



Echoes in the Void: Transgenerational Haunting and the Persistence of Palestinian Memory in Azem's *The Book of Disappearance*

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Abstract

*The present paper brings forth to the speculative yet most realistic pronouncement of the current era in which all Palestinians vanish overnight, leaving behind empty homes, and disrupted social systems by providing testimony through tear-filled diaries and recollections. While employing Meera Atkinson's (2017) transgenerational lens, the researchers investigate the characters' fractured memories and traumatic experiences in Ibtisam Azem's *The Book of Disappearance*. Azem dramatizes the delicate yet robust mechanisms through which trauma, memory, and silence are passed down through the generations despite systematic erasure. Even after more than seventy years of the Nakba (1948), characters are preserving their memory as this has passed across generations featuring that while bodies may disappear, trauma and memory remain as spectral legacies, shaping the present and unsettling dominant narratives. The novel's central conceit: the sudden disappearance of Palestinians functions not as absence but as a heightened presence that exposes the continuity of loss and remembrance. Through a close reading of recurring images of emptiness, repetition, and silence, the study demonstrates that Azem constructs a poetics of haunting in which memory reverberates across bodies, generations, and silences. In bridging Palestinian narrative with transgenerational (2017) trauma theory, the paper contributes to a growing body of scholarship that reads political displacement through affective inheritance. Ultimately, it proposes that Azem's (2019) novel renders the void itself resonant, turning disappearance into a living archive of collective memory.*

Keywords: *Transgenerational Trauma, Affective Inheritance, Collective Memory, Silence and Absence, The Book of Disappearance, Resilience*

Introduction

"If we vanish, who will tell our story? If the papers burn, if the walls crumble, perhaps this notebook will survive." (Azem, 2019, p. 165). Ibtisam Azem is a Palestinian novelist whose work, *The Book of Disappearance* was originally published in Arabic in 2014 and later translated into English by Sinan Antoon in 2019. *The Book of Disappearance* (2019) was long listed for the 2025 international booker prize with the judges calling it *"speculative and meditative, haunting and deeply humane...an exceptional exercise in memory-making, history, and psycho-geography"* (The Booker Prizes, 2025). This has drawn global attention to the work's formal intelligence and its excellent foresight of future. The question of how memory endures amid historical erasure lies at the heart of Palestinian literature. From the 1948 Nakba to the present, Palestinian writers have attempted not only to narrate loss but to sustain the very existence of a people through remembrance. Azem stages the transition from tears becoming victims of atrocity bearing physical grief to testimony, where writing and memory defy erasure, through the diaries of Alaa and Ariel. This study uses Meera Atkinson's (2017) transgenerational trauma lens as a theoretical model to argue how trauma is inherited, embodied, and politicized rather than limited to a single instance. Azem's narrative turns quiet into witness and absence into presence, providing a counter-archive of Palestinian tenacity from checkpoint-scarred cities to abandoned homes that still smell of bread. The novel stages disappearance not only as political erasure but as a haunted inheritance, using absence, narrative fragmentation, and relational witnessing to depict trauma transmitted across generations and communities. The disappearance in Azem's narrative is not merely political; it is affective and intergenerational, echoing through both victims and witnesses. In this sense, *The Book of Disappearance* (2019) can be read as a study of what Meera Atkinson (2017) terms 'transgenerational trauma': the migration of psychic pain, memory, and affect across temporal, bodily, and communal boundaries.

Literature review:

The notion of trauma made its way into the humanities in the 1990s because of the pioneering efforts of the first wave of literary trauma theorists, who included Professor Cathy Caruth, Soshana Felman, and Geoffrey Hartman. Earlier studies viewed trauma as catastrophic event that shatters consciousness and cannot be fully grasped or narrated. Critics have explored different forms of trauma: Psychic trauma and cultural trauma. Judith Herman (1997) coined the term 'Chronic trauma' that "pervades every relationship, from the most intimate familial bonds to the most abstract affiliations of religion and community" (p.37). Drawing observations from the earlier works, recently Meera Atkinson (2017) examined the ways in which literary testimony communicates affective and relational contagion, illuminating transmissive cycles of trauma grounded in structural social organization and that have consequences across generations (p.3). She introduced the concept of transgenerational trauma. It essentially refers to the premise that trauma can be transmitted down across generations. Secondary traumatization is another name for it, as is historical, transgenerational, or intergenerational trauma. American Psychological Association (2023) defines Intergenerational trauma as when an individual displays signs of trauma even though they hadn't been present at or affected by the traumatic events (APA). Atkinson used the word transgenerational instead of intergenerational which she herself admits that it can

