

CULTURAL TRAUMA AND CONTEMPORARY WOMEN'S WRITING. THE CASE OF SAȘA ZARE'S SOMATIC SCRIPTOTHERAPY

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ABSTRACT. *Cultural Trauma and Contemporary Women's Writing. The Case of Sașa Zare's Somatic Scriptotherapy.* Situated at the crossroads of Literary Studies, Trauma Studies, and Memory Studies, this paper examines the conceptualization of "cultural trauma" within trauma theory and its representation in Sașa Zare's contemporary writing (*Dezrădăcinare [Uprooting]*) (2022), while also addressing the emergence of a new genre informed by these concerns. The aim of this study is threefold. First, I analyze the contested concept of cultural trauma and its relationship to both clinical studies and women's writing. Second, I extend Suzette A. Henke's notion of "scriptotherapy" into somatic scriptotherapy and investigate the emergence of a new genre within contemporary women's literature. Third, I explore the cultural and traumatic representations of motherhood, alongside the somatic dynamics of the mother-daughter relationship in *Dezrădăcinare* by Sașa Zare. The principal conclusions of this paper may be summarized as follows. First, *Dezrădăcinare* demonstrates that the expansion of writing into the exploration of traumatic stressors and processes of individual transformation requires a broader conceptualization of trauma, such as that advanced by theories of cultural trauma. Second, it reveals that the interrelation of procedural memory, therapeutic

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reenactment, and traumatic outcomes in contemporary women's writing necessitates the articulation of a new genre. Finally, it shows how different forms of clinical trauma, such as enmeshment, attachment, and developmental trauma, are inextricably bound to the embodiment of motherhood and to the bodily entanglement of the mother–daughter relation.

Keywords: *cultural trauma, somatic scriptotherapy, contemporary women's writing, Dezrădăcinare, Eastern European literature, procedural memory, enmeshment trauma, developmental trauma, attachment trauma.*

REZUMAT. Trauma culturală și literatura contemporană feminină. Analiza critică a scriiturii somatice în opera Sașei Zare. Situat la intersecția dintre studiile literare, studiile despre traumă (Trauma Studies) și studiile despre memorie (Memory Studies), acest articol examinează conceptualizarea „traumei culturale” în cadrul Trauma Studies și reprezentarea sa în *Dezrădăcinare* (2022) de Sașa Zare, abordând totodată emergența unui nou gen literar modelat de aceste preocupări. Demersul de față are trei obiective majore. În primul rând, analizez conceptul controversat de traumă culturală și relația sa atât cu studiile clinice, cât și cu scrierile feminine. În al doilea rând, extind noțiunea de „scriptotherapy” propusă de Suzette A. Henke în *somatic scriptotherapy* și investighez apariția unui nou gen în literatura feminină contemporană. În al treilea rând, explorez reprezentările culturale și traumatice ale maternității, alături de dinamica somatică a relației mamă–fiică în *Dezrădăcinare* (2022) de Sașa Zare. Concluziile principale ale acestui studiu pot fi rezumate astfel. În primul rând, *Dezrădăcinare* demonstrează că extinderea scrisului către explorarea factorilor traumatici și a proceselor de transformare individuală reclamă o conceptualizare mai amplă a traumei, precum cea avansată de teoriile traumei culturale. În al doilea rând, evidențiază că legăturile dintre memoria procedurală, reactualizarea terapeutică și consecințele traumatice în scrierile feminine contemporane necesită articularea unui nou gen. În cele din urmă, ilustrează cum diferite forme de traumă clinică, precum *enmeshment*, *attachment*, și *developmental trauma*, sunt inextricabil legate de maternitatea privită ca embodiment și de interdependența corporală a relației mamă–fiică.

Cuvinte-cheie: *traumă culturală, scriptoterapie somatică, literatura contemporană scrisă de femei, Dezrădăcinare, literatura est-europeană, memorie procedurală, enmeshment trauma, developmental trauma, attachment trauma.*

Critical discourse today is more than ever charged with shaping fiction into a medium that bears responsibility and aids in the development of curative strategies for self-construction and self-repair, working alongside non-formal educational tools such as social media, video platforms, and streaming services.

