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ABSTRACT

Memory studies has relied heavily on Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory to describe how catastrophic histories reach generations that did not live through them. This article asks what becomes of that framework when the catastrophe has not ended. Reading Cynthia Ozick's *The Shawl* and Saul Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet* alongside Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* and Ibtisam Azem's *The Book of Disappearance*, it argues that postmemory rests on three assumptions that Palestinian literary memory unsettles: that the traumatic event has concluded, that the postgeneration stands at a remove from it, and that the labor of memory is fundamentally reparative. The analysis moves through three registers drawn from Hirsch's own architecture of transmission. At the level of the object, a shawl functions as a relic mediating irrevocable loss, while house keys and Ottoman land registers operate as counter-archival evidence underwriting claims to return. At the level of place, an indifferent New York neglects the past, whereas Jaffa undergoes administrative erasure through renaming. At the level of the body, residual injury gives way to ongoing inscription. Drawing on decolonizing trauma scholarship, settler colonial theory, and clinical work on continuous traumatic stress, the article contends that postmemory requires recalibration rather than rejection, and that Sa'di and Abu-Lughod's account of a doubling of memory and postmemory indicates one route. Throughout, the comparison presumes asymmetry rather than equivalence between the two histories.

KEYWORDS

Postmemory

Nakba

Holocaust

Marianne Hirsch

Settler Colonialism

Introduction

Modern and contemporary scholarship has devoted sustained attention to questions of identity and trauma through the lens of memory. This scholarly engagement has established memory as a productive analytical framework for examining histories and ongoing realities of violence, dispossession, and trauma. Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory emerged from attempts to theorize the intergenerational transmission of Holocaust memory, accounting for how subsequent generations inherit collective traumatic memory through photographs, storytelling, and affective traces. The concept has since been extended to other histories of collective violence, including the Palestinian Nakba, where it has informed analyses of cultural and literary representations of inherited trauma. Yet the conditions under which Jewish and Palestinian postmemory take shape remain fundamentally different. Jewish literary postmemory emerged in the aftermath of the Holocaust, whereas Palestinian literary postmemory continues to develop in the context of ongoing displacement, occupation, and

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settler-colonial violence. This distinction complicates any universal application of postmemory as a theoretical framework, raising questions about how inherited memory is produced, transmitted, and mobilized across different historical and cultural contexts, particularly those marked by unresolved rupture and continuing violence. Through a connective reading of Jewish and Palestinian literary memory, this article examines how narration, locality, and resistance operate across distinct cultural and mnemonic contexts. It argues that, although the two traditions share important mnemonic structures, their divergent historical conditions expose both the possibilities and the limits of postmemory as a transcultural framework.

This article employs postmemory to study the relational and literary connections between Holocaust and Nakba memory, connections shaped by historical and political entanglements. To avoid universalizing culturally specific trauma, utilizing postmemory as a framework is contingent on the active recognition of the historical, political, and cultural factors that delineate the distinct ways in which collective memory is recalled and transmitted within different communities. In her conceptualization of postmemory, Hirsch describes the inheritance of traumatic memory as a transmission process driven by familial stories, photographs of survivors of trauma, as well as through the affective engagement of the postgeneration. Departing from Hirsch's model, this study reexamines her premise of historical distance to include alternative forms of trauma resulting from unresolved or ongoing violence and displacement. This reevaluation is founded under the assertion that postmemory operates differently when it addresses contexts shaped by circumstances of unsettled conflict. Commonly referenced as the Nakba, the 1948 forced displacement of Palestinians from their land is often invoked to explore the persistent state of spatial restriction and embodied experience that blurs the lines between lived memory and mediated recollection. In the Palestinian literary context, the Nakba is synonymous with the continuous plight of Palestinians as it represents the inception of their collective loss of land and self-determination.

The influence of the Holocaust on memory scholarship is clear in its orientation, which centers archives, absences, and belatedness as points of focus. It presents itself in the archival backdrop of Jan and Aleida Assmann's concept of cultural memory, in the commemorative turn described through Pierre Nora's configuration of the modern memory boom, as well as in Hirsch's explicit ambition to utilize postmemory as "a form of repair" (6). The Holocaust's centrality to Jewish postmemory is marked by the aftermath of loss and its residual trauma. By contrast, Palestinian postmemory outwardly displays a political consciousness that anchors embodied traumatic recollection as a vehicle of resistance, rather than as a form of passive representation or as a means toward closure. In order to account for these divergent conditions, this article draws on theories of collective and cultural memory alongside notions of Palestinian embodied memory to study the distinct utility of postmemory in the representation of the Holocaust and the Nakba in Jewish and Palestinian literature. Through a connective reading of Cynthia Ozick's *The Shawl*, Saul Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*, and Ibtisam Azem's *The Book of Disappearance*, this article highlights the role of literature as a site where collective memory is not only represented but also actively reshaped, contested, and negotiated. Going beyond a consideration of postmemory as shared trauma, this article also underlines the inherent asymmetry characterizing stakes of memory across the two distinct histories of violence and trauma.

Scholarly work on postmemory and the inheritance of trauma has been developed to account for the aftermath of collective calamity. Foundational authors such as Marianne Hirsch, Dominick LaCapra, and James Young engage with the Holocaust through an attention toward questions of transmission, representation, and the materialization of memory (93; 220; 12). These contributions echo Maurice Halbwachs's critical articulations on the social dimension of

the process of recollection, while paralleling related endeavors that expand on concerns of intergenerational transmission, archival traces, and affective engagement (27). Comparably, scholarship on Palestinian collective memory, with the Nakba at its center, has been profoundly shaped by the critical interventions of scholars such as Lila Abu-Lughod, Ahmad H. Sa'di, Elias Khoury, Nur Masalha, and Anaheed Al-Hardan, alongside engagements with Western memory theory. Authors engaging with Palestinian collective memory diligently challenged the fixed temporality of the Nakba by foregrounding its continuity. Elias Khoury addresses this concern when he writes that "Memory can be a trap, and the *nakba* as only a memory is the biggest trap that can mislead rational analysis of the Palestinian present" (E. Khoury 263). Cautioning against the erasure of the ongoing structural violence against the Palestinian people, he repositions the events of 1948 as the underlying condition of the persistent present-day conflict, not as mere memory, but as an enduring reality that exemplifies the staticity of the Palestinian experience. Masalha extends this line of argument throughout *The Palestine Nakba*, insisting that the catastrophe be written from below, through oral history and subaltern narration, precisely because official historiography has proven structurally incapable of registering it. Despite scholarly consensus regarding the factual continuity of the Nakba, studies utilizing the framework of postmemory to examine Palestinian memory often mobilize the concept without sufficient interrogation of its temporal assumptions or its distinct origin as a Holocaust-centric framework. These tensions, while at times acknowledged, are rarely fully developed or systematically addressed. Failure to confront these concerns not only affects our ability to properly explore Palestinian inherited memory, but also hinders prospective attempts at studying the Holocaust and the Nakba side by side.