suggest traumatic transmissions as limited to a specific familial lineage (Atkinson. 2017, p.4) . She argues that trauma is not only a psychological event passed from parent to child but a complex phenomenon that is unconsciously transmitted to multiple generations through genes means it is biologically embedded and culturally sustained. For her, the word ‘Transgenerational’ captures the haunting, pervasive and multilayered nature of inherited trauma.

Scholars have explored *The Book of Disappearance* (2019) through various critical lines like postcolonial theory, speculative fiction, and as a part of resistance literature. Critics have focused on how Azem dramatizes disappearance, silencing and the haunting in the wake of the Nakba (1948) and ongoing occupation, but few have interrogated the novel’s deeper engagement with trauma transmission and across generations. One major thematic strand is the novel’s exploration of absence or presence. For instance, Intisar Rashid Khaleel et al. (2020) classify the novel as postcolonial and read it within the context of magic realism, concurring that “the vanishing symbolizes a colonial fantasy motivated by exploring the possible occurrences if it became a reality” (p. 230). Kelleher’s (2020) commentary focuses on the novel’s structural duality and its moral tension between the disappeared Palestinians and the Israeli narrator. It reflects on the novel’s emotional and ethical resonance within postcolonial memory discourse.

Tonia Harris (2021) shares a similar view as she confirms in her analysis of the novel how Azem challenges Israel’s founding father’s assertion that “the old will die and the young will forget” through Alaa’s diary (Azem, p. 143). Alaa’s notebook especially the grandmother’s recollections anchors the book’s intergenerational thread. Critics note how private wounds (family loss, displacement, bodily scars) double as historical record, turning intimate testimony into an archive that contests official forgetting. This registers thematically as “presence in absence”: language, photographs, and diaries persist even when people are gone. The review (2021) foregrounds how Azem transforms the act of vanishing into a critique of settler colonial consciousness and moral blindness. Khatab (2022) provides a narratological analysis of how Azem constructs presence through absence. The paper highlights narrative fragmentation, shifting perspectives, and collective memory as storytelling devices that evoke intergenerational trauma.

The second strand in existing scholarship is to explore it through resistance narrative in Arabic fiction. Almalki (2024) sees it within the frame of Arabic science fiction focusing on ASF tropes and how they challenge the utopian vision of Israel to dystopian vision of Palestinians. Almalki (2024) analyses it also through Azem’s practicing the post colonial techniques by the lens of Ghasan Kanafani ‘s resistance literature and Toni Morrison’s Rememory strands as she finds that Azem followed the similar techniques what Morrison used in her essay ‘The Site of Memory (1995)’. Mattar (2024) situates Azem alongside other Palestinian writers using speculative fiction to resist colonial erasure. The article (2024) argues that Azem’s world of vanishing Palestinians symbolically restores agency by transforming trauma into active resistance through imagination.

Recently, *The Book of Disappearance* (2019) has become the platform for critical and analytical readings on account of its global fame. In an interview with Mathews (2024), Azem discusses her concept of the “presence of absence,” the sea motif, and Jaffa’s memory scape. Her reflections reveal how personal and collective histories intertwine to convey inherited trauma.

