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Author	池田, 年穂(Ikeda, Toshiho) Hashi, Tomoko
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Thinning Corn and Volunteering the Cosmos: Maternal Generational Trauma in Bobby Ann Mason's *Offerings*

Toshiho IKEDA, Tomoko HASHI*

Bobby Ann Mason, born in 1940 in Kentucky, went north to New York City after she graduated University of Kentucky. She launched herself as a novelist in 1982, when *Shiloh* was published. She experienced her years of living in the north as a culture shock. She was eager to write "her people back home also going through culture shock." But Mason successfully resisted using "her people back home" in a satiric way, because she is truly fascinated by the way her people talk, the things they buy and do and eat. Although she is sometimes compared with her contemporary Raymond Carver, Mason seems less depressed than he by the life her characters live. At the same time, Mason eloquently describes the generational gap caused by the change and the urbanization which occurred in the South. Her short stories sometimes shed light on the rift among three generations of women: a grandmother, who's a symbol of the good, old South; a daughter, who represents the rising generation and whose values have been either contaminated or enhanced by the values of contemporary American society; and a mother, who belongs ambivalently neither to the grandmother's nor to the daughter's generation.

Without focusing solely on the gap Mason points out, but using it as a springboard, this article (completed through discussions between two members of SLEI ...Scholars on *Literature of Exiles and Immigrants*) explores how Mason describes the human tendencies of three generations of women tortured by traumas and fated to pass them down subconsciously through the generations and continue to victimize their children, just by closely analyzing only the text, *Offerings*.

The text used for this article is included in *Shiloh and Other Stories*; Harper, 1990 (pp.53-59), and the pages of citation in this article indicate the pages of the book above.

How would you feel if you had a love affair with your child's spouse? This is a tough question to answer, but possibly you may become depressed, or, conversely, may enjoy yourself. Eventually, however, most people would be psychologically harmed by such an occurrence. Some people, if they are lucky, would eventually discover a solution by getting help from others. There is an even tougher question of how one would deal with this situation by taking steps to solve family and marital problems. This, however, can be extremely, difficult for individual family members who love and care for each other without harming family member.

It would be ideal if people could control themselves by being conscious of what they were doing. But what would happen if they were unable to control themselves? For example, those who are continuously motivated by Oedipal Conflict do not understand why they cannot stop engaging in incest. They do not realize that they have a psychological disorder which is beyond their power to control and which provokes them to engage in incest. Moreover, whenever people have traumas in their pasts which wounded and shocked them, they tend to inflict their unhappiness on others. It is now generally accepted that those who were victims of childhood sexual abuse are more likely than others to eventually abuse their own children. A son, for example, who was sexually abused by his father is considered to be more likely to sexually abuse his own child. And sadly, we can then predict that this child may eventually sexually abuse his own child, and so on down the generations. In this way, a parent provoked by unconscious forces torments his own children and, indirectly, subsequent

*Tomoko HASHI; MA (Humanities), the University of Chicago

generations.

Offerings by Bobby Ann Mason describes a woman, Mama, who is suffering from traumas that caused her to lose her husband, and who then afflicts her daughter, Sandra, by stealing Sandra's husband Jerry and isolating her own daughter from the outside world. Mama implants her trauma into Sandra's mental world, with that result that Sandra confines herself in a distorted universe, from which she fantasizes in vain about escape. We will explore Mason's allusions to trauma, by studying Mama's affliction, her treatment of Sandra, Sandra's own despair, and Sandra's fantasy of escape. Basically, in *Offerings*, Mason depicts a human tendency to repeat the same trauma-caused patterns of action through the generations, and suggests that it is extremely difficult to escape family trauma, by describing Mama's affair with Sandra's husband.

In the very first paragraph of the story, we find Mason's allusions to trauma in that she suggests a slightly unnatural relationship between mother and daughter. The story begins: "Sandra's maternal grandmother died of childbed fever at the age of twenty-six. Mama was four" (p.53). A part of the name of the described sickness "child" and the word "maternal" both hint that this story concerns a close relationship between mother and daughter. Moreover, the word "infection" implies mother and daughter are suffering from a similar problem, which contaminates them both physically and psychologically. This leads us to understand that trauma exists in Sandra's family, because mother and daughter repeat the same pattern of affliction: death, illness, loss of youth, loss of fertility, and loss of a husband.

