



# Inherited Displacement Intergenerational Trauma in Second-Generation Migrant Narratives

FALGUNI M. PARMAR  
Research Scholar,  
Department of English, Gujarat University

## Abstract:

*This article examines the notion of the inherited displacement by focusing on how the effects of migration are transmitted across generations. While first generation migrants experience displacement through loss of home and culture but the second generation inherits these experiences in emotional and psychological forms. Even without migrating themselves, second-generation migrants' lives are shaped by parental stories and silences. This creates a situation where children of migrants carry memories that are not personally experienced by deeply felt.*

*The study analyses *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* and *Pachinko* to investigate how inherited trauma is portrayed in literature. It emphasizes on three aspects memory without direct experience, silence as a form of emotional transmission, and the formation of fragmented identities. The study also uses the ideas postmemory and intergenerational trauma to explain how displacement continues beyond the first generation.*

*This study proposes that displacement should not be understood just as a physical movement but as a psychological condition that affects identity formation over time. By specifying the experiences of second-generation migrants, this study draws focus to the suppressed and unspoken impact of migration. It shows how literature acts as a medium to represent and understand these complex emotional realities.*

---

**Keywords:** *Inherited displacement, intergenerational trauma, postmemory, diaspora, identity, second-generation migrants, memory, silence*

---

## 1. Introduction

Migration is usually defined as a physical movement from one place to another. Most works focus on the struggles of people who migrate, like loss of home, social adjustments, cultural differences and fragmented identities. However, this idea is limited because it ignores the aftermath of migration, especially in the lives of the next generation.

Children of migrants do not experience migration directly but they grow up within the environment shaped by it. They hear stories about the past, the struggles faced, observe emotions and also silence is faced where important experiences are not discussed. So, they develop a connection with a past they have never lived. Here, displacement becomes emotional rather than physical.

In contemporary works, the traditional concept of migration is challenged. Instead of seeing displacement as a one-time event, it can be seen as ongoing process that affects multiple generations.

This article studied inherited displacement through *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* and *Pachinko*. These texts show how trauma is passed from one generation to other through silence, memory and

emotional behaviour. This article argues that second generation migrants live with the effects of displacement even without direct experience.

## 2. Objectives

This article aims to explain the idea of intergeneration displacement in a clear and simple way. It explores how trauma is passed from one generation to another, especially from parents' children in migrant families. The study also highlights how memory works without direct experience and how second-generation migrants carry emotional pieces of the past.

Also, it explores the role of silence in communicating trauma and how these experiences contribute to the formation of fragmented identities.

## 3. Methodology

This study uses qualitative method. It is based on close reading and analysis of two texts *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* and *Pachinko*. The analysis focuses on characters, themes and emotional experiences instead of complicated technical methods. It also uses selected concepts from trauma theory and memory studies to justify the argument. The works of Marianne Hirsch and Cathy Caruth are used to explain how trauma is passed down through generations.

The method is simple but effective as it combines both, textual analysis with theoretical understanding

## 4. Significance of the Study

This study is important because it draws attention to a less discussed aspect of migration studies that is the experiences of second-generation migrants. Most studies focus on first generation migrants but this leaves a gap in understanding how migration continues to affect later generations. It also shows that trauma is not always visible or directly expressed. It can be present in silent forms like behaviour, emotions and family relationships. By focusing on these aspects, the study provides a deeper understanding of displacement.

Another important point is that literature acts as powerful tool to explore these issues, through stories and characters, literature makes it easier to understand complex emotional and psychological experiences.

## 5. Theoretical Framework

The concept of postmemory, introduced by Marianne Hirsch, is central to this study. Postmemory indicates to the way in which the second generation relates to the traumatic experiences of the first generation. These experiences are passed down through stories, images and environments but not remembered directly. Hirsch states that post memory connects the next generation to a past that they did not experience but still feel deeply.

Another important idea is given by Cathy Caruth, who argues that trauma does not remain limited to the past but it continues to affect individuals over time and may appear in other forms. Trauma is not clearly remembered, sometimes it is experienced through emotional reactions and repeated patterns.

These theories help us understand that displacement is not only physical but also emotional and psychological.

## 6. Analysis

Inherited displacement can be understood through three aspects memory without direct experience, silence as a form of emotional transmission and fragmented identity. Second generation migrants carry memories that they have not personally experienced as these memories are usually incomplete and emotional rather than factual. In *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, the narrator tries to understand his mother's past through writing, stating, "I am writing to reach you" (Vuong 1). This line portrays both

connection and distance as he tries to feel the experiences that are not his own. Similarly, in *Pachinko*, the younger generation continues to be shaped by earlier struggles, shown in the line “History has failed us, but no matter” (Lee 1). This shows that the past continues to influence the present even without direct experience.

Silence also plays a crucial role in passing on the trauma. In many migrant families, painful experiences are not openly discussed which is why trauma exist in indirect forms rather than erasing it. In *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, the mother's silence creates emotional distance so the narrator tries to bridge the gap through writing. In *Pachinko*, the older generation avoids talking about their struggles but their emotions still affect the younger generation. This shows that trauma can be passed through behaviour, mood and family environment.

Inherited displacement leads to fragmented identity. Second generation migrants often feel that they are caught between cultures and struggle to create a stable sense of self. In *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, the narrator has confusion related to language, culture and family expectations which resulted in an unstable identity. Similarly, in *Pachinko*, characters find difficult to feel a sense of belonging as they face discrimination and social exclusion. Their identity becomes complex and divided. Together, these aspects show that inherited displacement affects not only emotions but also identity formation in lasting ways.

## 7. Discussion

The study shows that inherited displacement is complex and not simple or direct process. It works through different elements like memory, silence and identity struggles. Second generation migrants experience the effects of migration in indirect ways, which makes their situation difficult. The concepts of postmemory and trauma helps us understand that displacement is not just physical movement. It becomes a psychological condition that transmits across generations.

Literature plays an important role in showing these experiences because it focuses on emotions and personal stories. It helps readers understand how deeply migration can affect individuals, even if they have not experienced it fully and directly.

## 8. Conclusion

This article shows that displacement is not just limited to those who migrate. It continues in the lives of their children through emotional and psychological inheritance. Through *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* and *Pachinko*, it is very evident that second generation migrants carry the effects of past experiences in powerful ways without directly experiencing it. Understanding inherited displacement helps us to see migration as ongoing and multi-generational process. It also highlights the importance of addressing emotional and psychological aspects of migration.

Literature provides a meaningful way to explores these issues and give voice to experiences that are often silent or hidden.

## References

1. Caruth, C. (1996). *Unclaimed experience Trauma, narrative, and history*. Baltimore, MD Johns Hopkins University Press.
2. Hirsch, M. (2012). *The generation of postmemory Writing and visual culture after the Holocaust*. New York, NY Columbia University Press.
3. Lee, M. J. (2017). *Pachinko*. New York, NY Grand Central Publishing.
4. Vuong, O. (2019). *On earth we're briefly gorgeous*. New York, NY Penguin Press.