At the core of these media and self-help discourses is the notion that not only can any change, crisis, or individual or collective event act as a traumatic stressor with potential traumatic effects on the self, but that their representation (Alexander 2004, 10) is also central to shaping these outcomes, both in the everyday narratives individuals construct about themselves and in aesthetic processes of meaning-making.

Situated at the crossroads of Literary, Trauma, and Memory Studies, this paper explores the conceptualization of “cultural trauma” within Trauma Studies and its representation in contemporary women’s writing, as well as the emergence of a new genre informed by these concerns. Given that trauma constitutes a significant element of the fabric of contemporary women’s literature across both Western and Eastern Europe (and beyond), its factors are multiple and glocal, as outlined in the first part of this paper. The second part will introduce the concept of somatic “scriptotherapy” (Henke 1998, xii–xiii), informed by Suzette A. Henke’s theory, which I have extended to designate what I regard as a new genre within contemporary women’s writing that engages with memory and trauma. The final section analyzes the somatic aspects of the mother–daughter relationship in Sașa Zare’s *Dezrădăcinare* [*Uprooting*] (2022).

The aim of this paper is threefold. First, I examine the controversial concept of cultural trauma and its relationship with both clinical studies and women’s writing. Second, by extending the concept of “scriptotherapy” into somatic scriptotherapy, I investigate the connections between memory, the cultural capital of trauma, and the emergence of a new genre within contemporary women’s writing. Third, given that trauma theory has been constructed with a primary focus on Holocaust survivors and their families (Pabel 2023, 2), Trauma Studies does not fully account for the experiences of individuals in post-communist Eastern Europe². My research therefore seeks to address this gap by examining an overlooked dimension within Trauma Studies: the cultural and traumatic representations of motherhood and the somatic dynamics of the mother–daughter relationship in contemporary literature written by women in post-communist countries, as exemplified by *Dezrădăcinare* by Sașa Zare, a hybrid text situated at the intersection of fiction and nonfiction.

Contemporary women’s writing in Eastern European literature is also largely shaped by a “conflictual «private» mother-daughter relationship” (Fell

² However, two works are particularly noteworthy as precursors to this research. On the one hand, there is a study focusing on the experiences of women in post-communist countries, namely *Genre and the (Post-)Communist Woman: Analyzing Transformations of the Central and Eastern European Female Ideal* (2014) by Florentina Andreescu and Michael J. Shapiro. On the other hand, there is an article by Elena Adam and Simona Mitroiu, *Remembering the Past: Representations of Women’s Trauma in Post-1989 Romanian Cinema* (2016).

2003, 11) and a predominantly negative perception of motherhood. As both Alison Fell and Marianne Hirsch observe, mother–daughter relations are marked by profound ambivalence, as maturing daughters (and writers) “negotiate the fluctuations of symbiosis and separation” (Hirsch 1989, 20) in their relationships with their mothers, in an ongoing quest for self-definition, and the avoidance of the fear of “becoming one’s mother” (*matrophobia*) (Rich 1976, 235). The text I will analyze as a case study foregrounds the theme of separation, evident even in its title, as *Uprooting* represents the most accurate rendering of *Dezrădăcinare*. However, this instance is not unique within Eastern European literature. In terms of the literary exploration of motherhood and the mother–daughter relationship in contemporary narratives set in post-communism, communism, or alternating between the two, one might also cite novels such as *Mătes piens* [*Soviet Milk*] (2015) by Nora Ikstena, *Grădina de sticlă* [*The Glass Garden*] (2018) by Tatiana Țibuleac, *Părinți* [*Parents*] (2020) by Diana Bădică, and *Tăcerea vine prima* [*The Silence Comes First*] (2024) by Ioana Stăncescu.