Scarce endeavors have been made to mnemonically connect the Holocaust and the Nakba due to concerns of flattening their historical specificity or marginalizing the distinct human tragedy of the Holocaust. Yet a number of scholars challenged these assumptions by presenting novel perspectives that promote memory's productive nature. In one of his articles, Michael Rothberg utilizes his framework of multidirectionality to examine Warsaw and Gaza as locations of traumatic memory. Rothberg argues that public memory is shaped by "transcultural borrowing, exchange, and adaptation," qualities that render distinct collective memories dependent on one another in matters of articulation ("From Gaza to Warsaw" 524). Similarly, in *The Generation of Postmemory*, Marianne Hirsch devotes a section of her study to a reading of Ghassan Kanafani's *Return to Haifa* alongside Holocaust literary texts, highlighting the role of memory objects in narratives of return. (206). A more in-depth analysis of the parallelism of these two historical events was contributed by Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg in their ground-breaking book *The Holocaust and the Nakba: A New Grammar of Trauma and History*. Bashir and Goldberg trace both the Holocaust and the Nakba to European colonialism, as they argue that the two calamities are related through their status as consequences of "modern political violence created by the convergence of nationalism, imperialism, orientalism, and colonialism" (14). The authors maintain the distinction of the two national narratives while echoing Rothberg's sentiment on transcultural borrowing, as they highlight the similarity of the syntax and grammar used to frame each of the two narratives. Additionally, Avraham Sela and Alon Kadish expand on the parallelism between Israeli and Palestinian national narratives by examining the arcs that shape their development. The two authors describe the Israeli national narrative to be marked by themes of destruction, redemption, Holocaust, rebirth, exile, and return (6). Comparably, they trace the Palestinian national narrative through Nakba and defeat, rebellion, resistance, exile, and desire for return (6). These parallelisms further solidify Rothberg's claim of the transcultural dialogue intrinsic not only to collective memory, but to national narratives as well.

Two more recent contributions extend this connective work in directions that bear on the present study, and one of them requires the article to qualify its own premise. Nadim Khoury proposes postnational memory to name a mode of deliberation that extends the communicative bounds of remembrance beyond national membership and disrupts the territorialization of memory along national lines. Where nationalism seeks congruence between memory and territory, Nadim Khoury argues, joint deliberation on the Holocaust and the Nakba unsettles that congruence. Nawal Musleh-Motut pursues a comparable aim ethnographically rather than theoretically, working with Palestinians and Israelis in Canadian diasporas whom she identifies as belonging to the Holocaust and Nakba postmemory generations, and using vernacular photographs to prompt exchange between them. Her governing distinction, that participants come to connect rather than compare their histories of suffering and exile, states an ethical commitment this article shares. Musleh-Motut's study also complicates any suggestion that postmemory as a field has remained indifferent to Palestine, since Hirsch herself has publicly endorsed the project. That endorsement is worth registering rather than passing over. What it indicates, however, is engagement at the level of dialogic ethics and method: postmemory extended to a new set of participants and a new archive of photographs. What has not followed from it is a revision of the framework's temporal architecture, which continues to presume that the catastrophe being transmitted lies behind the generation transmitting it. That architecture is what the present article examines.

Several further interventions deserve particular attention here, since each approaches the question this article poses and arrives at conclusions it must contend with. The most direct is Wael Salam's, who has written twice on *Mornings in Jenin* and whose argument runs close to the one advanced below. Salam contends that Palestinian memory in Abulhawa's novel operates as non-violent resistance and political claim rather than as passive symptom, and that reading such literature through trauma theory serves to decolonize the theory itself. In a companion essay he presses the temporal point directly, arguing that Palestinian memories are "both persistent and ongoing" (95) and that for characters who remain displaced, "their memories of the Nakba never become a past because they are still displaced, and danger is still lurking" (102). Salam's formulation of Amal's condition as governed "not by a mere past, but rather by a past-in-the-present" (109) names with unusual economy what the present article traces across four novels. Two things distinguish the study that follows. Salam works within Palestinian American fiction and reads Abulhawa alongside Alyan; the present article sets Palestinian narratives against Jewish ones in order to locate the divergence structurally rather than to establish it by assertion. And where Salam addresses trauma theory broadly, the target here is postmemory specifically, whose assumptions about generational position differ from those of the Caruthian model and require separate accounting. Salam's own observation that Abulhawa's novel "draws a parallel between Holocaust survivors and Nakba survivors" indicates that the comparative frame is not imposed from outside but already at work in the primary text.

Ronit Lentin's *Co-memory and Melancholia* examines Israeli commemorations of the Nakba and proposes "co-memory" to name a remembrance undertaken by those positioned on the far side of the injury, a formulation that unsettles any assumption that postmemory belongs securely to the descendants of victims. More recently, Layla AlAmmar has argued that Palestinian cultural production generates what she terms "postmemorial absence," a condition in which the perpetual activation of a traumatic past forecloses meaningful inhabitation of the present and suspends the formation of identity (1–3). This article shares AlAmmar's conviction that postmemory functions differently when trauma refuses to recede into the past. However, whereas AlAmmar locates in Palestinian postmemory a burden and a sense of evacuation, the

readings developed here identify, alongside that burden, a generative and consciously political mode of memory work. The novels examined here do not merely register the cost of an unfinished catastrophe. They put inherited memory to work as an instrument of claim-making. This is a difference of emphasis rather than of kind, and holding both accounts in view yields a fuller picture than either does alone.

Despite the significance of these contributions, the tendency to study the Holocaust and the Nakba in isolation still persists. This is in part due to the distinct conditions of the Palestinian Nakba, which continue to challenge the framework of postmemory through tensions marked by issues of continuity and political asymmetry. The underexplored gap in the theorization of the framework of postmemory across historically asymmetrical contexts of violence remains a core concern in the development of connective studies of Holocaust and Nakba memory. This is not merely a disciplinary oversight but rather a symptom of a theoretical inadequacy that fails to connect postmemory's presumptions of historical aftermath and temporal distance to the Palestinian mnemonic context marked by continuity and cultural resistance. This article contributes to this gap by challenging the conceptual limitations of the framework of postmemory through a connected literary exploration of the representation of Holocaust and Nakba memory in Jewish and Palestinian works of fiction. By examining key narrative moments in each of the four novels, this article argues that postmemory serves as a productive, yet asymmetrical, instrument for the analysis of violence and trauma across different and uneven geopolitical locations.

The comparative framework adopted here is guided by a shared set of formal preoccupations across the four novels, making comparison meaningful rather than merely juxtapositional: each stages memory transmission within a familial frame, each assigns interpretive weight to material objects and urban space, and each registers trauma at the level of the body. *The Shawl* and *Mr. Sammler's Planet* are both American Jewish narratives written by authors with no direct experience of the camps, which situates them squarely within the postmemorial and secondhand relation that Hirsch describes. *Mornings in Jenin* and *The Book of Disappearance* were composed decades after 1948 by Palestinian writers positioned differently in relation to it, Abulhawa in diaspora and Azem within the geography of the rupture. The comparison is not one of equivalent suffering, and nothing in what follows should be read as such. It is a comparison of mnemonic form: of what memory is asked to do in each case, and of what the asking reveals about the framework used to describe it. The analysis moves through three registers, objects, sites, and bodies, that correspond to Hirsch's own architecture of transmission. Reading the two sets of novels through the same categories is what allows the divergence between them to appear as a structural feature rather than an incidental one.

