

From intergenerational trauma  
to intergenerational solace

# How the Pain Sings

AYA SABI

If traumatic memories are handed down from one generation to the next, then we surely must have generations of consolation in our bodies as well. Can we move on from trauma to solace? And if we can, then how?

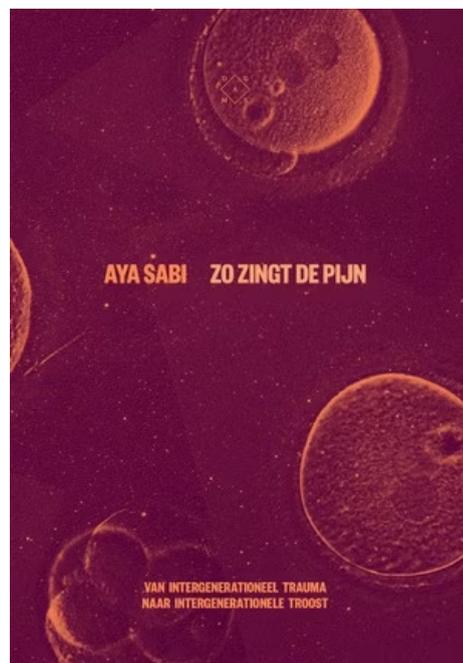
In 'How the Pain Sings', Aya Sabi investigates these questions in a lyrical, intimate essay. She goes in search of the possibilities of solace within a single life, taking the body as her starting point. The book is in six parts, with brief, tranquil passages that interweave thoughts, descriptions and autofiction. Sometimes a page has just one powerful sentence. The rest is white space – room to breathe, to contemplate, to feel.

Sabi directs her attention at those things that language cannot capture. She investigates the idea that trauma pain is prelingual, that it resides in the body and so is passed down from generation to generation. It is therefore insufficient merely to identify and describe trauma. Healing needs to take place at a physical level too.

What sets this work apart in the field of trauma literature is Sabi's focus on what can be achieved within healing. After all, trauma is not purely negative, it is also a warning signal, a defence mechanism intended to guard us against fresh pain. Inside this forcefield, 'How the Pain Sings' searches for a kind, hopeful movement towards recovery.

**She meticulously dissects her own process of moving from pain to healing, discusses the assumptions she comes upon along the way, and connects scientific insights and theories on the subject.**

TROUW



## AUTHOR



**Aya Sabi** (b. 1995) writes fiction as well as columns for Flemish newspaper 'De Morgen'. At the age of 22, she made her debut with the short-story collection 'Verkrumeld land' (Crumbled Land, 2017), which Dutch paper 'NRC Handelsblad' compared to the work of British author Zadie Smith. Her first novel 'Half Leven' (Half Life, 2022) centres on the key themes of migration, feminism and colonialism. Sabi writes with great passion, really gets under the skin of her characters and is ruthless in her descriptions of the pain, powerlessness and lack of understanding they experience. Photo © Debby Termonia

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