Feminist Criticism and the Clinical and Cultural Dimension of Trauma

One primary reason why trauma has been a constant focus in women’s writing from the late 20th century onward, and has become increasingly prominent in recent years not only in central and Western cultures, but also in lesser-known literatures, such as those of post-communist countries in Eastern Europe, is the rise of feminist criticism, which developed alongside the *psychology of women*, in the United States in the 1960s (Brown 2017, 502). Feminist criticism, together with critical social movements, not only brought attention to a wide spectrum of interpersonal traumas, which subsequently became a focus of study within trauma psychology (Brown 2017, 503), but also played a pivotal role in advancing the understanding of interpersonal trauma, both in clinical and cultural contexts (502). This legacy is perpetuated today not only in that activism and research on trauma, across both the social and human sciences as well as the clinical domain, continue to inform one another, but also in that women’s writing provides a space in which the dialogue between these domains becomes visible. In this context, the cultural representation of trauma shifts beyond the framework of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which has dominated clinical research since the 1980s (Walker 2017, 69) to emphasize instead the individual processes through which memory constructs, manifests, and reactivates not the traumatic event itself, but the unfolding of the traumatic process.

A second reason why women’s literature today intensively explores the traumatic dimension of existence, shaped by personal, familial, cultural, and societal experiences, is that the clinical concept of trauma had expanded by the

end of the 20th century (Britt, and Hammet 2024, 920) to encompass a broader range of individual experiences. Until the 19th century, trauma was largely explained through physical causes that were used to justify its psychological manifestations. Beginning with the publication of the first *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) by the American Psychiatric Association in 1952, in the aftermath of the Second World War, traumatic symptomatology came to be regarded as “a reaction to an event, rather than an expression of an inborn defect or vulnerability” (Figley, Ellis, Reuther, and Gold 2017, 5). It was only with the appearance of DSM-III in 1980 that posttraumatic stress-disorder (PTSD) was officially recognized as a diagnosis, premised on the assumption that trauma constituted “an event beyond ordinary human experience” (Figley, Ellis, Reuther, and Gold 2017, 5) that could have adverse effects on virtually anyone. Despite this apparent broadening of the concept of trauma, from its early association with a wound, to its alignment with an external event, and ultimately to its synonymy with PTSD, sexual violation was not explicitly acknowledged as a category of traumatic event until DSM-V (2013), even though childhood sexual abuse had long been one of the most studied and clinically treated forms of trauma (Figley, Ellis, Reuther, and Gold 2017, 6).

Following the expansion of trauma beyond its clinical dimension in the 1990s, alongside the publication of one of the foundational works in the field of cultural trauma, namely *Unclaimed Experience. Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996) by Cathy Caruth, within the now interdisciplinary field of Trauma Studies, the emphasis no longer rests exclusively on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as in clinical studies, but rather on the notions of change, crisis, and process. Trauma is therefore no longer synonymous with events “beyond ordinary human experience” (Figley, Ellis, Reuther, and Gold 2017, 5), but is embedded in everyday life, with traumatic stressors potentially emerging from experiences such as grief, poverty, emotional abuse, divorce, job loss, interpersonal conflict, displacement, revolution, accidents, bankruptcy, terrorist attacks, or dismissal from work (Caruth 1995, 159).

The broadening of the term, however, produces a double-edged effect. On the one hand, by encompassing a wide array of experiences, many of which lack grounding in clinical studies, it risks becoming a “concept creep” (Britt, and Hammet 2024, 916), that is, a term rendered semantically diluted through overextension and generalization. On the other hand, this very terminological relaxation, and the consequent flexible application of the concept of trauma, enables insights derived from the human and social sciences, beyond the scope of psychological research, to resonate within the clinical domain. As Lucy Britt and Wilson H. Hammett observe, this shift reflects a broader dynamic. On the one hand, as the cultural conception of trauma expanded in the late 20th century,

clinicians began to restrict the diagnostic definition of PTSD; on the other hand, under the influence of feminist scholarship, new categories of “complex PTSD” were introduced, including sustained exposure to an abusive relationship (Britt, and Hammet 2024, 920).