Both mother and daughter experience trauma at very young and vulnerable ages. Sandra's maternal grandmother died young, suffering from childbed fever. Similarly, soon after giving birth to Sandra, Mama "developed an infection" (p.53) of the uterus that makes her seriously ill. Although she narrowly escapes death, "she learned the worst" (p.53) when she finally sees a doctor, and during the ensuing hysterectomy she ". . . could see a red expanse below her waist" (p.53) in her semi-conscious state. Mama must have felt an unbearable dread close to the fear of death itself during the operation and afterwards. Moreover, Mama had already experienced the fear of death from the death of her own mother, who died of childbed fever when Mama was four.

Mama was traumatized because a daughter really needs her mother to support her entire young life. Even if a daughter does not die herself, the shadow of a mother's death never fails to influence her. The younger she is when she loses her mother, the deeper her own fear of death may become. In these ways, the entangled loss of youth and fertility afflict both Mama and Sandra in this story. The youthful death of Sandra's grandmother is shown as not only the loss of her own life but also of future generations. This explains Mama's unexpected fear during her own hysterectomy and the shame she experiences as she blushes during her operation. By compelling her to lie back on an operating table, and depriving her of consciousness, this operation violates Mama's own sense, youth and fertility.

Another factor is that none of Sandra, Mama and Sandra's paternal grandmother have strong husbands in their lives. Their fathers and husbands are portrayed as powerless and dwarfed. Though Sandra's grandfather, Bob Turnbow and her grandmother's second husband, Mr. Stamper both appear in the story, her grandfather died slowly, over five years, of Parkinson disease, and Mr. Stamper is described only as someone who "owned a shoe store . . ." (p.54). Even when he was alive, Sandra's grandfather was completely dependent on his wife for over five years. During his illness and decline, he became a hopeless and powerless man. In these ways, Mason's descriptions emphasize a maternal linkage where mother and daughter share a family trauma.

Mama's affliction begins because she envies both Sandra's paternal grandmother—Grandmother Stamper—and Sandra. Grandmother Stamper has everything that Mama does not have: husband, family, and untormented life. Unlike Mama's mother, Grandmother Stamper is, during her second

marriage, experiencing a long and untroubled period, with no traumatic illness. Unlike Mama who is described as troubled and trapped, Sandra's paternal grandmother is described by her first husband, Sandra's grandfather, as "a good woman" (p.54). It is true "she's been through so much" (p.58), including the tragic and tough situation of nursing her ailing husband for five years and ". . . trying her best to look after their dying farm" (p.54), but she has, in actuality, lead a rather happy life as a typical Southern wife. Grandmother Stamper married, waited on her husband, gave birth to a child, cooked chicken in the traditional way, cleaned the house, and supported her family and the family business. Her life may appear on the surface, to be dull, banal, commonplace, sometimes painful, without any exceptional happiness, but at least, for her first husband, she looked happy as if she ". . . lights up the fires in the sky"(p.54). In her old age, with her second husband, she lives in comfort in a small apartment on a city street. In fact, as a woman in her generation, she has lived successfully as a woman and a wife. In contrast, Mama views her life as tormented; she envies fair enough her mother-in-law's relative successes.

At the same time, as envying Grandmother Stamper, Mama also appears to feel jealous of her daughter, Sandra; Sandra is still young, has no illness, and leads a decent life in the calm of the countryside. Furthermore, Sandra has a husband and could even have a child. Mama's psychological isolation probably increased considerably when Sandra, her only blood relative, married and left home. Mama's only recourse was to make up for her loss, and to fill her isolation, by psychologically denying the boundaries between Sandra and herself. As a result, Mama, in a practical sense, forces Sandra's husband Jerry to move away.

Though Mama's close relationship with Jerry is not described directly, Mama's struggle to keep Jerry's departure a secret from Grandmother Stamper reveals that Mama has had a love affair with Jerry. Mama insists that they are not going, ". . . to tell Grandmother about the separation" (p.54). This suggests that Mama is involved in that separation, and is concealing something that relates to her own trauma. After Sandra was born, and Mama suffered from a birth-related fever, at first she insisted that she would not "see the doctor" and that, "It would go away" (p.53). To some extent, she may have been afraid of discovering just how serious the illness was, but she seems to be even more frightened that her sickness would be publicly revealed. From a traditional point of view, the ability to have children is a measure of a woman's value, and once Mama's hysterectomy took away that ability, she almost certainly saw herself as a hopeless and failed woman. In fact, when she lost her sexual and reproductive powers, she lost part of her identity as a woman. Moreover, she may very well hate the fertility of others because it reminds her of her own trauma and loss. Mama definitely has something traumatic to hide, which makes all comments seem like threats.

