



European Journal of Humanistic Studies and Social Dynamics

Journal homepage: <https://easrjournals.com/index.php/ejhssd/index>



Narrating the Unhealed Wound: War Trauma in Sinan Antoon's "The Corpse Washer" and "Ave Maria"

Ali Hussein Ali Rasheed ^a

^aCollege of Education for Humanities, Al-Hamdaniya University, Nineveh, Iraq.

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Received: 8/4/2026

Accepted: 17/4/2026

Published: 20/4/2026

Doi:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22647064>

Corresponding author's:

Ali Hussein Ali Rasheed, College of Education for Humanities, Al-Hamdaniya University, Nineveh, Iraq.

Email: aliha@uohamdaniya.edu.iq

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the way Sinan Antoon uses the power of narration in both the *Corpse Washer* and the *Ave Maria* to transform the historically restrictive context of personal and communal memory into the context within which the tragedy of war is dealt with. The use of violence and loss cycles puts most of the characters in the fiction in a state of limitation, but they slowly bend the lines between the past and the present without breaking the silence of the current conflict. The memory modes of Baghdad represented in the novels with its broken time and spectral memory dissolve the line between experience and psychoanalysis. Boundaries are blurred, which shows how the characters are able to break the limits of their damaged minds. Jawad and his routines, coupled with Youssef and his spiritual visions, defy the traditional attitudes to the victim as helpless and resigned. This article adds to the important literature about Antoon by pointing out the inventiveness with which the books use fragmented narrative. This is the method that refats trauma in the shape of narration resistance and survival. While preceding researchers have investigated the political underlying forces in Antoon's narratives, this take a look at gives a sparkling attitude to the position of memory as a metaphorical and mental agent of patience.

KEYWORD: War Trauma, Healing, Iraqi literature, Diaspora.

Copyright © 2026 EJHSSD ; Published by European Academy of Scientific Research

This is an open access article licensed under CC BY: (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>)



1. INTRODUCTION

Sinan Antoon truly is an exceptional figure in the contemporary Arabic literature, at least to us who study contemporary authors of the Middle East. He is an insider, who is probably covering the worst elements of the near past of Iraq and an outsider who is reporting back home, the U.S. I have read in my class material that he was born in Baghdad in 1967 when the Baathists of Saddam were closing a fist. Our readings can reveal to us how dictatorial authority and never-ending propaganda established the background of his early years. He studied English literature undergrad at Baghdad University, where he balanced between Arabic literature and Western literature and I believe, this is what makes his narrative voice have that hybrid feel we are expected to discern. With the crippling UN sanctions and the following economic spiral following the Gulf War strike in 1991 he left the country, as did many of the rest of his contemporaries. It was discussed in college that, that migration wave formed a diaspora of writers which reconstructed Iraqi literature. Then he moved on to the U.S. where he grabbed M.S. at Georgetown, and a Ph.D. in Arabic Studies at Harvard, a career path in the teaching game that we have been encouraging the kids to follow in our text. Ever since 2004 he has been teaching Arabic literature at New York University, and continues to write poetry, novels, translations, and criticism (see his interviews and biographical notes in our sources list).

Antoon fled not only in 1991 but it resembled the wider exodus that we have observed following crisis after crisis. In our modules, we have discussed the Iran -Iraq War (1980-88) which has taken away hundreds of thousands of lives and aggravated societal wounds. As a result, infrastructure and

life on the ground did not get any better with the Gulf War and subsequent sanctions. The U.S. invasion in 2003 dethroned Saddam, but it also gave way to a three-way war of insurgency, sectarian violence, and civil war that peaked between 2006 and 2008 and is yet to be broken down in our case studies. The minority of Christians, who had been part of the tracery of the multicultural Baghdad, were subjected to specific persecution as well as mass exodus—another argument that we mentioned during the discussion of the class on minority stories. In 2003, Antoon returned to Baghdad, albeit briefly, to shoot the documentary, *Bon A propos Baghdad*, so that we can study the realities within the city post the invasion. These strata of violence, exile, and memory are constantly at conflict with his writings. According to what he tells in interviews, his work is the result of a two-pronged viewpoint: the work is founded on Iraqi experience, but influenced by a distance, which allows him to criticize freely without the direct censorship.