Ishaq & Batool (2025) read the novel as an act of settler colonial elimination and resistance that inverts colonial visibility, making the absence of Palestinians a mirror of Israeli denial. So far, trauma studies have largely focused on historical violence yet familial and transgenerational trauma is still considered as private and not explored vividly. This novel skillfully engages with the notion that how transgenerational trauma is simultaneously transmitted, disrupted, and transformed through memory, absence, and voice. The unsounding silence, and memory become vehicles for transmitting the collective wounds of the Palestinian experience across generations and haunt them uncontrollably. Earlier analyses highlight the political and representational dimensions of Azem's work yet it overlooks how Azem's narrative demonstrates what Meera Atkinson sees the transmissibility of trauma through haunting, silence, and embodied repetition. This (2017) approach treats it as an affective phenomenon: a kind of haunting that outlives the visible, transforming both the colonized and the colonizer. This study contributes to trauma and postcolonial literary scholarship by applying Atkinson's (2017) transgenerational trauma framework to Palestinian fiction for the first time. In doing so, it extends the discourse on Palestinian literature from representation of resistance to resilience of memory, situating Azem's novel within global trauma studies alongside works by Toni Morrison, W. G. Sebald, and Edwidge Danticat.

Therefore, it is worth noting Azem's novel can be read as a narrative where transgenerational trauma is simultaneously transmitted, disrupted, and transformed through memory, absence, and voice. Atkinson's (2017) transgenerational lens emphasizes how trauma moves across generations through narrative, silence, and embodied memory. In *The Book of Disappearance* (2019), the grandmother's stories, Alaa's journals, and the community's cultural traces (which remain after physical disappearance) provide rich ground for such analysis. Trauma is not just about what one generation suffers but how its effects are carried across lineages. Atkinson (2017) uses "transgenerational" to include both intergenerational (parent to child) and multigenerational (across several generations) effects.

Research Questions:

The current research attempts to investigate the answers to the following questions.

1. How does *The Book of Disappearance* depict silence, absence, and affect as vehicles for transmitting trauma across generations?
2. In what ways do Alaa's and Ariel's diaries function as counter-archives that convert personal and collective grief into testimony?
3. In what ways does the novel depict the intergenerational transmission of trauma, and how is this process shaped by political histories and spatial realities of displacement?

Theoretical Framework:

This study uses a qualitative textual analysis approach grounded in trauma studies with reference to Meera Atkinson's (2017) transgenerational trauma theory as its central interpretive framework. The topic of transgenerational trauma, which explains how the impacts of trauma experienced by one generation can be handed down to succeeding generations, has been studied by Professor and author Meera Atkinson. Atkinson (2017) redefines trauma as an affective force, one that moves silently through bodies, gestures, and memories across generations rather than remaining confined to individual experience. Her

framework rejects linear or singular models of trauma recovery, emphasizing that the continuous haunting, fractured or fragmented memories, political inheritance, belatedness trauma and above all silence become great pillar of trauma transmission.

Atkinson built upon these developments introduced a new perspective by integrating a transgenerational perspective into trauma studies. In *Trauma Fiction* (2017), she explored how trauma is inherited across generations through both explicit narratives and silences. Atkinson (2017) highlights how trauma is frequently unintentionally woven into societal and familial narratives. Her investigation involves consideration of the relationship between familial, intergenerational, and multigenerational trauma, and trauma as a social phenomenon (Atkinson, p.4). She observes transmittive cycles of trauma that have consequences across generations. The grandmother's gestures, Alaa's diary, Ariel's uneasy conscience, and Dayan's repressed guilt form a network of affective echoes that embody Atkinson's concept of trauma as relational and migratory.

Data Analysis and Discussion:

Trauma is not subjective or individual; it passes in family through broader social, historical, political structures highlighting patriarchy and collective violence. Atkinson (2017) insists that trauma writing is political. By turning absence into presence and silence into testimony, *The Book of Disappearance* (2019) not only exposes the enduring wounds of colonial violence but also preserves Palestinian endurance against erasure. It can be analyzed through an array of critical examination of the text that confirms Atkinson's (2017) notion of transgenerational lens.