According to Caruth, cultural trauma develops gradually over time in response to personal or societal transformations (Caruth 1995, 160), often in subtle ways, which makes it correspondingly more difficult to identify and to substantiate with empirical data. I therefore contend that contemporary women’s writing provides a broader and more nuanced articulation of the cultural representation of trauma than the empirical data generated by clinical studies. Furthermore, this literary articulation not only mediates the dialogue between cultural and clinical perspectives, but also reinforces and extends feminist scholarship in the 21st century.

Cultural Representation of Trauma, and Somatic Scriptotherapy

As Cathy Caruth observes, literature, alongside sociology, history, psychoanalysis, and psychiatry, is called upon “to explain, to cure, and to show why it is that we can no longer simply explain or simply cure” (Caruth 1995, 4). Within this framework, contemporary women’s writing (among other forms of cultural production) intersects with and reinforces a broader cultural understanding of trauma. Although trauma as represented in contemporary women’s writing may be approached through a clinical framework, its central concern does not lie in reconstructing the traumatic event itself or in delineating a traumatic outcome through the profile of PTSD. Rather, the emphasis falls on the lived experience of trauma and on writing as a mode of constructing and remembering it, while simultaneously functioning as a therapeutic re-enactment undertaken by a subject in a state of ongoing transformation. Even though Caruth has been criticized for neglecting the narrative dimension, for aestheticizing trauma, and for emphasizing the failure of trauma to be represented (Wulf, and Weilnböck 2008, 230), I argue that contemporary women’s writing may serve as empirical evidence in support of the theory of cultural trauma. Moreover, it has the potential to inform clinical research and to provide insights that may contribute to the development of curative strategies for self-care.

Advanced by proponents of life writing, one of today’s most prominent literary genre, the claim that the literary depiction of crisis and trauma tends to foster formal innovation and disrupt traditional modes of realist narration (Pellicer-Ortín 2025, 107) entails two important implications. First, it highlights the flexibility of literary form in response to social factors, as well as literature’s need and capacity to adapt formally to the contemporary world. Second, by

translating individual experiences of crisis or trauma into a universal and universalizable register, and by engaging in “discussions about identity across various aspects of contemporary public life” (Pellicer-Ortín 2025, 108), life writing turns into a “marketable commodity” (108), aligning with the dissemination of cultural trauma.

Dezrădăcinare [Uprooting] (2022) by Sașa Zare may be read as traversing multiple genres, such as novel, autotheory, and therapeutic journal (Iovănel, and Bâlici 2022). Nevertheless, for the purposes of this analysis, I situate it at the boundary between fiction and nonfiction, within the framework of “scriptotherapy”. This genre is closely related to life writing, insofar as both concepts pertain to a general practice of writing aimed at reflecting upon and working through personal experiences, and in that they can be “biographical, novelistic, historical or explicitly self-referential and therefore autobiographical” (Pellicer-Ortín 2025, 105). I draw on Suzette A. Henke’s concept of “scriptotherapy” to refer to “the process of writing out and writing through traumatic experience in the mode of therapeutic re-enactment” (Henke 1998, xii–xiii). This definition suggests that literature may function as a therapeutic means of reconstituting the self not only in the aftermath of trauma, vulnerability, or crisis (Kuznetski, Battisti, and Pellicer-Ortín. 2025, 4), but also in the course of articulating, constructing, and representing trauma through the act of writing.

I add to this definition certain features of life writing, such as a subject that is “always in a process of change” (Pellicer-Ortín 2025, 104), and the genre’s capacity “to communicate intricate inner experiences and/or moments of crisis” (104), typically articulated in a first-person, non-linear narrative, structured by temporal layering and fluid movements across time, wherein past and present are granted equal narrative weight. Given that both the process of change and the aforementioned internal experiences are inherently sensory, I refine and delimit the subgenre into what I term “somatic scriptotherapy”, in which not only the (re)construction of bodily experience constitutes the central focus, but also “procedural memory” (or the memory of the body), which, according to Peter Levine, encompasses the memory of sensory experience, defensive responses, and self-protection, constituting the “deepest strata of memory” (Levine 2015, 39).