This article is divided into four sections. The first provides a detailed exploration of the framework of postmemory and addresses the tensions that result from its application in the Palestinian context. The second examines the shifting role of memory objects from archival relics to physical evidence in *The Shawl* and *Mornings in Jenin*. The third centers on the examination of the urban landscape in *Mr. Sammler's Planet* and *The Book of Disappearance* as a space where the past is either ignored or actively erased. The fourth draws on all four novels to discuss the presence of corporeal memory between embodied remembering and recursive violence. The conclusion synthesizes these findings by connectively situating the two sets of narratives in an open dialogue marked by shared mnemonic strategies, structural limitations, and points of divergence.

The Framework of Postmemory and its Limits

The quality of post-ness that characterizes Hirsch's theorization of postmemory arises as a result of engagement with the aftermath of calamity. Absence frames the mnemonic transmission process as offspring navigate the intergenerational trauma of their parents by confronting their verbal and non-verbal memory accounts. Hirsch highlights the role of photographs, narratives, and memory objects in bridging the gap between lived and mediated experience, as she describes the workings of postmemory alongside notions of projection and imagination (5). Establishing postmemory as a creative process led by imaginative investment provides a functional framework for exploring the mnemonic link that the postgeneration have toward their parents' past, as well as the literary and artistic productions that sought to represent the residual trauma left by a looming collective catastrophe. While Hirsch's postmemory has been a foundational theoretical instrument in the examination of inherited memory, its conceptual assumptions of aftermath and temporal distance require closer scrutiny.

Postmemory assumes temporal closure through its focus on the residual trauma caused by the conclusion of a past event. Hirsch situates the postgeneration as a central subject of study and orients her theory in representation over embodiment, inheritance over lived experience, and repair over loss. This conceptualization allows for the exploration of the unique perspective of a postgeneration that seeks to decipher and mediate the absence caused by an imposing past. Through its focus on the aftermath of trauma, postmemory privileges the ethical representation of an inaccessible past, which renders mediated forms of memory, such as photographs and material objects, crucial for its intergenerational transmission process. Postmemory's conceptual assumptions situate it within a theoretical tradition of memory studies that equally relies on temporal distance for the articulation of memory. It parallels similar assumptions made by Halbwachs, Jan and Aleida Assmann, Nora, and Young, which consider aftermath to be a condition for collective and cultural remembering. For instance, Jan and Aleida Assmann's study of the influence of institutionalized memory in shaping national and cultural identity, as well as Nora's commentary on the succession of sites of memory as a result of the disappearance of lived memory, echo Hirsch's formulation of a postmemory that materializes through temporal distance and belatedness (Assmann 9; Nora 7). These articulations delineate a clear progression that views memory as the outcome of the culmination of a lived experience. Much of the same logic is applied by leading scholars in trauma theory, a field indispensable to the development of postmemory's conceptual framework. Cathy Caruth describes trauma as "the narrative of a belated experience" that recurs through fragmentation and displacement (7). Comparably, LaCapra explores his concepts of "acting-out" and "working-through" as distinct patterns of behavior for processing a past traumatic event (59). Both Caruth and LaCapra provide critical perspectives that portray trauma as the ongoing consequence of a lived experience that defies assimilation while continuing to intrude on the present. The two authors respectively examine the long-term effects of trauma that can be traced to specific events in the past, which orient their work within a fixed temporality.

The critique advanced here is not unprecedented, nor is it presented as such. Over the past two decades, trauma studies has subjected its Eurocentric foundations to sustained critical scrutiny, and the implications of that interrogation extend directly to postmemory, even when the concept itself is not explicitly invoked. Roger Luckhurst, for instance, argues that trauma theory, in its inattention to political conditions, "shockingly fails to address atrocity, genocide and war" (Luckhurst 22). Writing during the same period, Rothberg questions whether trauma, in its then-current formulation, "provides the best framework for thinking about the legacies of violence in the colonized/postcolonial world" ("Decolonizing" 224). The most systematic

articulation of this critique, however, appears in Stef Craps's *Postcolonial Witnessing*, which argues that the field's founding texts have established a hegemonic paradigm that must be challenged if trauma theory is to fulfil its ethical promise. For Craps, this requires bringing the social and historical conditions that shape suffering back into analytical view (Craps 2–4). Irene Visser traces the implications of this critique for literary studies through Katherine Baxter's observation that the dominant paradigm's emphasis on individual injury "potentially closes off other modes of presenting trauma," including those that foreground collective experience, protracted violence, and political struggle (qtd. in Visser 109). Visser extends this argument by insisting that resistance and resilience should be understood not as individual responses but "as part of a communal process of living and working through trauma" (Visser 108). It is this insight that bears most directly on the present study. If postmemory is conventionally understood as a mode of repair undertaken by descendants in relation to a traumatic past, its explanatory force becomes less certain when trauma remains communal, ongoing, and politically consequential.

Clinical research on protracted violence supplies an unexpectedly precise vocabulary for what the literary framework lacks. Gillian Eagle and Debra Kaminer note that prevailing conceptualizations of traumatic stress "retain the assumption that traumatic experiences have occurred in the past," and they propose continuous traumatic stress to describe the position of populations inhabiting conditions of "realistic current and ongoing danger" (85). Their account isolates four features that distinguish such conditions: the pervasiveness of the threatening context, the location of the stressor in the present and future rather than the past, the difficulty of discriminating real from anticipated danger, and the absence of functioning protective systems (85). Each of these bears on the mnemonic situation this article describes. Where danger is anticipated as well as remembered, the temporal partition on which postmemory depends does not hold. A parallel formulation reaches literary criticism through feminist psychology. Laura Brown's concept of insidious trauma, developed to name the traumatogenic effects of oppression that operate below the threshold of spectacular violence, has been taken up by Ann Cvetkovich and, more recently, by Kaisa Ilmonen, who observes that such formulations compel critics "to move beyond medicalized articulations" of injury and to attend to harm that is structural and quotidian rather than punctual (177). Samah Jabr pushes this line of thinking further from within clinical practice itself. Drawing on her psychiatric work in the occupied territories, she argues that Western trauma models pathologize normal responses to abnormal conditions and insists that Palestinian resilience operates not despite ongoing violence but through it (Jabr 12). For Jabr, the catastrophe is not a condition to be lived—a distinction that echoes Ilmonen's call to move beyond medicalized articulations of injury and that anticipates the literary analysis developed below (34–36). Postmemory was not built to register injury of this kind. Its exemplary objects, the photograph and the surviving heirloom, presuppose a rupture whose edges can be located.

If continuous traumatic stress names the phenomenology, settler colonial theory names the mechanism. Patrick Wolfe's formulation has become the standard reference: settler colonizers, he writes, "come to stay: invasion is a structure not an event" (388). Elimination, in his account, functions as "an organizing principal of settler-colonial society rather than a one-off (and superseded) occurrence" (388). The relevance to the present argument is direct and, in Wolfe's own text, explicitly Palestinian. He identifies renaming as "central to the cadastral effacement/replacement of the Palestinian Arab presence," and he cites Mark LeVine's assessment that Jaffa "has had to be emptied of its Arab past and Arab inhabitants in order for architects to be able to reenvision the region as a 'typical Middle Eastern city'" (388–89). Setting Wolfe's structure alongside Hirsch's framework exposes an incompatibility that is temporal before it is political. Postmemory presupposes an event that has ended and a generation positioned after it. Settler colonialism, as Wolfe describes it, has no after. What

follows from this is not that postmemory becomes inapplicable to Palestinian material, but that its central terms require redefinition when they travel. The postgeneration is not, in this context, a generation that came after. It is a generation that came into the middle.