Because of this sense of insufficiency, Mama makes great efforts to hide from Grandmother her hysterectomy, her smoking, and Sandra and Jerry's separation. She conceals her hysterectomy because, just as she did not originally want to see the doctor for her post childbirth fever, she does not want anything traumatic to be revealed to public view. Mama's smoking also symbolically represents her trauma. From Grandmother Stamper's conservative perspective, women should not smoke. Furthermore, Mama's smoking can be viewed as a symbolic phallic substitute for the sexuality missing from her life. Symbolically, it manifests her desire to have a husband. The fact that, "For twenty-five years, Mama has sneaked smokes whenever her mother-in-law is around" (p.54), proves that she is naturally a deceiver. Textually, Mama's strong fear of revealing her secret in public is emphasized by using the designation "mother-in-law" since the word "law" impresses on us that her secret is not trivial in the public eye. Moreover, the phrase "mother-in-law" appears just once throughout the whole story during the explanation of Mama's desire to smoke, whereas during the rest of the story grandmother is referred to in various ways, including "Grandmother" (p.54), "Grandmother Stamper" (p.54), "Ethel" (p.56) and just "grandmother" (p.55). In the same paragraph that the phrase mother-in-law is used, Mama also insists on hiding Sandra's separation from her

husband, Jerry from grandmother. This reveals Mama's anxiety about what she would have to do and what would happen if her affair with Jerry were to be discovered. This acute anxiety also reveals itself in Mama's having to directly explain Jerry's absence to grandmother. In theory, it would have been easy for Sandra to assure her grandmother that Mama had nothing to do with the separation, but instead she lets Mama explain ". . . about the night shift and overtime" (p.55). In fact, it can be said that Mama explains it herself because of her anxiety that grandmother will detect her involvement with Sandra's husband. In this single instance, Mama's struggle to hide her involvement displaces her strong desire to avoid facing her trauma.

In her treatment of Sandra, Mama not only deprives Sandra of Jerry's physical presence, but also afflicts Sandra mentally by depriving her of Jerry's love. Fundamentally, Sandra experiences depression due to a lack of love from her marital life. She explains that when "[h]er husband is gone" (p.53) she "stayed behind" (p.53), whereas, in fact, she decided not to follow Jerry, because he lost interest in her. If, indeed, he still loved her, he would spend his weekends with her. In reality, however, he spends his weekends ". . . watching go-go dancers in smoky bars" (p.53), and lives in a bigger city, "Louisville" (p.53) than the place where she lives. The place where Mama lives is not mentioned in the story, but there is evidence that she does not visit Sandra all that often. For example, Mama asks Sandra, "Did you ever find out what went with your little white cat?" (p.55) If Mama met Sandra often, she would already know what had happened to the cat. In fact, it can be regarded as strange that she asks Sandra about it at all. Moreover, it is also strange that it falls to Mama to explain about Jerry's absence, which she tells grandmother is due to his work on the night shift. This alone suggests that she is living with Jerry in town. Thus, when Jerry begins to prefer being out on the town at weekends to staying with his wife, the reader is led to speculate if he is choosing Mama over Sandra.

In another instance, Sandra recalls her grandmother's telling her to ". . . dust under her bed, so the dust bunnies would not multiply and take over" (p.54). This can clearly be seen as Grandmother warning Sandra to take responsibility for her marital bed. The phrase "dust bunnies" suggests Playboy bunnies, snuggle bunnies, and other available women. Despite such warnings, although Sandra may actually realize that Jerry is no longer interested in her, it is clear that she is totally unaware that Mama is responsible for the rift.

Jerry's loss of interest, triggered by Mama, irritates Sandra because, in reality, she still loves him. She symbolically rescues "the bird from the cat . . . to let it recover" (p.53) in order to show how much she wants him back and also wants her marriage to recover. When she saw wounded bird's wings give "a flicker" (p.53), she recalls her flickering hope of regaining Jerry.