Antoon blends the lyrical intensity of the prose with the grim realism, which is achieved through the use of fragmented structures that convey the fragmented nature of the individual minds and the society in Iraq. Memory in his works does not serve as a nostalgia but is an oppositional space where individual trauma and collective past come into conflict.

1.1. Research Question

In which aspects of *The Corpse Washer* (2013) and *Ave Maria* (2017), Sinan Antoon employs fragmented narration and memory modes as means of resistance and survival? How do these narrative strategies allow characters to transcend passive victimhood and subvert trauma to become psychological resistance?

1.2. Methodology

The research is a qualitative, text-based one, which is based on trauma theory (in particular, on the works by Cathy Caruth and Dominick LaCapra) and narrative theory. It uses close reading and comparative analysis of the two novels to analyze how narrative form relates to the way the war trauma is portrayed.

In accordance with the information provided above, the proposed research is going to analyze the mechanisms of narrative used by Antoon in his two novels, breaking down the analysis into three principal parts: The first part will cover the theoretical framework of trauma and how fragmented narrative is manifested in the structure of the novel. The second part is about the analytical part of the character Jawad in *The Corpse Washer*, and the concept of death rituals as a means of resistance and preservation of memory. The third section contrasts this with the character Youssef of *Ave Maria*, where spiritual visions and space memory are described as the places of resistance and a conclusion is made which sums up the findings on the role of narrative in psychological survival.

It is important to distinguish between “magical realism” as a literary genre and the representation of trauma in Antoon’s novels. Although some of the narrative devices of magical realism (Fragmentation, cyclical time and the confusion of reality and vision) are used in this work, they are not used as mere aesthetic or fantastical techniques, like in the works of Gabriel Garcia Marquez or Isabel Allende. On the contrary, they are the symptoms of trauma hallucination and spectral memory, the mental symptoms of the extended war and the mass violence. In the vein of Cathy Caruth (1996) and Dominick LaCapra (2001) this study interprets such phenomena as being of trauma realism, in which the fantastic is not created by imagination, but by the uncropped wounds of history. This methodological explanation avoids any possibility of confusion of the terminology, it firmly grounds the analysis within the trauma theory and not within the genre of magical realism.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Published in 2013, “*The Corpse Washer*” (initially “*Ya Maryam*” in Arabic), authored with the aid of Sinan Antoon, depicts the lives and challenges faced with the aid of Jawad and his own family in struggle-torn Baghdad. The novel explores the lives of diverse people within the Kazim own family, particularly Jawad, a young artist grew to become corpse washer amid the chaos of Iraq’s conflicts. As the identify suggests, Antoon’s “*The Corpse Washer*” takes region in a “Mghaysil” wherein Jawad Kazim, a reluctant inheritor of his own family’s career, is living. Jawad seeks to get away the cycle of

death, but the limitless influx of our bodies forces him to confront the pervasive trauma of conflict. Antoon's novels interfragmentary narratives to turn the site of trauma historically limited, into an internet of reckoning for survivors. Though the novel's protagonists are not necessarily psychologically grounded, they gradually transcend the boundaries between memory and truth, in the end harden the oppressive silence. A narrative of Baghdad that blurs the distinction between living to enjoy and the psychological consequences, as well as the long-held timelines of its novels reveals the distinction between lived to cherish and lost to, as described in the novel. This blurring in relation to characters outside of their traumatized self reaches beyond the limits of traumatized thinking. The repeated activities of Jawad, the repressed sentient of the house, disturb standard notions of victim-passivity and resignation. The changing roles of survivors are not different from the story shaping the house. And as memory evolves and develops, so does the characters' identities and skills. Recalling the past into a space of resistance, in which survivors keep their histories, testimonies, and persistence tucked away among the chaos of political change. Also, the requirements of the novels also characterize the binary competition between person and collective.