1.Trauma and memory as Inheritance:

Ibtisam Azem's *The Book of Disappearance* (2019) dramatizes how trauma persists across generations and communities, surfacing through silence, haunting, narrative fragmentation, various metaphors and fragmented memory. Atkinson's (2017) transgenerational trauma lens clarifies this persistence, showing how trauma is transmitted not only through narration but also through embodied residues, repetitions, and silences that refuse to vanish. Atkinson opines that trauma is carried from parents or grandparents to forthcoming generations. Alaa's grandmother represents the first generation of trauma, who faced the Historic Nakba (1948) and lost their own land of Jaffa. The grandmother's presence is precisely this; not an ordered archive but a haunting imprint. She represents how Palestinians inherit trauma in gestures, pauses, and rituals, even when words fail. The grandmother's memories of having been expelled from Jaffa haunt him. Her oral stories and lived presence embody what Atkinson (2017) calls the '*transmission of affective memory*'. In the poetics of trans-trauma, micro-macro traumatic memory is written as a ghostly presence and an affective feeding backward and forward. It is a creative process that converts distance- or the unknowability of trauma in the instance of its occurrence -into intensity artfully expressed in language (Atkinson, p. 15). The figure of Alaa's grandmother epitomizes trauma's embodied transmission. Her presence, recalled by Alaa as vividly as "*He sees her as clear as day and still remembers that night*" (Azem, 2019, p. 203), reveals how memory lingers beyond linear narration. The grandmother's gestures: grinding spices, remembering Jaffa become acts of inheritance, encoding the Nakba (1948) into the psyche of her grandson. Alaa looks back on his grandmother's stories about Jaffa before 1948, "*Her voice heavy with the weight of what had*

been lost, and what would never be recovered.” (Azem, 2019, p. 32–33) It fosters the notion of memory as inheritance, even when Alaa didn’t experience the Nakba himself. He lives its aftershocks through her narrative. This confirms Atkinson’s notion of trauma as source linking history to the present. Alaa inherits trauma not through direct experience but through his grandmother’s narrated loss, showing how trauma circulates within family stories.

2.Narrative and Silence:

The psychological composition of descendants is shaped by the stories that families tell or choose not to tell about traumatic experiences as some traumas are too painful to articulate. Trauma here is not directly narrated but embodied and emotional, silently shaping the next generation’s psyche. This is crucial as *“He never asked his mother why she cried whenever the sea was mentioned. The tears spoke a story she could not utter.”* (Azem, 2019, p. 54) . Atkinson (2017) notion is affirmed here that emotional silence carries trauma without explicit storytelling. She observes that how might a person inherit all the words left unsaid in a family that is part of a collective history of colonization and then go on to write out of that?... (p.102). Thus, trauma is conveyed through narration and most importantly through a “poetics” that operates in the dark space that lies between the poetic word and affective silence, presence and absence, the sayable and the unsayable (p.85) , capturing ghostly and haunting nature of inherited trauma.

Even after her death, she haunts Alaa’s psyche echoing Atkinson’s idea of haunting as a form of transgenerational survival. Alaa’s diary becomes a testament of inherited pain, a text within the text that resists erasure. Ariel also observes silence all around, *“There is nothing more terrifying than silence that speaks”* (p.43) This silence is carrying greatest trauma one could ever feel and this is observed crucially not only in the oppressed but also witnessed by oppressors.

3.Living in the presence of Absence:

The novel turns a city map into an archive of presence-in-absence. Arab lit’s interview clarifies Azem’s conceptual frame “living in the presence of absence” and links the novel’s memory work to intergenerational transmission after the Nakba(1948) : a transfer not only of content (names, places) but of affective orientations (fear, longing, refusal). The city’s (Jaffa) streets and buildings preserve erasure and memory at once and grandmother’s pre-nakba maps overlay today’s Tel Aviv. Crucially important here is that disappearance does not mute Palestinian voice; the notebook chapters stage a persistence that literature can carry across languages, what Antoon (in the booker interview) elsewhere calls a text’s “afterlife” through translation. The disappearance itself produces a strange affect of absence, loss, shock. Even if characters don’t always name what has been passed on, the novel gives us scenes of haunted space, emptiness, absence of bodies or neighbors. also the interplay of grief, waiting, expectation. Moreover, spatial or political realities are inscribed into collective memory that transmits through family storytelling and place-rituals such as sea-watching bench, inherited routes through the city.