As a framework, then, postmemory becomes unstable when its underlying assumptions of temporal distance are challenged by conditions of ongoing structural violence and displacement. Contexts of continuous or recursive violence disrupt postmemory's fundamental premise of the distinction between past and present, as well as generation and postgeneration. Scholars writing about the Palestinian Nakba have repeatedly demonstrated the continuous nature of the events of 1948 by exploring their enduring legacy. Ahmad H. Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod describe the Nakba as "the creator of an unsettled inner time" that fragments and structures Palestinian identity and history (5). Similarly, Diana Allan applies the term "past continuous" to portray the Palestinian experience of an ongoing Nakba that persists far beyond its temporal boundaries (1). In the Palestinian context, inherited memory is further disrupted by developing conflict and violence, which leads to prevailing tensions between a continuous past and a stagnant present. These tensions stretch postmemory's claims of distance and belatedness by effectively blurring the line between notions of witnessing and experiencing. Hirsch's core theorization regarding the process of intergenerational memory transmission, alongside her analysis of familial dynamics and mnemonic objects, remains essential for the exploration of inherited memory. However, under conditions of continuous violence, these elements require critical adjustments so that they may account for both absence and presence. Palestinian postmemory does not center on the representation of absence or the reparation of trauma; it echoes the ongoing presence of the Nakba through embodied and lived experience. This crucial distinction unsettles Hirsch's framework since it portrays the body as more than a receiver of inherited memory, but rather as a site for active inscription and resistance.

There is, moreover, a formulation already available within Palestinian memory scholarship that anticipates much of this argument, and it appears in a text that has become foundational to the field. Writing of the descendants of 1948, Sa'di and Abu-Lughod observe that ongoing displacements and personal encounters with racism "fire this generation to identify with the 'imagined community' of Palestinians through a doubling of memory and postmemory" (21). The phrase repays attention. Doubling is not succession. Hirsch's architecture depends on a relay in which memory belongs to one generation and postmemory to the next, and the ethical and interpretive work of the second consists in bridging a gap the first cannot close. Sa'di and Abu-Lughod describe instead a simultaneity, a generation that inherits an account of catastrophe and accumulates its own direct experience of the same structure of violence, holding both at once. What this article contributes is a sustained literary demonstration of that doubling, traced through the objects, sites, and bodies of four novels, and an assessment of what it costs postmemory as a framework.

One qualification is necessary before proceeding, and it guards against a distortion that a comparative argument of this kind can easily produce. To describe Palestinian memory as continuous is not to describe it as uniform. Al-Hardan's fieldwork among Palestinians in Syria demonstrates precisely the opposite, tracking how the meaning of the Nakba has shifted across generations, across political affiliations, and under the pressure of subsequent catastrophes, and challenging what she identifies as the nationalist assumption that memories of 1948 are static and commonly held. Nothing in the following analysis should be taken to posit a singular Palestinian mnemonic subject. The novels examined here are two texts among many, positioned differently in relation to diaspora and to the geography of the rupture, and the claims advanced on their basis are claims about a mnemonic tendency rather than about a people.

The Mnemonic Object: From Relic to Proof

Mnemonic objects play a prominent role in the inheritance of memory by materializing the past in the present and evoking absence through presence. Marianne Hirsch bestows great significance on memory objects, particularly photographs and visual material culture, as a core element in her study of Jewish postmemory. Heirlooms, clothing items, and personal objects trigger mental and sensory recollection of past experiences, essentially serving as portals to the past. For survivors of trauma, memory objects are relics linked to vivid recollections and unresolved emotions. They maintain a kindred mnemonic value to the postgeneration through a function in mediating past familial and collective episodes that predate their birth. Mnemonic objects carry different meanings and tackle distinct concerns across divergent temporal and political contexts of collective trauma. Hirsch explores the role of objects as "points of memory" that act as spatial and temporal markers for the past (61). Utilizing Roland Barthes's concept of the punctum, Hirsch examines the symbolic quality of memory objects that allows for the intersection between the past and the present, and establishes a connection between viewer and image (47). This connection grants the postgeneration access to imaginatively inhabit and mnemonically conjure the lived experiences of previous generations. A clear pattern materializes upon the examination of the utility of mnemonic objects across distinct literary contexts, which reveals a stark contrast between the way these objects operate under diverse cultural and political conditions. In literary texts centering on the Holocaust, memory objects often function as relics that aid in the preservation of the past or the mediation of its residual trauma. Conversely, Palestinian literature features memory objects as concrete evidence of the right of return and desire for self-determination, thereby functioning as a form of mnemonic resistance against forces of erasure. The distinct roles that memory objects occupy within different literary traditions directly reflect the temporal, cultural, and political stakes intrinsic to each collective trauma.

Cynthia Ozick's *The Shawl* is a significant literary piece that engages in postmemorial work through its exploration of motherhood, survival, and loss in a post-Holocaust void. Ozick introduces the shawl as a central mnemonic object through which Rosa mediates the loss of her infant daughter, Magda, who was killed in the concentration camps. As a personal object used to shelter Magda from the bleak reality of the camps and conceal her presence from the guards, the shawl functions as an extension of her being. It mediates the loss of Magda by acting as a stand-in that triggers retrospective recollections in light of present affective needs. Rosa proclaims it a "magic shawl," capable of conjuring up visions of her daughter in various stages of her life (5). Adhering to Hirsch's model, Rosa utilizes the shawl to mnemonically imagine the past and mourn the loss of her daughter. The events of the novel take place years after the end of World War II, which further situates it within postmemory's characteristic state of belatedness. Within the confinement of a safe but hollow life in Florida, Rosa clings to the shawl for remnants of a past that hosted her youthful enthusiasm, promising potential, and beloved daughter. Trauma intersects with nostalgia, prompting her to insist that survivors of the Holocaust have three lives, "The life before, the life during, the life after" (58). The shawl allows Rosa to traverse the temporal limitations separating the fragmented sections of her life, structuring a mode of recollection that sustains her denial of her daughter's death. Ozick portrays this memory object as a relic of a forgotten world; Rosa ardently performs a ritual to unleash its mnemonic power by touching its texture, inhaling its scent, and kissing its surface (31–32, 62). Sensory memory and imagination collaborate to trigger visual illusions of Magda that help Rosa conjure visions of her as a wealthy doctor and a professor of Greek philosophy (35, 39). As a relic, the shawl functions to preserve Magda's memory, sustain Rosa's attachment, and archive the tragedy that led to her premature death. It represents absence

through presence, thus foregrounding the belatedness of the Holocaust and the finality of its aftermath.

The temporal logic of Ozick's novella deserves closer attention, since it is precisely this logic that the Palestinian texts will disturb. Rosa's ritual is efficacious only because Magda is irrecoverable. Were there any prospect of the daughter's return, the shawl would function as an aid to search rather than as an instrument of conjuring, and Rosa's imaginative labor would be redirected from the past toward a future. The object's mnemonic power is constituted by the closure of the event it commemorates. The end of the novel emphasizes the retrospective nature of postmemory as Rosa stoically proclaims "Magda was away," a declaration that serves to signal the completion of her ritual of worship, the culmination of Magda's life, and the climax of the narrative (70). By means of the mnemonic object, the narrative signals an imaginative turn where memory is utilized to mourn substantial loss and transform the past to fit the affective needs of the present. What Hirsch's framework describes with real precision is this operation: a past that is finished, an object that mediates it, and a subject whose labor is interpretive rather than instrumental.