Special narrative powers are assigned to the characters to aid them, as well as Antoon, generate imaginary and unrealistic spaces, such as spaceships, which are beyond the constraints of a society ravaged by war. Antoon writes of cultural narratives that echo the author's own experience as a child in Iraq at a time of profound political and social change. These novels cover decades from the Iran-Iraq War to the U. S. invasion and subsequent invasion of Iraq in 2003, from dictatorship to occupation and sectarian war. He is an Antoon whose home life reflects his period, where he left Iraq after the 1991 Gulf War and now lives in the U.S. Antoon's novels have some of the most recognizable characteristics of Iraq, and the complicated family dramas, while being deeply Iraqi, reflect the wider sociopolitical tensions of the time. These novels chronicle the fates of generations of Iraqi families, as their lives are undercut by political and social shifting in the country. By exploring this family history, Antoon explores the complexity of Iraqi identity due to sect, gender and political affiliation.

The other cultural layer is the emotional strand of trauma that is entrenched in the novels. Antoon applies to the imaginations of most authors and is the employment of the trauma narratives in the generation of suspense, atmospheres, setting (time and place), and the complicated plot. Also, flashbacks and images that are haunting the characters are not only purposes but also mirror the cultural applicability of collective memory in Iraqi culture of traumatic events of the past and continuing violence. The women have not merely penned works of fictional constructs as Udasmoro et al explain but filled them with historical content, memories and plots." [1].

Antoon's novels are also a deep understanding of people in Iraqi society. The characters of the novels, such as the character of Jawad and elderly Youssef, grapple with traditional roles and aim to make space for independence in a system of endless violence. Through struggle, Antoon illustrates the bigger social changes that seemed beginning to challenge the status quo as survivors struggled to regain greater authority and power. This study uses the theory of "thriller" to examine how narrative strategies are employed to reconstruct Antoon's psycho-subjectivity as a site of survival and resistance. Memory as a survival metaphor and psychological force in is the novel's new way of representing war victims/traumatized subjects. This dispositive draws on theoretical developments by scholars such as Kathy Carruth who foreground the significance of deferred remembering in processes of identity and power. It reads how Antoon fractures traditionally binary oppositional structures, and challenges silencing norms, by making the subjected (traumatized) mind mutable, perceptive, and able to 'look' beyond itself.

Recent readings of trauma scholars developing the literature of the Arab world are also informing this article as they re-enact the location of the passive victim by the writings of such authors as Antoun. "The Intra Active Memory as a Site of Resistance and Transformation" is a light-hearted intervention on the discussion of narrative deconstruction as a feasible solution to the long-term bleeding of war. Subverts hegemonic binaries and logic of amnesia in a variety of rhetoric strategies. Both the narrators and the makers of the narrative are the same; it is in the two-way conversation, which is, the psycho temporal way. The traumatic peculiarities of the novels transcend the boundaries of the mind and permeate the outer reality that effects the flow of events and life of individuals.

The analysis also leads to the paper, with some scholars having examined the trauma in Arabic literature, who have analyzed how writers like Antoon have subverted and rejuvenated the tropes of passive victim. It contributes to the larger discourse about the possibility of narrative fragmentation as a viable tool of introducing into the present the unresolved traumas of war by stressing on the memory as a space of resistance and change. With his application of a wide variety of literary devices, Antoon breaks the traditional binary oppositions and norms of forgetting. The discontinuous plots with their identity and time changes reflect the changing identities and abilities of the characters. The traumatic aspects in the novels spill out of the mind affecting other events and individuals in the real world. This shows that the world of conflict is not the only sphere which in the traditional approach was seen as different and secondary to the mental domain, however, the sphere of the psychological space does have its own effective tool of influence. A novel can be transformed into a variety of forms: testimony, chronicle, essay, fantasy, legend, or poetry, and each of these forms can give us an opportunity to experience the multifacetedness of our world and see our role in it. "This concept is reflected in the novels of Antoon as they combine reality and imagination in the sense that there is a factual testimony blended with some bits of fantasy to bring out a strong political and literary voice-one that is also a reflection of the resistance of survivors. The power of the trauma literature in his work is that the victims are not depicted as passive, but as the ones that are formed by the constant struggle of survival. The power of memory in the characters questions the concept of victimhood as silence and challenges the efforts of erasure. By doing so, Antoon can be regarded as a transformative author that opposes oppression by means of fragmented narrative styles, which also suggests that sometimes imaginative expression can be more communicative than what can be described by scientific discourse [2].