“The checkpoints are scars carved on the city’s body, inherited by every child who grows up within its walls.” (Azem, 2019, p. 119). This confirms Atkinson’s premise that multigenerational trauma is inseparable from settler-colonial structures.

“The abandoned homes still smelled of bread, still echoed with laughter, but no one remained to

Taste or laugh.”(Azem,2019,pg.192). Everyday spaces hold sensory traces of the disappeared, again it confirms Atkinson’s plea that trauma remains embodied in place, objects, and sensory memory. Everyday sensory traces (smell, sound) embody trauma within place and objects, showing how loss permeates beyond language. Azem describes it in an incredibly intelligent way “He felt as if the absent ones were still present, whispering in languages that could not be recorded.” (Azem,2019 p.143). Though the bodies vanish, but documents speak: diaries, photos, names, routes. Disappearance does not erase presence but transforms it into haunting, echoing Atkinson’s emphasis on belated trauma surfacing later.

4.Narrative fragmentation/ Non-Linear Narration as Trauma Testimony:

The narrative alternates chapters between Ariel’s present-tense experience (infrastructural breakdown, media panic, everyday disorientation) and Alaa’s reflective notebooks (family memory, the grandmother’s history, Jaffa’s palimpsest), creating a double register of witnessing and counter-witnessing. This narrative fragmentation signals out a formal marker of inherited trauma. The analysis foregrounds three narrative vectors of transmission: the grandmother’s stories as embodied memory of the Nakba; Alaa’s diary as an act of preserving inherited trauma for future generations; and Ariel’s conflicted reading of this diary, which transfers trauma across communal and political boundaries. Here, the narrative style (Alaa’s flashbacks, multiple perspectives of Israelis) mimic the process of remembering and processing trauma. The novel’s speculative disappearance of Palestinians, rather than silencing trauma, amplifies its spectral persistence, showing how absence itself becomes a mode of inheritance. As a liberal Zionist who supports Israel’s cause while opposing the military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, Ariel is Alaa’s friend and neighbor. Ariel starts looking for answers to the mystery of the Palestinians’ collective vanishing after waking up one morning to discover that they had all suddenly disappeared. *“I search the city for them, but it is only their shadows that remain, haunting the streets.”* (Azem, 2019, p. 87) The dual diary structure, along with spectral imagery, testifies to collective trauma through absence and narrative fragmentation. Diaries, oral stories, and personal memories function as counter-archives.

The novel bears witness that how the violence of 1948 still lives inside the minds of its perpetrators. Atkinson (2017) notes that *“traumatic affect rumbles, spills, bursts forth, erupts, leaks, emits, fumes, whispers, screams and acts from its restless grave, because at the deepest level it seeks recognition. It demands witnessing and memorial and it haunts until it gets it.* (p.131).Dayan’s memory becomes a battlefield where guilt, silence, and haunting refuse to disappear ; paralleling the novel’s central theme that even if Palestinians vanish, their memory and trauma remain. Dayan, now in his eighties, watches television coverage of the Palestinians’ sudden disappearance. He is stunned by the images of empty houses and ghostly streets. For more than sixty years, he has been tormented by memories of a particular night in 1948. He recalls atrocities, euphemistically called “cleaning,” committed in places like al-Lid

and Jaffa. These included storming houses, terrorizing families, and killings. He remembers a Palestinian woman who sat outside her home for decades repeating *“I chose you, Hasan”*. Her refrain haunts him, but he never dared to speak to her or apologize. Her silence, and his own complicity, leave him restless. *“Her silence haunted him. What he did that night hunts him.”* (p. 204). His dreams are filled with nightmares of being tongue-tied, unable to speak, symbolizing his inability to confess or reconcile with the past. This confirms the premise that traumatic memory is experienced belatedly in forms like haunted flashbacks and nightmares.