Conversely, in Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*, mnemonic objects such as house keys and property deeds perform a concrete and political rather than symbolic function. Abulhawa explores the comprehensive transmission of memory and material culture to the "heirs" of a small pastoral village in Palestine at the cusp of an ongoing Nakba (35). Unlike Rosa's shawl, the mnemonic objects represented in *Mornings in Jenin* transcend their retrospective function in order to fulfill a more pressing prospective purpose that anchors the Palestinian claim to the land and right of return. These mnemonic objects are not merely symbols of a lost home, but rather factual evidence of ownership and belonging. Inscribed in these items are the political claims of a territorial discourse that fuels resistance, allowing them to function as counter-archives. Through the lens of sensory memory, Abulhawa describes the material presence of "the iron keys" and "the yellowed property deeds" by evoking their phantom weight and faded hue (140). In the novel, house keys and property deeds are intergenerationally inherited in hopes of reclaiming what has been lost, allowing these mnemonic objects to bear a legitimacy capable of tangible intervention that can facilitate conditions for accountability and justice. The claim to the land, history, and national identity takes shape through material items and vivid mnemonic episodes that solidify the ongoing state of systematic violence and dispossession. It materializes in moments big and small throughout the narrative: the characters' profound attachment to the olive groves and the fruits of their harvest, the cultural songs of the "nye" followed by the dancing of the "dabke," as well as the episodic and sensory memory of the homeland (46). For the Palestinian characters in the novel, material objects and oral memory are a defense mechanism against the awareness that they were "slowly being erased from the world. from its history and from its future" (48–49). The array of ownership documents in their possession, "the large iron keys …, the crumbling land registers issued by the Ottomans, the deeds from the British mandate," all serve as legal and concrete proof of their claims to the land (35). As active instruments of political agency and resistance, these mnemonic objects represent legally binding proof of the collective dispossession of Palestinians as they maintain a factual link to contested geography and occupied ancestral homes.

Abulhawa places this bequest immediately after a sentence that theorizes the novel's own temporality, and the juxtaposition is not incidental. In "the sorrow of a history buried alive," she writes, "the year 1948 in Palestine fell from the calendar into exile, ceasing to reckon the marching count of days, months, and years, instead becoming an infinite mist of one moment in history" (35). The year does not recede into the past. It exits chronology and persists as atmosphere, a condition the novel figures spatially rather than temporally, as mist rather than

as distance. Read against that sentence, the inheritance that follows cannot be a bequest from a closed era, since the era in question has not closed. Equally telling is the grammar of the bequest itself, which strings the iron keys, the Ottoman registers, the Mandate deeds, "their memories and love of the land," and "the dauntless will not to leave the spirit of forty generations trapped beneath the subversion of thieves" along a single undifferentiated series (35). Documentary instruments and affective dispositions arrive in the same breath and carry the same grammatical weight. Hirsch's postmemory holds these registers apart, assigning the material object the task of mediating an affect that cannot pass directly between generations. Abulhawa's syntax declines the separation, and in declining it makes the novel's own theoretical claim: what descends to the postgeneration is neither document nor feeling but an unbroken obligation.

The counter-archival function of these objects merits emphasis, since it marks a genuine departure from the model of transmission Hirsch describes. Masalha's argument that the Nakba must be narrated from below, through oral history and the testimony of the dispossessed, rests on the premise that official archives were constituted through the same processes that produced the dispossession. Where the archive is itself an instrument of erasure, the objects that survive outside it acquire an evidentiary weight they would not otherwise carry. Brigitte Herremans has recently made a comparable case for Palestinian literary writing as a form of informal archive that emerges "from below, often in response to silences," and that operates as counter-hegemonic documentation rather than as commemoration (97). Abulhawa's keys and deeds sit precisely at this juncture. They are simultaneously affective heirlooms and documentary instruments, and the novel refuses to resolve them into one or the other. The Ottoman land registers and Mandate deeds are objects of longing, certainly, but they are also, in a quite literal sense, title. Hirsch's punctum registers the first of these functions and has no apparatus for the second.

Mnemonic objects fulfill different functions across the two novels due to varying underlying conditions of residual and ongoing trauma. In Ozick's portrayal of the aftermath of the Holocaust, the shawl acquires a symbolic role as it represents the irrevocable loss of Rosa's daughter. In contrast, the material objects in *Mornings in Jenin* surpass abstract symbolism to account for a context characterized by ongoing systematic violence. This move from affective relic to tangible proof signifies the political agency and spirit of resistance embedded in Palestinian literature. By emphasizing the role of mnemonic objects in mediating between the aftermath of a collective tragedy and its present remembrance, Hirsch's postmemory centers on the reconstruction and imagination of lost experiences. Alternatively, Abulhawa's novel approaches memory from the perspective of the past continuous, as she mobilizes material objects to assert the present continuity of occupation and conflict. Under such conditions, oral memory and mnemonic objects do not merely recall the past for the purpose of affective investment; instead, they bridge the gap between the past and the present by contesting what persistently remains: dispossession, violence, and loss.

Sites of Memory: Between Alienation and Erasure

Nora's influential claim that "we speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left" was introduced as commentary against the modern obsession with commemoration that substitutes lived experience with sites of memory (7). The notion that memory can be inscribed in landscapes, sites, and geographies energized a modern boom of commemorative memory that was triggered by the anxiety of losing witness accounts. This was particularly true of the Holocaust, as the gradual passing of survivors, coupled with the ethical imperative of "never again," prompted concerns over the preservation of its memory. Within this context, commemorative practices sustain the formation of postmemory through archival and physical

materials. Conversely, due to various restrictions on the memorialization of its violence and trauma, Palestinian postmemory lacks institutional forms of recognition and commemoration. Bashir and Goldberg explore this erasure of Palestinian history as a consequence of what has been dubbed the "Nakba Law," a 2011 Israeli impediment against attempts to commemorate the events of 1948 within Israel-Palestine (2). The general lack of institutional commemoration of the Nakba and the abundance of Holocaust memorialization distinctly impact Jewish and Palestinian postmemory through respective fears of forgetting and threats of erasure.

The asymmetry here is worth stating in structural terms rather than descriptive ones. Nora's lieux de mémoire arise where milieux de mémoire have receded, which is to say that commemoration presupposes the cessation of the practices it replaces. Wolfe's account describes a situation in which the milieu is not receding but being actively dismantled, and in which the replacement of names, landscapes, and cadastral records constitutes an ongoing administrative operation rather than a completed historical fact (388). Nora's framework diagnoses forgetting as a byproduct of modernity. It has no category for forgetting as policy. When the Nakba Law criminalizes commemoration, the resulting absence of sites of memory cannot be read, in Nora's terms, as the natural attenuation of lived memory. It is the intended outcome of a legislative act. This distinction determines what the literary text is asked to do. Where commemoration is institutionally available, literature supplements the memorial. Where it is prohibited, literature substitutes for it.