Moreover, it is also significant that Sandra "never dusts" (p.54). According to *Genesis*, dust represents sperm. *Genesis* states "not only was Adam created from the dust of the earth, but Abraham was promised that his seed shall be as the dust of the earth. . ." (*Genesis* 28:14). The fact that Sandra is reluctant to rid her life of dust suggests that she strongly desires not to leave her past, when she and her husband shared a full and loving marriage. In fact, although she is frustrated with her absent husband, she still loves him.

Although this dilemma represents Sandra's despair, she refuses to find a way out of it. The inferred knowledge of the love affair between Mama and Jerry makes Sandra abandon herself to a hopeless situation, which she reenacts in her treatment of the injured bird. When she rescues the bird, "she decided to put it outside" (p.53), a move that shows her desire to let it go alongside her despair and inability to face her dilemma. Were she metaphorically able to face her dilemma, she would have treated the injured bird better by keeping it in her home and trying to cure it. But she does not. She takes it out of her house, during which action the bird dies. When the story states, "The dead bird is on a stump, untouched" (p.53), it shows that Sandra chose to leave the problem untouched. Sandra's despair is also revealed in her first conversation with Mama. When Mama asks

“. . . what went with your little white cat” (p.55), Sandra replies in a strange way, saying, “. . . I think maybe he got shot” (p.55). It is difficult for the reader to believe that she is so uncaring. After all, this is not a wild cat, but her pet. We already know that Sandra is fastidious about her cats because she “counts her cats” (p.53), so, her reply to Mama shows that rather than shows concern, Sandra dodges the painful question due to the stress of her larger dilemma. In fact, it is clear that she actively evades additional conflicts.

Her dilemma leads Sandra to distrust people and isolate herself. She has few interpersonal relationships in the story. She “grows vegetables” (p.53) and “loads a bucket with tomatoes and picks some dill, a cucumber, a handful of beans” (p.53). She has no job outside the house. She is to all intents and purposes, a farmer. True the work of farmers who cultivate their own land is challenging and varied; they plow, they sow, they reap. However, Sandra as a farmer, though very conscious of her dependence upon natural forces, does not acknowledge that human beings must also depend on each other. Instead of human exchanges, Sandra talks a lot about animals when grandmother and Mama visit her. She “tells them about the raccoon she saw as she came home one night” (p.55) and complains that “those silly ducks wouldn’t come in” (p.55). This is unusual, because normally a young woman like Sandra would retell gossip and funny stories that she heard from friends. But Sandra never talks about people, and seems to have no friends or close neighbors she likes to invite to her home for a chat. She is so solitary that she does not ever regularly clean her home. Only when she has “her mother and grandmother coming to visit, does she notice that cobwebs are strung across corners of the ceiling in the living room” (p.54). Furthermore, she leaves her linoleum dirty, her sink rusted and splotched, and her wallpaper peeled. It is patently clear that she lives a solitary life because if she were entertaining neighbors, she would be likely to at least make her living room and kitchen look neat. So, the simple evidence of her dilapidated house shows that her neighbors never visit. In fact, instead of going out and reaching people, she has “insulated” (p.53) herself from other human beings. She refuses to communicate with people. Instead, she adores her cats, dogs and vegetables, and uses them as substitutes to avoid human contact and engender isolation.

However, although Sandra distrusts people, she also longs for family. She “presses Grandmother to talk about the past, to tell about the farm Sandra can barely remember” (p.56). This is because, unlike the present, the past Grandmother describes is full of happy memories. True to her current condition, however, Sandra does not remember people living and working on the farm, but only “the dizzying porch swing, a dog with a bushy tail, the daisy-edged field of corn, and a litter of squirming kittens like a deep pile of mated socks in a drawer” (p.57). As is clearly shown, Sandra remembers only nature and animals in detail, describing them with vivid modifiers as if she were reliving it. She does not, however, identify with or refer to any living people even from her childhood. She apparently has no conscious memories of her childhood and family on the farm.

Sandra also urges Grandmother to talk about the trees. The trees, especially the gigantic walnut trees that she wants to know about, lead us to think of family trees. A heavy trunk rooted in the earth in a stable way supports all the branches, thereby symbolizing life and regeneration and linking the past and future of the family. This is the source of Sandra’s yearning to know about the trees. Although “she also remembers the day the trees came down” (p.57), Sandra has few memories of the trees themselves. We can assume that Sandra recognizes the fact that her family tree is broken, but she does not remember any details. In fact, she desires to have her family back, in order to better understand why the family split apart.