5. Haunting and Silence and Affective Contagion:

Atkinson’s transgenerational (2017) conceptual lens observes that trauma can pass “silently” across generations not just through stories, but through feelings and bodies in the form of cyclical hauntings. In her view, hurt leaks into family life via affect (moods, tension), embodied habits (startle responses, avoidance), and unconscious clues (tone, pauses, what is never spoken). ‘Trauma....is immeasurable and for most of us unimaginable’ (p.115). Dayan recalls, *“They had ‘cleaned’ one of the neighborhoods in al-Lid. That’s what they termed what they did”* (Azem, 2019, p. 207). Dayan’s memory of “cleaning” in al-Lid demonstrates how denial and euphemism conceal but never erase guilt. The euphemism of “cleaning” shows the systemic violence of the Israeli military during the Nakba: collective punishment, displacement, and killings.

Finally, Dayan’s memory illustrates how silence haunts perpetrators as well as victims. Dayan recalls her vividly: *“He sees her as clear as day and still remembers that night.”* (Azem, pg.121.). Atkinson’s notion is grounded that how affect and bodily memory (night sweats) are transmitted even in enemies. It is crucial to note here that trauma resurfaces most forcefully through silences and denials, the very places where speech breaks down. Dayan’s euphemistic memory embodies how denial itself transmits trauma, haunting him through insomnia and nightmares. Dayan’s nightmares of being tongue-tied (Azem, 2019, p. 204) reveal silence as a transmissive force, shaping even those complicit in violence. *“Sometimes he dreams that he is tongue-tied... no one understands what he says”* (Azem, 2019, p. 204). Atkinson (2017) explains that silence can be a *“transmissive force, ensuring trauma lives on through absence as much as through speech”* (p. 157). The assaulted woman’s ululation: *“I chose you, Hasan. I chose you, Hasan. I chose you, Hasan”* (Azem, 2019, p. 204, ll. 52–54) anchors as an echo of what Atkinson (2017) emphasizes that trauma often emerges in *“fragments and repetitions, unanchored from linear narrative”* (p. 89). The refrain functions as a haunting fragment: simultaneously meaningless and unforgettable, an echo of trauma that crosses generations and communities. The woman’s refrain (“I chose you, Hasan”) symbolizes Palestinian resilience. Her silence and persistence become a tormenting reminder of what Dayan participated in but never faced honestly. The refrain’s incompleteness makes it more powerful: it cannot be fully assimilated, yet it cannot be forgotten.

For Palestinians, silence is not absence but resilience ; memory encoded in fragment, repetition, and ritual. For Israelis, silence is haunting ; an intrusion into conscience and a destabilization of identity. When Alaa asks from his grandmother about how she was kicked out, she answers in tiring tone that her tongue is worn away from words as if even her words

are tired too.

6.Cultural Context:

The Poetics of Transgenerational Trauma examines the ways literature elucidates the processes of transmission and the cultural conditions that give rise to it (Atkinson,2017,p 4). Trauma persists throughout generations due to broader sociocultural causes like collective memory or national trauma. Alaa's longing to tell his grandmother that "I wanted to tell you they bombed Gaza and that Baba committed suicide" (Azem,2019,p.88). The phrase arrives in a breathless, declarative chain mirroring how communities speak crisis, it fuses private collapse with national catastrophe. Through Atkinson, Azem's novel shows how a Palestinian cultural world transmits history in everyday speech and even reporting fresh violence function as cultural rituals that carry and slowly transform trauma across generations.

Alaa remembers the time asking his grandmother about her sorrow all the time, she in return said "Palestine collapsed over our heads....Jaffa collapsed over our heads...We are orphans, grandson, orphans." (Azem, pg 135). Here, these lines condense cultural time where catastrophe is not past rather an ongoing cultural trauma. Alaa feels that the atrocity his ancestors faced is transferred to him in his black box of memory in his head, he considers it like a glass house full of cracks that have wrinkles but still standing. He murmurs that "your memory is a burden that pains me. I feel so lonely in Jaffa" (Azem,2019,p.71) and this pain for them all is too great for them to endure memory. Alaa remembers the atrocity saying the land is layered with past deaths, expulsions, and erased lives "...when i walk in Palestine, I feel that am walking on corpses...." (Azem,pg.68) Here "walking" stands for daily routine, while "corpses" drags buried violence into the present, so the land itself reads like an archive of loss. Atkinson (2017) argues trauma often passes as affect first: tone, rhythm, bodily sensation then as narrative. Through Atkinson's lens (2017), this is affective inheritance: the body learns to feel the weight of history before it can narrate it fully, hence it is not an argument; it's a somatic flash. The line therefore refuses easy normalization: life goes on, but it goes on over something, and the novel asks us to feel that pressure.