Numerous researchers have been interested in the application of trauma discourses, especially concerning their combination of the individual with the collective in the psychological domain. Deborah Cohn believes that fragmentation tries to challenge the division between the individual and collective, between the past and the present [3]. Similarly, Patricia Lertora observes that "the traumatic aspects of the novels dissolve the lines between lived experience and memory, physical and metaphysical, rational and irrational" [4]. This confusion of trauma happens in the core of the discontinuous histories of sentient past and mnemonic past. However, some scholars have observed that the psychological and time alterations in the narratives mirror and help the characters to persevere. According to Celia Correias de Zapata, even memory turns out to be a living being, which is sensitive to the developing personalities and capacities of survivors [5]. Amelia Simpson also implies the psyche as "a microcosm of the nation" which becomes not only a refuge but also a source of power of the survivors [6].

In the novels, literature has provided emphasis on trauma and life survival. To most, Antoon goes against conventional beliefs of passive victimization, by making the mind a place to disobey and a place to be strong. Another statement by Lertora is that the novels sabotage the distinction between a passive psychological world and an active world of the public [4]. Zapata makes the same statement that the characters questioned the order of silence [5]. According to Simpson, Jawad rituals and role are a power and resistance [6]. Besides, Cohen also writes that Jawad is blurring the boundaries between the world of the public and the world of the private, and the tradition of sorrow using his means of obscurity, nevering a boundary between the worldly deeds and the supernatural ones [3]. Antoon thus constitutes attention to the survival problems in the Iraqi society, though not as many authors do, and this is the reason why the trauma narratives are employed to highlight questions of survival in Iraq. According to the parenting the text by Doris Meyer, Antoon applies this literary device to offer a resolution of conflicting dualities of life and death due to the human culture as it is formed by and embodies a world of becoming, a dynamic, open system that continuously attempts to synthesize the insistent dualisms spawned by human culture [7]. In the case of writers, it has been suggested to use the theme of forgetting to expose oppression and subjugation stories [8]. In these novels, Antoon extends his concept of the Iraqi culture benefitting the people of Iraq. Besides that, Antoon also endeavors to do so by depicting the survivors as the kings capable of transforming the horrible system of violence.

The text of a trauma narrative that he has created is meant to empower the survivors as it helps them to learn more about the uncoded side of the human reality. It achieves this by coming up

with a language that enables these experiences to speak, and which challenges the ideology that ignores and ignores them. The discontinuity that Antoon uses in his case allows him to create a language that would allow him to express the experience of the survivors in a manner that would not have been possible under the conventional realism. Combining the real with the hallucinatory, Antoon unveils the backstage of human actuality, of those actualities that have been silenced or disowned by erasive ideologies. The traumatizing issues of the novels serve as metaphorical representations of the usually unseen or undervalued aspects in the experiences of the survivors which include the strength of their emotions, the resistance they can achieve and their connections to shared pasts. The vision of imagination and wonder is what makes the readers of the "Literature of the Boom" be said to be engaged [9] with the "Literature of the Boom". Those aspects can also be employed to drive the establishment of a more fair and joyful society. The hidden spiritualities of human condition, according to him, can be revealed in the work of Antoon in a process of imagining and rediscovering the magical [7]. In that regard, the novels do not only document the experience of the lives of the survivors, but their impact extends. Antoon aims at widening the vision of his readers, concentrating on the concealed experiences, and unresearched facets of hegemonical ideologies, and putting them into question, and pointing them to novel social possibilities. They represent another form of knowledge and vision, and provide a means of influencing critical thinking and, maybe, social change. Another manner in which Antoon can expand the perspectives of his readers is through depicting the complexity of the Iraqi identity. He analyses the destinies of his characters, their life sect, gender, political affiliation in the experience of the individual. The effect of such detail is rather introspective descriptions of identity, and it is a means of challenging readers to consider the number of forces which shape their identities and those of other people.