Knowing that Sandra longs for a family, Mama’s trauma keeps Sandra in a tormented dilemma of distrust of humans and social isolation. However, when Grandmother Stamper visits Sandra, the elderly lady tries to free Sandra from her torment. Grandmother “is looking for Jerry” (p.55). Those words show that Grandmother, a traditional Southern married woman, believes that Sandra should have her husband. If, in fact, Grandmother had discovered the facts of Sandra’s separation, she might

well have worked to bring about reconciliation. Mama, however, prevents Grandmother from intervening, and insists that Sandra does not even inform Grandmother of the separation. Even so, Sandra knows that Grandmother wants to support her marital life because "she realizes that Grandmother is looking for Jerry" (p.55). It is clear that Mama intends to remove Grandmother just as much as Sandra intends to take in Grandmother:

"I don't know how long I can keep up that night-shift lie." [Sandra says]

"But she's been through so much," Mama says. "She thinks the world of you, Sandra."

"I know"

"She thinks Jerry hung the moon"

"I tell you, if he so much as walks through that door—"

"I love those cosmos you planted," Mama says. "They're the prettiest I've ever seen. . ."

"They're volunteers. I just hated to thin them."

"You didn't?"

"I didn't thin them either. I just hated to thin them."

"I know what you mean," says Mama. "It always broke my heart to thin corn. But you learn" (pp.57-58)

While Sandra proposes to tell Grandmother at least about the fact of the separation, Mama dissuades her, saying that Grandmother is anxious about Sandra's "world." Moreover, Mama enforces Sandra's present isolation by changing the subject of the conversation from Jerry to flowers. Mama's words, "I love those cosmos you planted" is not a logical rejoinder to Sandra saying, "I tell you, if he so much as walks through that door—" Sandra appears to blame Mama for taking away Jerry, and Mama's sudden evasion sounds like an attempt to keep her daughter even if she loses Jerry. "The cosmos you planted" seems to be using the term cosmos literally, instead of as the name of a flower, to mean, "the world you made." In this case, the cosmos represents the isolated universe Sandra has created for herself. Thus, Mama ensnares her daughter in a distorted world.

In this story, Mama unconsciously passes down her trauma to Sandra. However, neither mother nor daughter realizes this fact. Sandra does not notice that her distorted world is not actually of her own making, and Mama does consciously realize it is her creation. This is shown by the fact that Sandra says that the cosmos she planted are "volunteers" (p.58), and that she did not do a thing. Mama replies, "You didn't?" In fact, just as the cosmos are growing without Sandra's active effort, her distorted world is produced by Mama's trauma, and without any overt intention on Sandra's part.

Trauma creates substantial, lasting damage to psychological development. Those who are afflicted by trauma tend to re-inflict it on their own children. Mama, for example, hates to thin corn, but she does. She also hates to lose men, but she does. The corn, like the cigarettes, symbolizes Mama's relations with men. Sandra, like her mother, also comes to hate to thin plants—in her case, the cosmos. Thus she inherits her mother's trauma by living in a parallel world to that created by Mama's trauma. If this is true, as is generally believed, if Sandra had a daughter, she could also pass on the same trauma. This passing down from generation to generation is illustrated in the last sentence of the dialogue above, when Mama says, "It always broke my heart to thin corn. But you learn." In this, she is suggesting that Sandra learns to do the same as her. The story further suggests that Sandra could take away her daughter's husband just as Mama stole her's. This subconscious generation repetition is exemplified by the sentence: "She [Sandra] sees bowls of blood lined up on the counter" (p.58). This shows that Sandra senses that there is something in her blood that is beyond her conscious control.

The final scene of the story coincides with the beginning, with Mason hinting that trauma flows in a maternal line. Both Sandra and Mama confess that they have decided to part with Jerry. Mama says, "There's no way to drive ducks in from a pond" (p.59), and Sandra adds, "Sometimes they just take a notion to stay out here all night" (p.59). These sentences represent the tacit agreement

between mother and daughter to give up Jerry, both as a phallus and a husband, much in the same way they realize the futility of attempting to shut up ducks overnight in the barn. The symbolical loss of phallus and husband is also represented by the foxes. "Once she [Sandra] saw three fox pups playing in the full moon, like dancers in a spotlight" (p.59). Here, the three foxes represent Mama, Sandra, and Jerry, who played with one another in the past, but who will do so no longer. The sentence, "And just last week she heard a baby screaming in terror" (p.59) replaces the foxes' "menacing yaps" (p.59), and, in fact, the foxes disappear from the scene. Although in reality merely the cry of a wildcat, the screaming baby recalls the start of the traumas mentioned at the beginning of the story, where mothers lose both their fertility and their men, and where men shrink to diminished and diminutive presences. "Mama throws her cigarette in the pond" (p.59). Sandra admits that "she would not mind if the wildcat took her ducks. They are her offering" (p.59). This is how both women reenact the loss of their men and the trauma that opens the story.

