost sister, Abdullah's sadness and trauma has taken him into an abyss of no memories.

Abdullah does two things to help him suppress the memory of his experience. First, he relocates to the United States from Afghanistan. Hosseini does not give the reader information on the journey. It is from Pari, his daughter, that we discover that Abdullah currently resides in the US. This suggests that Abdullah migrates to the US in order to create distance between him and the geographical location where his trauma began. The second, which happens involuntarily, is the loss of his memory. Abdullah describes it in a letter he leaves behind for his sister: "they tell me I must wade into waters, where I will soon drown. Before I match in, I leave this on the shore for you. I pray you find it, sister, so you will know what was in my heart as I went under. (p.461) The "what was in my heart" that Abdullah refers to is the pain of the loss of his sister which he carries all through his life. The unknown waters Abdullah wades into, although, unwillingly, represents the loss of his memory. By losing his memory, Abdullah numbs the pain of losing his sister and suppresses his trauma. The symbol of water and drowning is synonymous with Kambirinachi's experience in *Butter Honey Pig Bread* (2022). Kambirinachi literally wades into the river back home and drowns as a way of suppressing her trauma. Abdullah metaphorically drowns in lost memories.

Another character who drowns in the novel is Nila Wahdati. Nila drowns herself in alcohol when she migrates to France with her 'adopted daughter,' Pari. When Nabi first describes Nila in his letter to Markos, the reader perceives her as an uncompromising woman. However, as Nabi discovers later, Nila suffered in silence as she watched her husband love another before her very own eyes. Nila does not leave because her husband is sick and bedridden, she leaves because he is in love with Nabi. And she tells Nabi: "it was you, Nabi," she said in my ear. "It was always you. Didn't you know?" (p.125) The traumatic experience of having to live with a husband who was in love with another man does not evaporate with her migration to France. Nila carries that weight of trauma with her. And it is evident in her revolving cycle of lovers and her over indulgence in alcohol.

5.0. Conclusion

So far, Khaled Hosseini's characters, through their varied experiences, have exposed the idea of the other trauma. Although trauma has been defined by Freud and others, and examples of events that lead to trauma have been stated, these characters through their individual stories have expanded the situations and events that could lead to trauma. It is ironic that for the two characters—Abdullah and Nila, who are traumatized and migrate, war looms in their homeland. In the definition of trauma earlier stated, the experience of war is one contributing factor to trauma. However, the discussion so far has proven that war is not the reason for Nila and Abdullah's migration or the cause of their trauma. Although war is one common factor that causes trauma, trauma can happen through an array of experiences. For instance, Abdullah's trauma is a result of his cruel separation from

his sister. Also, Nila's trauma is as a result of the rude awakening that her husband loves another. As such, Nila's traumatic experience pushes her to commit suicide. Abdullah's experience pushes him to cling to his daughter in an unhealthy manner. It probably contributes to the loss of his memory. It can be concluded that Abdullah equally dies. Although not by suicide; he dies when he loses his memory. The loss of memory represents the loss of self. Another character who is traumatized is Nabi. When Nabi is writing to Mr. Markos, he does not write that his trauma is as a result of the war in Afghanistan. He rather writes that his trauma is as a result of the part he played in separating a sister from her brother. All of these individual experiences, although fictitious (because the text is a work of fiction) are a writer's way of representing the human experience. It is without question that trauma could occur as a result of a myriad of experiences. At every point in time, it is the individual's reaction to the experience that determines trauma.

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Authors Biodata:

Faith Ben-Daniels

Faith Ben-Daniels is an Associate Professor of African and World Literature at the Department of Languages Education, of the Akenten Appiah-Menka University of Skills Training and Entrepreneurial Development, (AAMUSTED) Ghana. She is an alumna of the University of Ghana and the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, where she obtained her undergraduate and postgraduate degrees respectively in English. She is also an alumna of the University of Education, Winneba, where she obtained a Diploma in Education. She is currently also serving as the Acting Dean for the Faculty of Education and Communication Sciences at AAMUSTED. Her research interests are in traditional storytelling practices from across the world, children's literature, supernatural discussions in literature, migration literature, African womanism and feminism.

Jonathan Essuman is a Senior Lecturer of literature at the Department of Languages Education, Akenten Appiah-Menka University of Skills Training and Entrepreneurial Development, (AAMUSTED) Kumasi. He holds a PhD degree from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi. In his teaching career, he always put the learner at the center of the learning activities and places a special emphasis on diversity and practical experiences. His research interests are within the scope of postcolonial literature, emerging discourses on Literature and the Environment, contemporary perspectives on Africana Womanism and emerging discussions on Migration and African Migrants and has published in these areas. He has attended several conferences both locally and internationally and presented papers at some of these conferences.

Rita Ndonibi is a Lecturer of Literature in the Department of Languages Education at Akenten Appiah-Menka University of Skills Training and Entrepreneurial Development, Kumasi, Ghana. Her research interests are Comparative literature, Africana Womanism, Feminism, Women Empowerment in African literature, and Marxism. She loves empowering women and thinks that teaching students to think critically would help them become more adaptable in a world that is changing quickly. She is an adaptable literature teacher who can work with students of all skill levels and is knowledgeable in various literary genres. She enjoys encouraging students to read independently and assisting them in appreciating the beauty of literature.

Authorship and Level of Contribution:

Faith Ben-Daniels initiated the research idea and topic. She was responsible for the analysis and interpretation of the text as a traumatic text, using Freud's definition of trauma.

Jonathan Essuman's contribution focused on the discussion of Freud's theory on trauma.

Rita Ndonibi was responsible for the gathering of relevant data from psychology and other related texts, and the discussion of the data gathered.

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