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“The Buried Past”: Childhood Trauma in Nadia Hashimi’s Sparks Like Stars

[U]ntold histories live in shadow graves. (Hashimi 8)

It may indeed be questioned whether we have any memories at all from our childhood: memories relating to our childhood may be all that we possess. (Freud 322)

The present paper aims at revisiting the notion of childhood trauma and its inescapable repercussions on the future life of the traumatized subject via reading profoundly Sparks Like Stars (2021) by the Afghan-American writer Nadia Hashimi. Being a native of Afghanistan which has always been associated with fanaticism, terror and warfare, Hashimi attempts in her novel to engage the reader in the sufferings of Sitara Zamani—the daughter of the chief adviser of the exiled Afghan president Sardar Daoud and the only surviving member of the ruling family after the pro-Communist coup in 1979—who has escaped from the harrowing incidents in her country to the United States of America. After spending many years in the United States, Zamani suddenly discovers that she has not succeeded in burying her past traumatic memories; particularly after the events of 9/11 and the United States’s ceaseless attacks on Afghanistan. The paper offers deep insight into Zamani’s relentless quest for healing from her buried sorrows by coming to terms with her painful past.

Biography of the Presenter:

Engy Ashour Torky (engy.torky@suezuni.edu.eg) is an assistant professor of English Literature in the English department at the Faculty of Arts, Suez University and a former Fulbright visiting scholar at Near Eastern Studies Department, UC Berkeley. She obtained her Ph.D. from Minia University. Her Ph.D. thesis scrutinizes the various trials and tribulations that Chinese-American and Japanese-American immigrants have been exposed to in the American landscape via reading profoundly some selected plays by the Chinese-American playwright David Henry Hwang and by the Japanese-American dramatist Philip Kan Gotanda. She has participated in various conferences both national and international. Dr. Torky’s research interests fall in the following areas: postcolonial studies, African literature, Asian-American drama, Persian Literature, women studies, and trauma and memory studies.