Trauma narrative is a type of writing, which involves the process of remembering and fragmenting and psychological process appears to be blended with the practice of a daily life. In Magic Realism and the Postcolonial Novel, Cristopher Warnes offers an argument that the story of trauma may make the unhealed current real and introduce some sense of normality where the real or the haunting is portrayed in a balanced and somewhat constant manner [10] Trauma narrative is unique to other genres, and modes, which involve the use of loss. In literary works that utilize literary traumatology as a motif, there is the astonishing receptivity to the psychological as one of the aspects of a normal life. These dimensions are something in which characters and readers believe and conduct business without regard to the fact that they are a natural component of their world. In The Magic(al) Realism by Ann Bowers, it is seen that three stages of evolution of the narrative of trauma can be perceived throughout the period of history [11]. Franz Roh (1890-1965) was the first to coin the term, trauma narrative. Roh argues that the trauma narrative is representational, and it is likely to enhance the impact of items within the story. He goes on with magic intuition of a work of art that is created in an artistic fashion, which is not emphasized, yet explained [12,13].

That is to say, Roh describes the impact of the new style which has been satisfied through revealing the narratives object making it clearer and more innocent. Such a creation of visual art premature conception of the trauma narrative adds to the realistic aspect of described items and their lucidity. The second step in the development of the trauma narration theory that Bowers came up with is reflected in the writings of Alejo Carpentier (1904-1980). The idea of lo real maravloso or the marvelous real became well-known thanks to Cuban author Carpentier in the prologue to his novel The Kingdom of This World (1949). The wonderful real is to Carpentier the wonder of the extraordinary details of the daily life especially in the culture and history of the Latin America. He tells us, the most authentic expression of the soul of an era, the most exact national soul image is marvelous real [14]. The marvelous real as developed by Carpentier revolves around the magical and fantastic aspects of the real world, but not an alternate dimension of the supernatural. The third phase of the literature about trauma development is characterized by the publications of Gabriel Garcia Marquez according to which surrealism runs in alleys in Mexico. The roots of Latin American Surrealism are connected to the Latin American reality [13]. To Marquez, the marvelous, the supernatural, were not in a different plane of existence as compared to the real but they were a part of Latin American reality. The books, including One Hundred Years of Solitude (1967), are more or less a mix of the real and the fantastic in a manner that baffles and opens the eyes of the reader.

The novels of Antoon are extensions of the foundations of these earlier adherents of trauma-narrative. Just as Marquez, Antoon graciously incorporates psychological elements in his narration, which creates a sense of surprise and disappointment. The splintered mind states are filled with sentient and mnemonic contents; it also enables the characters to assume an empowering position. Antoon tries to rebuke traditional dichotomies in trauma narrative: memory and forgetfulness, public and personal, and Carpentier perception of the fine real. The transformation of the stories is representative of their changing identity of residents and pushes the part that the narrative of trauma is playing to an even greater extent than psychology. It is an indication that the psychological sphere as we forget it is a very powerful one. Based on a more realistic approach by Roh, the trauma story of Antoon represents a real account of the Iraqi culture and history and incorporates extraordinary and ordinary. It is not so much about fantasy but the mysterious side of ordinary life especially the memory. According to *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, in the 1970s, the trauma narrative has been firmly attached to authors, who embrace fragmentation to disrupt the cultural conventions and ideas of what is deemed as normal [16]. It should be noted that the use of trauma narrative in literature was pioneered by an Italian critic known as Massimo Bontempelli. This concept was initially written in Bontempelli journal 900 in 1927. Bontempelli connects the trauma storytelling with the notion that the unresolved experiences are hidden somewhere in the common daily life. He proposes that the contemporary twentieth century thinking is opposed to any rigid lines between the real and imaginary, but rather a sense of reality that is unified and includes both. Here, a sense of the magical aspect of the everyday life of objects and people exists [13].