In Saul Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, the urban landscape of New York represents a temporal void where the past is alienated from the present. Artur Sammler, a Holocaust survivor, attempts to cope with the ethical decay of modern Western society while navigating his traumatic past and the prospects of an ideal future. The novel positions Sammler amidst his experiences in the concentration camp, his shallow existence in an amnesiac New York described as "quivering, riotous, lurid," and the utopian aspirations of abandoning Earth to inhabit the moon (147). To Sammler, Poland becomes a site of trauma engraved with memories of loss of home, loved ones, and humanity. He survives that experience by having to crawl out of a mass grave, which signifies his physical and spiritual rebirth but plagues him with intense feelings of survivor guilt. Sammler's rebirth grants him a renewed lifeline in an unsympathetic New York that ignores his history and amplifies his feelings of inadequacy, leading him to view the city as an embodiment of cultural and moral decay, reminiscent of "the collapse of civilization" (307). Sammler's perspective is heavily influenced by his experience as a Holocaust survivor; his memories of war, violence, and moral decay elicit constant concerns over the possibility of a second, renewed collapse. Echoing Rosa's distinction of before, during, and after, Sammler seeks to reunite with the memory that contextualizes his existence, as he wonders: "When had things seemed real, true? In Poland when blinded, in Zamosht when freezing, in the tomb when hungry" (251). Compared to these past experiences, Sammler's life in New York feels both hollow and artificial as it is unable to sustain his memory or acknowledge his history. The city that surrounds him is indifferent rather than hostile, and this distinction matters. New York does not erase Sammler's past; it simply has no use for it. The trauma he carries remains intact and unthreatened, held in a private archive that the urban landscape neither confirms nor contests.

In *The Book of Disappearance*, Ibtisam Azem similarly centers her narrative on the spatial rupture that marks the city of Jaffa. Set in a post-Nakba Palestine, the novel explores an alternative reality where Palestinians abruptly vanish from their homeland. The narrative navigates tensions between presence and absence through its portrayal of Tel Aviv/Jaffa as a layered space where geography is contested, repurposed, and politicized. The Palestinian landscape went through drastic geographical changes after its Nakba; from house demolitions

and destroyed cities and villages to "replaced street names," various attempts have been made to erase historical and geographical landmarks (95). To resist this erasure, Alaa channels his grandmother's memory to maintain the spatial integrity of a pre-1948 Jaffa. He habitually reminds himself "out loud of the names of streets, houses, and people," he records his grandmother's episodic memory shortly after her passing, and he actively attempts to "imagine" her Nakba (95, 228).

Azem's choice of city carries a weight that a reader unfamiliar with the settler colonial literature may miss, and it is worth making explicit. Jaffa functions in that scholarship as a paradigm case. Wolfe cites LeVine's judgment that the city "has had to be emptied of its Arab past and Arab inhabitants in order for architects to be able to reenvision the region as a 'typical Middle Eastern city'" (389), and he identifies renaming as "central to the cadastral effacement/replacement of the Palestinian Arab presence" (388). Masalha's chapter on toponymy supplies the historical substance behind the phrase. Place names in Palestine, he argues, became "a site of fierce contest between the European Zionist settler-coloniser and the colonised Palestinians," a contest in which Palestinian Arab names were "'unnamed' and Hebrewised" and in which indigenous names are held to be "redeemed" only once rendered from Arabic into Hebrew. Renaming, on this account, is not the incidental residue of conquest but one of its instruments, pursued through commissions and surveys with bureaucratic patience. Read against this, Alaa's recitation of street names ceases to be a private mnemonic habit and becomes a counter-cadastral practice. He is not recalling a lost city in the manner of Rosa recalling a lost daughter. He is maintaining a competing register against an official one, name by name, in a contest whose stakes are administrative as much as affective. The novel's speculative premise sharpens the point rather than softening it. By staging the total disappearance of Palestinians, Azem literalizes an operation already underway and invites the reader to notice how smoothly the remaining city absorbs the vacancy.

Despite residing in the same city, Alaa's Jaffa is distinctly different from his grandmother's, altered by systematic endeavors to destroy the Palestinian landscape and obscure its national identity and history. Alaa interacts with his grandmother's experience through a postmemorial approach built on imagination and projection, as he learns to "see" his city, its streets, and its people, as she "[was] seeing" them (16). The English translation of the novel employs the past continuous tense in this passage in a manner that echoes Allan's use of the same term to describe the ongoing urgency of the Nakba. The Palestinian characters in the novel are forced to endure active attempts at erasure in addition to the restrictions against the commemoration of their ongoing calamity. These conditions prompt memory to function as a central archive for the preservation of the past, enabling Alaa to look at his Jaffa and see his grandmother's Nakba. At the end of the novel, when all Palestinians have vanished, Alaa's records of his grandmother's memory are appropriated by his friend Ariel, who intends to publish the work as his own personal finding. This detail rewards attention, since it stages a problem that a comparative study of this kind must confront directly. Ariel's appropriation dramatizes the risk that Palestinian memory, once rendered into text, becomes available for narration by those positioned on the other side of the injury. Lentin's account of Israeli Nakba co-memory identifies the same difficulty from the opposite direction, asking what it means to commemorate a catastrophe one's own community produced. Azem's ending offers no reassurance on this question. The red notebook survives; its owner does not. Azem's authorial decision to construct her narrative around the disappearance of her Palestinian characters is a powerful commentary against the normalization of the absence of Palestinians within the urban landscape. In such an environment, homes, streets, and cities become sites of memory that archive presence through absence, allowing for overwritten traces of life, history, and identity to materialize through spatial memory.

Bellow and Azem respectively center their works on the manifestation of collective memory in sites and locations. Their representation of distinct spatial and temporal conditions triggers different concerns over the mnemonic integrity of the Holocaust and the Nakba. While Bellow emphasizes the state of alienation that marks a shallow urban landscape that fails to adequately acknowledge the momentous impact of the traumatic past, Azem explores memory's utility in reclaiming occupied spaces and resituating Palestinian identity and presence within the urban landscape. The two works equally channel Hirsch's framework in their depiction of intergenerational memory transmission as a central approach to preserving the past. However, unlike the mnemonic disjunction experienced in a progressive yet corrupt New York, Azem's characters tackle the systematic erasure of their identity, history, and way of life. In this context, memory is engraved in sites and bodies, not as a coping mechanism but as a means of survival. Memory actively counters measures to suppress the Palestinian past and eliminate its material and spatial traces in the present. Hirsch's postmemory functions to preserve, recover, and repair the past in an attempt to sustain its memory against the passage of time. This assumption of temporal distance is challenged by Azem's representation of ongoing dispossession and systematic suppression. Under these conditions, memory becomes a site of contestation and resistance, where the past is not merely recalled but rather reaffirmed.

The Body as Archive: Inherited Trauma and Recursive Violence

The mediation of memory does not stop at objects and sites, but extends to the affective and sensory traces imprinted within the body. Freud, LaCapra, and Caruth all focused, in some capacity or other, on collective, individual, and psychological responses against trauma, as they explored the role of memory in concealing, expressing, or re-experiencing traumatic episodes and histories (Freud 319; Caruth 15; LaCapra, "Trauma, Absence, Loss" 716). Similarly, Thomas Fuchs examines the temporal orientation of internalized experience by writing that "Body memory does not take one back to the past, but conveys an implicit effectiveness of the past in the present" (73). Based on its presumptions of temporal closure, Hirsch's postmemory outlines a clear divide between memory and postmemory, generation and postgeneration, and past and present. The body is a secondary archive, alongside photographs, objects, and sites, that sustains the inherited memory of past mediated trauma. Hirsch uses the terms "re-embody" and "re-individualize" to reference the mediation process of mnemonic identification with familial and cultural trauma (36). This stands in stark opposition to the Palestinian context where past trauma blends with present violence to form an ongoing lived reality. Sa'di and Abu-Lughod refer to the Nakba as "the point of reference for other events, past and future" (5). Adrien Zakar echoes this reflection through his attempt to trace the origins of the Nakba as an ideation of catastrophe in Palestinian historiography, as he clarifies its status as both "an instantial event of catastrophe and an ongoing process experienced in the everyday" (117). This described temporal continuity, marked by recursive violence, challenges postmemory's assumption of aftermath and recenters corporeal memory as a site of resistance, rather than inheritance.