Procedural memory, on the one hand, and the ways in which the body is perceived, positioned, and experienced in relation to others, on the other, are central to the genre I propose, as these processes intersect with both the act of writing, therapeutic re-enactment, and the cultural representation of motherhood, and the mother–daughter dynamic. Within trauma psychology, the conceptual focus has gradually shifted away from trauma’s original meaning as a wound, associated primarily with physical effects, toward an emphasis on the traumatic

event and its less visible psychological consequences. Yet, with the subsequent expansion of the concept of trauma and its integration into broader frameworks, embodiment, understood as the dynamic interdependence of mind and body, has become increasingly foregrounded in representations of interpersonal trauma in contemporary women writing.

Characteristic of the subgenre of somatic scriptotherapy is a body that participates in the process of identity construction: a first-person, experiential body, a body-as-memory that both connects and differentiates past and present, thereby generating a non-linear narrative structured through temporal layering. This is a reflexive body that accompanies the narratorial voice in the act of writing and in the production of an individual memory inscribed with collective and cultural dimensions, functioning as a counter-memory that resists the homogenizing imperatives of globalization and the surge of artificial intelligence, as well as the authoritarian politics of an ascendant far right, for which bodies are instrumentalized as sites of regulation and oppression. Within this framework, somatic scriptotherapy emerges in the current economic and political conjuncture both as a reaction against forces of uniformization, and as an alternative archive of individual (and thus cultural) memory, one that preserves not only affective, but also procedural memory.

Embodying the Mother: Trauma and Maternal Representation in *Dezrădăcinare* by Sașa Zare

Dezrădăcinare is one of the most acclaimed books published in 2022 in Romania, written in Romanian by an author from the Republic of Moldova, who publishes under the pseudonym Sașa Zare. *Dezrădăcinare* brings to light a range of intersecting realities: queer relationships, feminist activism, and displacement, all deeply intertwined with the representation of traumatic bonds between mother and daughter. While the book initially sets out to tell the breakup story of Sașa, the first-person narrator, with her girlfriend, it gradually turns into a fragmented narrative composed of journal entries, therapy sessions, reconstructed dialogues, and memories. Taken together, these fragments articulate a profound rupture: the separation from the mother; the displacement and dislocation from her homeland, Moldova, as Sașa relocates to Cluj-Napoca, Romania; and, ultimately, the alienation from her native language. These fractures coalesce around an identity in perpetual motion and negotiation, structured by the interplay between the immediacy of lived experience, and the enduring, at times intrusive, presence of memory. As the narrator herself observes: “In the contemporary world there is no such thing as a fixed identity; the self is nothing but a

disordered, restless, fractured *mélange*, constantly in transformation" (Zare 2022, 93) (m. t.)³.

The cultural representation of trauma in contemporary literature authored by women frequently intersects and is intertwined with depictions of motherhood and the mother–daughter relationship. Mothers in literature often become objects of discourse for their daughters, as demonstrated by Marianne Hirsch and Alison S. Fell in their seminal feminist studies on motherhood. As such, the emergence of maternal subjectivity in contemporary Western literature (and, we might add, in Eastern European literature) entails two related dynamics. According to Marianne Hirsch, on the one hand, it involves giving voice to the mother; on the other, it can entail her "marginalization", reducing her voice to that of the daughter and placing her in a position of dependence relative to her (Hirsch 1989, 16). *Dezrădăcinare* is no exception. In an effort to heal following her separation from her girlfriend, Sașa retraces her relationship with her mother, a path linking body and writing and employing a psychoanalytic approach akin to that of Hélène Cixous in *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1975), through which the narrator translates corporeal memories into language. As a pioneering contribution to Romanian-language somatic scriptotherapy, Zare's work configures the mother as institutionalized via an excessive bodily entanglement with her daughter.