Trauma narrative has emerged as a global phenomenon. The emergence of the traumatic realism genre in Arabic literature has sparked a debate among critics. They ask if it's been limited to Arabic literature or crossed regional borders to become a narrative style worldwide. Carpentier argues that trauma narrative is bound to a specific geographical space, highlighting the deep interconnection of reality and memory in the Arab world [11]. But critics like Bowers and Amaryll Chanady say that the story of trauma is not restricted by regional or national boundaries. Bowers mentions that authors of traumatic realism have been acknowledged internationally not only in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine, but all over the world. This trend has made trauma story a broader literary trend that is marked by a contest between the oppressed voices and the prevailing power structures. In *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris also argue that the trauma narrative makes possible the conflation of disparate realities, which permits the co-existence of worlds, spaces, and systems that would not be permitted to coexist or interact in traditional fiction [17].

Zamora and Faris indicate to us that trauma narrative is one of the ways through which one can explore and cross boundaries. As a way of offering the coexistence blend of divergent worlds and systems, the trauma narrative also breaks the rule and leaves a possibility to comprehend and depict new avenues. The novels of Antoon describe radical potential of trauma narrative as a critical and transformative device. This kind of literary device is utilized in a revolutionary manner, as Antoon breaks the established binary oppositions and shows how the survivors can become the source and agents of power and influence in society. Although memories are intangible and the psychological transformation, fragmented memories become the arena that is active and potent and symbolizes the personal and physical change of characters. Such traumatic characters of these novels come through the mind and create worlds and people. This is due to the fact that even the psychological space, traditionally regarded as an independent and lower body to the public sector led by men, imposes their influence. The larger project of social change is developed by Antoon through presenting memory as an element of resistance and change which expands the horizons of the readers and breaks the traditions of silence. The timeless worth of narrative of trauma as a literary procedure that may unearth the obscure facet of everyday life and create fresh social possibilities, Antoon timelessly reveals in his novels.

The Arabic writers of the 2000s see the reality in their countries so hyperbolic and surreal that they struggle to apply realism to the events that are happening in these countries. Such events as the U.S. invasion of Iraq or the sectarian violence could be explained only through the prism of traumatic realism. Such authors as Antoon have used traumatic realism to capture the attention of the rest of the world about the political, social, and economic conditions in Iraq. However, the Iraqi writers like

the Antoon and Hassan Blasim have not been so successful initially as it was in other places. Their contrast in this view brings out the difficulty of writers in the literary world - where the voices and opinions have been either ignored or silenced. Nonetheless, it did not come without the challenges but such authors as Antoon have used the strength of the trauma narrative to reflect the individual stories and plight of the survivors in the Iraqi world. Indeed, the novels by Antoon have been termed as political reviews of the war and occupation, posing a threat to elites. Last, as the long-term initiatives, including the foundation of the work on the narratives of trauma of the silenced and marginalized survivors so that they can be empowered and develop personally can be the intangible indicators of change, it might be critical to changing things around with the aim of building a better future [18].