Marked by residual trauma and belatedness, the representation of the Holocaust in the two novels centers on issues of narration and transmission. In this context, the body becomes a vessel of untreated trauma that persists despite the aftermath of catastrophe. In *The Shawl* this embodied dimension is portrayed through Rosa's nostalgic attachment to a traumatic past that houses the memory of her daughter. Unable to move on from her tragedy, Rosa's own body emerges as a site of memory that hosts the affective and sensory traces that connect her back to the past. She contemplates life in Florida and decides that "Everyone had left behind a real life"

(16). Later in the narrative, she admits to Persky that "a person lives where they can. If all they got is thoughts, that's where they live" (27–28). Rosa's inability to fully live in the present intimately relates to her somatic attachment to the shawl, an object that triggers physical and mnemonic responses upon contact with her body. To highlight this attachment, Rosa proclaims that, by mere proximity to the shawl, it felt as if "someone had cut out her life-organs and given them to her to hold" (56). By sustaining this mnemonic link to the shawl, Rosa internalizes her grief and reenacts its memory through affective, sensory, and embodied traces. Comparably, Sammler carries physical evidence of his experience as a Holocaust victim through a sustained injury that leaves him blind in one eye, which serves as a literal symbol of his distinct perspective. Sammler's injured eye affects how he views the modern landscape of New York; he admits that "my judgments are different. Altered. Like my eyesight" (214). Physical and mnemonic states reflect one another as Sammler's injured eye becomes a visible manifestation of the irreversible damage of war and its residual trauma. To his family, Sammler bears the responsibility of transmitting and representing the painful history of the Holocaust. In fulfilling this "symbolic task," Sammler's body becomes witness to a past that cannot fully be communicated (95). This physical and mnemonic baggage puts him at odds with an urban space that neither acknowledges nor accommodates his individual history and trauma. In both texts, the residual effects of trauma are portrayed through mnemonic and embodied traces. The body operates as another archive in the process of transmitting inherited memory. By portraying past violence and present alienation as distinct temporal chapters, the two novels' representation of Holocaust memory closely aligns with Hirsch's framework of aftermath, belatedness, and residual trauma. The crucial formal feature is that in each case the wound is complete. Sammler's eye will not be injured again; Rosa's daughter will not be taken twice.

In their depiction of Palestinian postmemory, literary narratives restructure the notion of embodied memory as an ongoing site of inscription rather than an archive marked by temporal and historical distance. Both *Mornings in Jenin* and *The Book of Disappearance* describe a state of recursive violence where the Nakba continues its reign as a mnemonic event and a lived reality. Abulhawa and Azem both explore the continuity of memory, not only as a process of inheritance but as a lived experience for the offspring of Nakba survivors who stayed in Palestine. For the Palestinian postgeneration, the embodied dimension is unsettled by the absence of temporal distance or aftermath, which positions the body within trauma, as opposed to after its conclusion. In *Mornings in Jenin* this is evident in the physical and mental scars caused by the violent dispossession and displacement of the Palestinian characters. In one of the more significant moments in the narrative, Abulhawa depicts the instant recognition of a once-stolen Palestinian infant by the scar on his head. Having been taken by a Jewish soldier at the cusp of Palestine's Nakba, Ismael/David is stripped of his identity and conditioned to inhabit the life of an imposter. Later in the novel, he reunites with his estranged brother as soldier and prisoner, and the pair instantly recognize one another. Abulhawa frames the scene as one of somatic connection, as she writes: "A Jewish soldier, whose face is mine, has taken my brother's scar" (103). The abduction of the child is not incidental to the novel's argument about memory. Shalhoub-Kevorkian's concept of unchilding names the political work of violence that evicts colonized children from the category of childhood itself, constructing them as racialized others and thereby rendering them available for a range of interventions that would be unthinkable elsewhere. Ismael's removal, his renaming, and his reconstruction as David enact this eviction with unusual literalness. What the scar preserves is the trace of an identity that administrative and familial reassignment could not fully overwrite. Throughout the narrative, the author reinforces notions of national identity and belonging through external states and physical manifestations. Characters note the "common lineage" reflected in their "features," a telltale biological indication of shared history and culture (7). In other passages,

Yehya, the family's patriarch, reflects on how Arabs "name their children to tell the story of their genealogy," while later revealing that his daughter was named Amal "with a long vowel because the short vowel means just one hope, one wish" (34–35, 72). This reflects a real Palestinian tradition that bestows the names of landscapes, such as Bisan, Jenin, and Yafa, on offspring; an endeavor against the eradication of the Palestinian homeland through the consolidation of memory within individuals themselves (Seyam). Set beside Wolfe's account of renaming as cadastral effacement, the practice reads as a direct counter-operation. Where the toponymy of the land is overwritten, the toponymy is relocated into the bodies of children.

A similar dynamic structures Azem's *The Book of Disappearance* through its centrality of absent presence. The novel showcases the instrumental use of memory in preserving identity, locations, and history through the figure of the family's matriarch, who safeguards the past. Alaa's decision to archive his grandmother's memories occurs shortly after her death and is inspired by fear "against forgetfulness" (97). With the death of the matriarch, the imminent threat of gradual memory loss looms over Alaa and his family. It inspires concrete fears over the disappearance of valuable lived memory concerning the Nakba and its pre-existing pastoral Palestine. Alaa stores his grandmother's memory in the pages of his red notebook as he navigates the tapestry of her life. Primarily, however, the novel's protagonist retains these episodes in his own memory, employing his faculty of recollection to conjure up her stories and accounts, as he proclaims: "We inherit memory the way we inherit the color of our eyes and skin" (88). The formulation is worth pausing over, since it makes a claim that Hirsch's framework cannot quite accommodate. To inherit memory as one inherits pigmentation is to receive it as constitutive rather than transmitted, as a feature of the organism rather than a deposit placed in it. Hirsch's postgeneration receives memory through mediation and must labor imaginatively to inhabit it. Alaa's formulation collapses that labor into inheritance itself. Jabr's clinical framework supplies a grounding for this literary claim. She describes Palestinian psychological experience as one in which trauma and identity are not separable—the body does not store memory; it is memory. Her patients, she writes, are their history insofar as that history has not ceased to unfold (Jabr 88–89). Alaa's assertion that memory is inherited "the way we inherit the color of our eyes and skin" reads, in this clinical light, not as metaphor but as diagnosis. The body, for Jabr as for Azem, is not a receptacle for the past. It is the medium of a continuous present. The red notebook serves as a neutral space that allows him to work through these intergenerational memories and establish a channel of communication with his late grandmother, but it is within his own body that these recollections find home.