In *Dezrădăcinare*, procedural memory is anchored in a space of self-reflection and manifests both in the therapist's office, during psychotherapeutic sessions, and in the structured practice of reflective writing. The authority of narrative is evident in the way Sașa negotiates her most intimate self, "repositioning the deepest parts" (Zare 2022, 191) of her identity, and attempts to displace her mother as the "voice of the mind" (175)⁴. In the act of narration, she recalls and works through fragmented images and experiences, which are then reorganized and interpreted within the context of her therapy sessions with her psychotherapist. The reconstruction of traumatic experiences, along with the cultural representation of trauma and motherhood, originates in therapeutic practice and extends into writing, in what we term somatic scriptotherapy, wherein the narration of one's life story serves to illuminate and construct the formation of trauma.

While most critical studies on motherhood concentrate on Western literature, it is important to recognize that, under the influence of late 20th century feminism, when motherhood increasingly became a matter of personal choice,

³ The cited work is originally written in Romanian. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the novel are my own ["Cred că în lumea contemporană nu există niciun fel de identitate fixă, eu l e doar un melanj dezordonat, neliniștit, fărâmițat, în transformare mereu"] (93).

⁴ "repoziționează cele mai adânci părți" (191); "voce a minții" (175).

and in parallel with medical and legal developments that facilitated a more “fluid” understanding of maternity and family (Fell 2003, 74), women’s writing in post-communist Eastern Europe in the 21st century likewise engages with the theme of motherhood. These texts often approach motherhood from the perspective of daughters, who negotiate their relationships with their mothers in a quest for self-definition.

For Saşa, subsequently relocating from Chişinău for the student city of Cluj-Napoca signifies a rupture from the mother-as-body, home, and homeland. The corporeal and affective detachment from a mother who regards her child, and later her teenage and adult daughter, primarily as a bodily extension provides Saşa with the critical distance necessary to interrogate, analyze, and eventually come to terms with her mother. Although multiple traumatic experiences emerge throughout this process, I will highlight three clinically recognized types of trauma as follows: developmental, attachment, and enmeshment trauma. These traumas are narrated progressively, emphasizing the formation and unfolding of trauma itself rather than its effects (as in clinical PTSD) or the extraordinary events that produced them, reflecting a broader, everyday understanding of trauma, as conceptualized within cultural trauma theory. In this context, the primary traumatic stressor is not sexual abuse or physical violence *per se*, although a childhood sexual episode is recounted by Saşa, but rather, within the mother-daughter dyad, it lies in the mother’s aspiration for her daughter to achieve and possess what she herself was denied under an oppressive communist system. Consequently, deprivation, poverty, restrictions on career and personal freedoms, and the policing of women’s bodies produced a possessive dynamic that both structured and constrained the mother-daughter relationship.

Saşa navigates a deeply rooted negative mother–daughter relationship while striving not to demonize her mother and seeking reconciliation; for this reason, the somatic scriptotherapy of Saşa Zare can be read as an attempt to come to terms with the mother. Saşa aims to perceive her mother beyond the fixed structures imposed by the institution of motherhood, and to understand her through the lived experiences of individual women, viewing motherhood as a practice rather than a prescribed role: “I so wish, mother, that we could dismantle the cult of the mother, that I could give your life back to you” (Zare 2022, 417)⁵. She does not separate from her mother as a living individual, but from her mother as an institution, a woman subordinated to societal expectations, for whom motherhood constitutes her sole social role, a role from which Saşa wishes to liberate her: “I wish that kinship structures could be released from

⁵ “Mi-aş dori atât de tare, mămică, să desfiinţăm cultul mamei, să pot să-ţi dau viaţa înapoi” (417).

the constraints of the traditional family. That you could have a community of friends now and a large house in which to enjoy life with them" (Zare 2022, 417)⁶.