Bowers and talks about the ways Marquez has impacted Antoon in writing the novels: "It has been frequently stated that the works of Antoon owe a lot to *"One Hundred Years of Solitude"*, such as the use of an omniscient narrator who recreates the account of the events basing on forgotten memories [11]. Antoon credits this inspiration source and ironically, he compares himself with a pirate who has taken over the ship of letters [19]. In the novels, he uses trauma narrative, which makes his work capable of shadowing, mimicking and reversing the original form that is said to cast it [20]. According to Robert Antoni, in Parody or Piracy, it is not individual voices that narrate the novels but a more collective, collaborative voice and that although traumatic events are given in the fiction by Antoni in the same deadpan style as in the fiction of Garcia Marquez, but that the entire concept is made to twist [19]. Therefore, there has been a literary legacy in Iraq to inter-exist with others that are more established so that Antoon can re-gender writing, memory and storytelling to subvert the self-propagating in Cien Anos de Soledad [20]. Bowers further says that Antoon uses the literary device of trauma narrative in his novels and thus allowing the existence of multiple truths [11].

According to the claims by Faris in Ordinary Enchantments, the characters in the novels directly attack authoritarianism and the prejudice of the society concerning gender and sexuality among other problems. The characters of Jawad, the main character, and Youssef are often used by Antoon as strong figures of the survivors. Antoon successfully uses this narrative technique to provide a face to the emerging genre of trauma writing that brings in a multi-sided perspective that marks the search of communal voice [21].

3. PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS IN "THE CORPSE WASHER"

To grasp the message in the novels, it is necessary to grasp all the psychological details of the situation by Antoon. These include, among other issues, a very keen examination of how survivors are portrayed especially in a tiny space, not the least in their own minds, in the novels. Scars in the novels of Antoon are secretive and concealed in the memories and flashbacks. The novels makes the concept of interdependence of characters and psyches and that they lack an existence beyond one another. A closer glance at the picture will reveal that, besides the simmering political scenario in Iraq, there is another war that is being fought, a survival war, and it is fought in the harsh competition that exists in the mind. In the example by Antoon of the battle between remembering and forgetting and opposites in the human mind, it is breathtaking that mind is actually imagined as a battlefield to itself in the books. That is to say the mind reflects the eternal internal struggle of the manner in which the survivors are largely treated and empowered in Iraq as Jalna Hanmer and Sheila Saunders demystify in Well-founded Fear: the sense of security of the survivors in the public spaces is strong-rooted in the failure to acquire an unchallenged right to occupy the space of the Iraqi survivors [22]. Thus, it is important to realize that despite the fact that the psychological world is commonly seen as a limited area of survivor, it is essential to admit that the actions performed inside the head are very valuable. Although being situated in the sphere of the private; survivors are also able to proclaim their agency and seek sources of power in this sphere, as well. Hooks restructures the concept of the psychic space, its relevance in the face of gender roles, sectarianism, and spirituality in the consciousness of the survivors of color, the working classes. Homeplace: A Site of Resistance is a study by Hooks that explores the homeplace of these survivors, and introduces it as a site of resistance, survival, and continued struggle towards liberation [23].

When it comes to assigning the two discussed novels the trauma classification, we can say that in *The Corpse Washer* it is a locus of personal trauma, and in *Ave Maria* it is a locus of group trauma. The space in most of the works appears to be subdivided into the spheres of personal and social parts of life. Jawad has power over his rituals and the inner world of his mind. But it is Youssef who is in charge of the collective memories of his family. The present paper dwells on the images of dismantled minds and what it means to remain and be frail in the novels. Metaphor of memory i.e. makes the characters the way they behave in their efforts to struggle against war-ruled domination. Through this the novels draw upon the psychic formation and spaces they contain as metaphors or symbols of social and political barriers. The remaining members of the family do not want to be controlled by metaphoric or symbolic walls. Rather, they can face them. Jawad, Youssef, and Maha are three individuals who are not cycled by violence, who attempt to harness it and delimit it by conformity to orthodox ideas of victimhood, and by preconceived functions of survival. The characters do not hesitate to confront violence in their homeland - and challenge its authority there. They set up their camp by continuing to multiply their lives elsewhere or by simply choosing not to narrate their stories. Characters and trauma in the novels are in a constant struggle to dominate the same space. But as the stories progress, trauma returns to know that it has lost the battle.