The two sets of narratives explore corporeal memory similarly, examining the way the individual body can store trauma through affective, sensory, verbal, and non-verbal cues and gestures. The central point of divergence emerges from the contextual and temporal orientation of trauma as either concluded or ongoing. Marked by belatedness and distance, *The Shawl* and *Mr. Sammler's Planet* engage Jewish postmemory as an inherited archive where the body preserves residual trauma. Conversely, through their depiction of recursive and ongoing violence, *Mornings in Jenin* and *The Book of Disappearance* represent the body as more than an archive, but rather as a site of mnemonic resistance. Eagle and Kaminer's account of continuous traumatic stress helps specify what is at stake in this difference. Where the stressor is located in the present and the future rather than the past, and where protective systems are absent, the body is not primarily engaged in the work of retrospective processing (85). It is engaged in anticipation. The vigilance this produces is not a symptom of a past injury but a rational response to a present condition, and it belongs to a temporal order that postmemory, oriented as it is toward what has already occurred, was not designed to describe. Jabr's distinction between trauma as a punctual event and suffering as an ongoing condition sharpens

this point: where Hirsch's framework is built around injury that can be worked through, the Palestinian texts examined here depict a suffering that persists, generating resilience and political meaning from within the condition itself (Jabr 42–44, 89). In considering the temporal context of the Holocaust and the Nakba, any attempt to universalize the function of individual bodies in storing trauma or transmitting memory crumbles under distinct historical and cultural conditions. The temporal status of violence, as either past or ongoing, intrinsically influences the stakes of corporeal memory. Under conditions of continuous violence, past catastrophe and present lived experience merge as waves of trauma overlap and intersect. Postmemory's underlying presumption of the distinction between the past and the present is limited in accounting for the simultaneous occurrence of historical and lived memory. As current generations of Palestinians endure the recursive violence experienced by their parents and grandparents, corporeal memory functions less as a repository of past trauma and more as a channel of active resistance against physical and cultural erasure. Salam's account of Amal converges here: her wound is bound to a trauma "not governed by a mere past, but rather by a past-in-the-present" (109). The body in these novels does not archive a completed injury. It registers one still being administered.

Conclusion

Through its exploration of the mnemonic representation of the Holocaust and the Nakba in select Jewish and Palestinian narratives, this article has argued that postmemory's framework, while foundational, is based on distinct temporal assumptions that insufficiently account for contexts of ongoing violence. The unique contextual and mnemonic conditions of the Nakba require the examination of past trauma alongside recursive and continuous violence that disrupts clear boundaries between the past and the present. In an endeavor to conceptualize the Nakba as a legal notion, Rabea Eghbariah explores its unique and intersecting dimensions of structure and rupture. The Nakba's structural presence arises as a result of its ongoing nature, which frames the lived experience of Palestinians, while signs of rupture manifest in the physical and mnemonic fragmentation of Palestinian reality (901). Consequently, this conditions Palestinian memory to be characterized by oral history, gaps, multitemporality, and resistance. These elements challenge postmemory's temporal assumptions of distance through present stakes that distinguish the Nakba as a constantly evolving phenomenon shaped by multiple overlapping temporalities framed by lived proximity and continuous damage. Through a literary analysis of the dynamic roles of mnemonic objects, spaces, and bodies, this article highlights a key shift from the representation of past trauma to the exploration of lived reality. At the level of materiality, examination of mnemonic objects in *The Shawl* and *Mornings in Jenin* reveals a move from relic to evidence, as objects perform differing functions from preserving the traumatic past through materiality to asserting historical and legal claims to seized ancestral homes and lands. This shift is further developed through a comparative study of the urban landscape as a site of forgetfulness and neglect of the past in *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, as opposed to a contested space under active threat of suppression and erasure as portrayed in *The Book of Disappearance*. Finally, at the level of corporeal memory, this article utilized key moments from all four novels to underline the transition from embodied and archival memory in Holocaust literature to ongoing mnemonic inscription and recursive trauma in the representation of the Nakba.

The divergence in the utility of memory between the two sets of novels signifies a shift in orientation from representation and preservation to lived reality and resistance. The framework of postmemory, with its origin in Holocaust studies, is developed from assumptions of historical aftermath, temporal distance, and anxiety over archival loss. Faced with conditions of ongoing

and recursive violence, these assumptions fail to account for the breakdown of distinct parameters between past and present, as well as memory and postmemory. This theoretical inadequacy reveals postmemory's temporal and structural limitations, and calls for a recalibration of this framework to include experiences of generational trauma transmission characterized by continuity and political and cultural resistance. Through a consideration of memory's simultaneous potential in functioning as both embodied and lived reality, postmemory's separation between event and experience can be seen as a multidirectional and ongoing, rather than fixed, process (Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory* 3). While this article does not suggest that Hirsch's postmemory should be dismissed based on these limitations, it emphasizes the need for inclusivity within its theoretical structure. Under this intervention, we can begin to acknowledge how postmemory operates across distinct but related temporal, cultural, and political conditions. Such a distinction is not based on opposition, as it underlines the influence of geopolitical contexts in the representation, recollection, and transmission of collective memory.

What such a recalibration would require can be stated with some precision. Postmemory rests on three linked assumptions: that the traumatic event has concluded, that the postgeneration stands at a remove from it, and that the work of memory is fundamentally reparative. Each of these can be loosened without abandoning the framework. An account of postmemory adequate to conditions of continuity would treat temporal distance as a variable rather than a precondition, would recognize that the postgeneration may be simultaneously an inheriting and an experiencing generation, and would admit instrumental and evidentiary functions of memory alongside reparative ones. None of these adjustments requires discarding Hirsch's central insight regarding the imaginative labor by which the descendants of catastrophe come to inhabit a past that is not theirs. They require only that the insight be released from the historical circumstances of its formulation.

Two limitations of the present study should be acknowledged. The first concerns the evidentiary base. Four novels cannot sustain claims about national literary traditions, and the selection made here privileged texts that foreground familial transmission, material culture, and embodiment, which is to say texts already hospitable to the categories being tested. A corpus assembled on different principles, one that included Palestinian writing indifferent to the Nakba or Jewish writing that resists the postmemorial frame, would likely yield a more complicated picture. The second concerns the asymmetry of the comparison itself. The Holocaust texts examined here are American, written in English, and situated within a literary and institutional culture in which Holocaust memory enjoys extensive support. The Palestinian texts, one of them in translation, emerge under conditions that include legal restriction on commemoration. The divergence this article traces is therefore not a divergence between two literatures conceived as equivalent objects, and readers should resist any inference that the comparison establishes symmetry between the histories themselves. What it establishes is narrower and, this article contends, more useful: that a framework built to describe one mnemonic situation distorts another, and that attending to the distortion tells us something about the framework.

The wager underlying this study is that connective reading of this kind is worth its risks. Bringing the Holocaust and the Nakba into the same analytical frame carries the danger of flattening the specificity of either, and that danger is real rather than rhetorical. But the alternative, a scholarship in which each catastrophe is theorized in isolation and the frameworks generated by one are silently exported to the other, carries a cost of its own. Postmemory traveled from Holocaust studies to Palestinian literary criticism without an accounting of what it assumed. The purpose of the foregoing has been to render that accounting, not in order to police the movement of concepts across contexts, but to make the movement deliberate.

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