In the closing sentences of the story, Sandra fantasizes that she is free from her trauma, much as Mama did at the beginning of the story. In Sandra's dream, the area around the pond takes on a subconscious significance, when she "thinks of the thousands of large golden garden spiders [that] are hidden in the field" (p.59). She ". . . can imagine bouncing with an excited spring from web to web, all the way up the hill to the woods" (p.59). In this vision, Sandra leaves entanglement after entanglement behind her, and escapes to the woods. She dreams that she can escape the web of her fate, by turning the webs of spiders in to escape-helping trampolines. The dawn, when the light is fresh, when all is still uncorrupted, pure, and uncompromised, is used by Sandra to fantasize about her renewal by bouncing herself away from her traumas. In her mind, she bounces away to the regenerative and refreshing woods. Similarly, at the beginning of the story, Mama dreams of being free. When she "was semiconscious, with a spinal anesthetic" (p.53), Mama "hear[s] the surgeons discussing a basketball game" (p.53). This represents Mama's desire to transform herself into a basketball, bouncing back and forth, upwards and downwards, from one side of the court to the other side in total freedom of movement. Anesthesia—unconsciousness—brings about her fantasy of liberation. Being, as they are, both confined in torment, Mama and Sandra dream of escaping their individual traumas and of attaining emotional freedom.

When we first read *Offerings*, on the surface, we see a happy visit of a grandmother and a mother and to a granddaughter/daughter. Superficially, they simply appear to sit around the table, eat their supper, talk about their past, watch TV, and experience the tranquility of rural Kentucky. The story seems to be nothing more than a small tale about a trivial family get-together of three generations of women on a late summer evening. There are clearly several slight areas of friction among the three women, but they appear insignificant. Grandmother lives a conservative Southern life, mother less so, daughter even less, because she lives apart from her husband. Beyond this, there does not, at least on the surface, appear to be any unbearable conflict among the three generations.

In reality, however, Mason describes a family afflicted by deep-rooted problems. She tells the story of a family tortured by trauma, and depicts a totally unnatural relationship between a mother and a daughter, trapped, as they are, in torment, fated to repeat the same patterns of affliction; death, illness, loss of youth, loss of fertility, and loss of husbands.

Because of her own trauma, Mama starts passing her afflictions down to her daughter, Sandra. Mama tries to compensate for her traumatic losses, but cannot compensate for the losses of her youth and fertility, or wipe out her illness and near-death experience. Finally, she attempts to compensate for her failures by stealing Jerry, her daughter's husband, in a move motivated by her jealousy of both Grandmother Stamper and of Sandra. By depriving Sandra of her husband, Mama sends Sandra into a state of distrust and isolation. Sandra then perpetuates this dysfunctional outlook by creating a distorted world in which even she is alienated from herself. Neither mother nor daughter realizes

that Sandra's distorted universe has been produced in response to an unacknowledged trauma passed down through maternal generations.

Instead of attempting to help her, Mama tries to keep Sandra isolated, and harms her even more by leaving Sandra in torment. Mama transplants into Sandra the seeds of her own horrible trauma. It is true that both Sandra and Mama fantasize about escaping from their traumas, but these fantasies are in vain. They do not recognize their trauma; instead, they interpret their subconscious actions as a force of fate.

Those who suffer from any kind of trauma carry their damage for a long time. Consequently, they may injure other people. In this way, parents can harm even the children they love. Parents who were abused as children or young people are more likely than others to abuse their children. They may well know that they are harming their children, but they cannot stop. Trauma becomes psychologically untouchable for those who are suffering. However, when they try to erase their trauma, it resists, because the trauma situates itself deep in the subconscious. We have to seek solutions to help victims of trauma, and learn how to deal with our own traumas, in order to avoid harming other people.

In *Offerings*, Mason urges us to solve our own traumatic problems, by pointing out that trauma is capable of being passed down through the generations, and that victims may inhabit not only the past, but also the future.