7.Ariel - The Traumatized Witness of the Other's Memory:

Ariel becomes the most striking example of how trauma crosses boundaries. Through the diary and the old woman's refrain, Ariel is forced into unwilling inheritance. His conscience is fractured by memories not his own. Atkinson contends that trauma is "contagious" in its haunting; it unsettles even those outside its immediate lineage. Ariel exemplifies this: he becomes a carrier of Palestinian memory, destabilized by words he cannot assimilate. The novel shows how trauma can cross enemy lines, haunting not only descendants of the dispossessed but also those complicit in their erasure. Azem extends this logic to landscapes. Ariel's description of "*empty houses and ghost streets in Arab neighborhoods*" (Azem, 2019, p. 204, ll. 23–25) exemplifies how disappearance turns absence into presence. Atkinson (2017) observes that trauma often manifests in "*psychic residues that inhabit landscapes*" (p. 112). Here, urban emptiness becomes a haunted archive, ensuring Palestinians remain visible in their absence. "The city wakes to find the Arabs gone... not one remains. It is as if they evaporated overnight." (Azem, p.205). This passage captures trauma's spectral visibility; the vanished are still present through their absence. It aligns with Atkinson's notion that trauma

persists as echo and absence, a haunting that refuses to resolve. In these fragments, Azem's novel affirms Atkinson's claim: trauma is never contained. It migrates across bodies, generations, and even enemy lines, enduring as haunting and silence.

8. Resilience in the face of Resistance:

Narration can become an act of defiance in Azem's *The Book of Disappearance* (2019). Azem brings forth that resistance can change into resilience as an affective technology that keeps people going as form of protective acts. This familial legacy of resistance and resilience suggest the transmission of trauma across generations. Alaa remembers his grandmother saying: "Oh my, Jaffa is so beautiful and Palestine is so beautiful! Very beautiful and it's not lost". The lullaby holds two currents at once: celebration ("beautiful") and threat ("not lost" implies it *could* be). This *ambivalence* is typical in transgenerational speech: elders model how to carry love and fear together without collapsing. "beautiful" makes the absent homeland present in speech; the city is held through words, benches, routes, and daily rituals.

Conclusion:

The researchers' findings reveal that Azem's *The Book of Disappearance* (2019) presents Palestinian history as a body-held, everyday archive where protective speech and place-rituals transmit trauma across generations. Trauma here is not a single wound but a living inheritance, transmitted through families, landscapes, and collective memory. Azem's novel stages a radical thought experiment: what if Palestinians simply vanished? The answer, through Atkinson's lens, is that they would remain more present than ever as haunting memory, fragmentary refrain, and spectral legacy. The grandmother transmits trauma through silence, Alaa archives it in his diary, Ariel inherits it unwillingly, and Dayan is consumed by guilt. This witness how reworking those inherited affects into testimony converts resistance into ethically charged resilience. The past is never dead; it is not even past, it becomes a haunting present in Azem's *The Book of Disappearance* (2019). Ultimately, Azem's work insists that even when bodies vanish, the stories remain; whispered, written, and carried forward as acts of resilience. Atkinson's (2017) theory illuminates the novel's central paradox: trauma does not vanish with the body. It migrates across time, space, and community. It survives in silence and fragment, ensuring that Palestinians cannot be erased, even in disappearance. Thus, the paper's contention of transgenerational trauma is confirmed as the last line of the novel clearly showcases the argument that the past becomes present and remains present: "*The red notebook is still open*".

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