For reconciliation to be conceivable in a future beyond Sașa's anticipation, the excavation of the past is intimately connected to procedural memory and, by extension, to the conceptualization of the body as a site to be read, interpreted, and discovered through writing. Yet, this examination of the body, understood in terms of affect, and temporality, reveals its persistent dependence on the mother's body, manifesting in Sașa's enduring sense that her own body constitutes little more than an extension of her mother's, as exemplified in the following passage:

It felt as if it were a foot or a hand of her mother's, and every time they met, Sveta naturally caught her own body part between her fingers and examined it: if it had slimmed down, if it had gotten fatter, if it had hair, if not, if it smelled, how it smelled, if it had gotten uglier, if that piece of flesh fit in with the rest of the world or if something was wrong there. Is it normal enough? Sașa imagined that was what was going through Sveta's mind while she was breaking her intimacy with her fist, and Sașa had to redraw it every time (Zare 2022, 39) (m. t)⁷.

When boundaries between family members are blurred, and the mother treats the daughter's self and body as her own, compromising the child's autonomy and preventing her from developing a separate sense of self, and bodily agency, specialists refer to this as enmeshment trauma, a condition in which differentiation and separation are impossible. Those subject to enmeshment often experience a lack of individuated selfhood and a sense of mutual indispensability, which, as exemplified by Sașa, can manifest in maladaptive interpersonal behaviors, and an "undeveloped self" (Baroncelli, Lodder, van der Lee, Bachrach 2025, 1-2).

There is no track of an abusive relationship, neither emotionally, nor corporally not even a symptom of PTSD. However, the closeness of their bodies and the dependence of the daughter on her mother's body unfolds in the process of

⁶ "Mi-aș dori ca formele de rudenie să fie scoase din blocajul familiei tradiționale. Ca tu să ai o comunitate de prietene acum și o casă mare, în care să huzurești împreună cu ele" (417).

⁷ "Da' sutien nu porți? Parcă ți se văd țâțele./ Și în timp ce o întreba asta, mâna Svetei s-a întins peste cană, peste solniță, peste mormanul cu plăcinte, peste farfuria Sașei și i-a atins sânul stâng, i l-a cuprins cu palma, și-a apăsât degetele pe el, precis, medical. (...) Se simțea de parcă ar fi fost un picior sau o mână a maică-sii și de câte ori se întâlneau, Sveta își prindea cu naturalețe între degete propria parte a corpului și o analiza: dacă a slăbit, dacă s-a îngrășat, dacă are păr, dacă nu, dacă miroase, cum miroase, dacă s-a mai urîțit, dacă bucata aia de carne se încadrează în rândul lumii sau e ceva greșit acolo. E destul de normală?, își imagina Sașa că era în capul Svetei, în timp ce îi rupea intimitatea cu pumnul și fata trebuia să și-o deseneze la loc de fiecare dată" (39).

narration and reconstruction of mother-daughter relationship as a result of emotional and physical neglect that stems out of Saşa's childhood stories, as illustrated in the following excerpts: *"I clung to my mother's big body"* (Zare, 2022, 27); or *"(...) always tied to one another, never apart, never far, always holding hands, I am hers, she is mine, we share the madness like a piece of bread with onion and butter"* (18–19)⁸.

Although Saşa also depicts her mother as a shelter, a refuge, and a home in the passages above, the excavation of the past, the reactivation of the child's bodily memory, and the alternation between past and present reveal the mother's affective neglect. This neglect, embedded in the routines of everyday life, unfolds gradually and is reconstructed through the act of writing, not as an extraordinary event "beyond ordinary human experience" (Figley, Ellis, Reuther, and Gold 2017, 5), but as a cumulative and continuous stressor that, according to specialists, can be classified as developmental trauma. Writing this trauma highlights not only the role of procedural memory in its evocation, but also the centrality of the body: it is through the body that readers can perceive, in Saşa Zare's somatic scriptotherapy, that developmental trauma does not arise from events, as in clinical trauma, but from sustained everyday exposure to affective neglect, and "from the lack of a secure attachment relationship" (Cruz, Lichten, Berg, George 2022, 3).

Alongside developmental trauma, attachment trauma is expressed in the disruption of attachment processes and the persistent undermining of physical and emotional stability within the family unit, which is also made evident in the bodily interactions between Saşa and her mother, as seen in the following excerpt: *"When my mother came closer and closer, large, beautifully smelling, I ran to her. I stuck to her, I wrapped my arms around her whole belly. How much I missed you, mommy!"* (31)⁹. The scene evokes the mother's return home and the daughter's joy at seeing her after an extended period of solitude; however, it is neither singular nor isolated throughout Zare's book. Nor is it the only episode relevant to the discussion of attachment trauma. While attachment trauma remains a relatively recent concept in clinical studies and lacks a fixed definition (Zagaria, Baggio, Rodella, Leto 2024, 1-16), Saşa Zare's somatic writing suggests two possible reasons for this. First, clinical research often emphasizes events rather than the everyday life of the traumatized individual. Second, clinical

⁸ "M-am agăţat de corpul mare al mamei" (27). "(...) mereu una legată de alta, niciodată fără, niciodată departe, mereu ne ţinem de mână, sunt a ei, e a mea, împărţim nebunia la două ca pe o bucată de pâine cu ceapă şi unt." (18-19)

⁹ "Când mama a ajuns tot mai aproape, mare, frumos mirositoare, am fugit la ea. M-am lipit, i-am luat toată burta în braţe. Ce dor mi-a fost de matală, mămica!" (31).

studies frequently focus on the consequences of trauma, rather than on the narrative itself as a form of re-enactment.

Together, these two forms of trauma, the developmental effects of chronic affective neglect and the relational disturbances of insecure attachment, along with enmeshment trauma, intersect in the embodied experience and mother–daughter relationship that Saša Zare reconstructs through writing.

Conclusions

First, *Dezrădăcinare* demonstrates that the expansion of writing into the exploration of traumatic stressors and processes of individual transformation requires a broader conceptualization of trauma, such as that advanced by theories of cultural trauma. Second, it reveals that the interrelation of procedural memory, therapeutic reenactment, and traumatic outcomes in contemporary women's writing necessitates the articulation of a new genre capable of encompassing and unfolding these dynamics. Finally, the text exemplifies how displacement and separation, understood as potential traumatic stressors within cultural trauma, together with various forms of clinical trauma, including enmeshment, attachment, and developmental trauma, are inextricably linked to the corporeal embodiment of the mother, as well as to the dynamics of mother–daughter bodily dependency.

In Saša Zare's writing, cultural and clinical understandings of trauma converge to configure a subject in perpetual transformation, a condition that shapes not only the formal characteristics of the text, conceived here as a form akin to life writing which I term *somatic scriptotherapy*, but also provides empirical support for both therapeutic strategies in clinical contexts and theories of cultural trauma. This is one reason why *somatic scriptotherapy* is crucial for reading *Dezrădăcinare*, while also possessing potential for further theoretical expansion.

One of the functions of this genre is not merely to illuminate trauma-coping mechanisms, but also to narrativize, and thereby render intelligible, the processes through which the body undertakes healing and implements curative strategies within and through the act of writing. In this sense, body and narrative converge in *somatic scriptotherapy*, foregrounding the ethical and cultural functions of literature by emphasizing the somatic dimension of human interaction and interpersonal trauma. While clinical studies since the 1990s have predominantly focused on post-traumatic stress disorder and the psychological consequences of traumatic events, Saša Zare's work demonstrates that writing – conceived both as a practice of constructing and mediating procedural memory and as

a mode of shaping how the body is perceived, positioned, and experienced in relation to others – is central to the unfolding of trauma and to the cultural representation of motherhood as an institution open to critique, as well as to the corporeally intertwined mother–daughter relationship.

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