The first chapters of the novels reveal the attitude of Jawad toward death taking into consideration the desire to escape it and put it into the frames of his inner world. The traits that described Jawad included resilience, emotional complexity, take-charge attitude and affinity to art as opposed to ritual. Jawad ablutely washes alone. He recalls his memories, and commands them with an iron will. The bodies could not hold against him: he invests permanent and remarkable on in the determination which will become immortal loss in the coming many years. They survive. He sticks said memories on the walls and survives, in spite of cold impunity to the visual. He introduces the psyche in large, heavy and powerful pieces that are to be passed on through generations, as a representative of the rural life. He puts them on the walls and places them in a way that is practical and convenient instead of appealing to beauty [24]. Then the city is flattened by invasions, Jawad decides to continue with what he had already started in life.

4. EXPLORING TRAUMA NARRATIVE IN “AVE MARIA”

In the case of *Ave Maria*, the spirituality of Youssef does not influence the house. His head is never in the clouds and his energies are always directed towards those who inhabit the place, and not focused on any kind of escapism. The fact that the author uses the narrative of trauma enables the author to represent the active rebellion of Youssef against what the society dictates him to be. The novel sees Youssef as someone resisting the customary interpretation of the house as the place of sectarian hegemony. He transforms the house into his world of memory, which is inaccessible and understandable to the external brutality. He manages to break the chains of imprisonment through developing a personal realm that has traumatic features. He opposes the standard vision of the house as a place of political superiority. He initiates a process of transformation, which turns the house into his own kingdom, with some elements of trauma infused into it as he puts it:

The noble, seigniorial architecture started growing off all kinds of supplementary little rooms, staircases, turrets and terraces, in response to the imaginative delight of Youssef, and the needs of the moment. The bricklayers used to add another extension to the house when a new visitor came. The large residential house on the corner gradually transformed into a maze [25]. Once the house is initially disturbed, it is clear that violence has already found its way to the house. Its features include the solemn, cubic and dense aspects as well as the pompous one [25]. Violence forces the architect to work under a disruption mode so as to make a stark contrast to the traditional architectural forms. It desires the house to display its status, devastation, and order and civility that it associates with power [25].

The house is emanating with dilapidation with broken layout, straight lines, and graceful, imported furniture. However, as trauma approaches, there is a narrative figure, which serves as a narrative moving force. The grand house has been restored to its original dignified appearance, but over the years Youssef infiltrates the interior of the house with his distinctive fusion of spirituality, memories, art, and complexity. After a short time, the back part of the house is burdened with layers of narrative elements- protrusions and built-up forms, twisting staircases, going nowhere, towers, small windows that cannot be opened, doors suspended in the air, distorted corridors and portholes connecting various living spaces such that people can still communicate even during siesta [25]. The

modifications are executed as per the direction of Youssef through his visions and the instructions of the other world through the mnemonic material. The fact that the depiction of these experiences might appear to be chaotic initially will assist in the establishment of a world free of peace, as well as the world of untrampled freedom of the lead characters within the novel. The fact that the house infringed upon so many state and city regulations is significant because it acts as a reminder of the trauma narrative that Youssef went through, and how it is in revolt against the authoritarian regime.

The traumatic nature of authority posed by Jawad is revealed even when he is told about the never-ending dying. He is regretting not pursuing art earlier. He is making plans in his mind of what to do but he puts in his mind what he would do had he heard about the losses. He imagines that he will have a great palace with the treasures of the depths of antiquity and considers the possibility of removing them away and maintain them as if he is the only person holding a key [24]. Jawad is of the opinion that had he kept his dreams to himself, they would not have been stolen off him through war [24].

Just like most conventional characters, Jawad perceives his losses as something that should be cherished and keeps them to a minimum so as to make them loyal. Jawad is so keen on retaining his memories alongside him that he even goes to the extent of preparing a ritual. He has a spot in this ritual, his family, and his long-gone desires. He is ruthless that nobody or nothing would ever strip him of his memories again.

But, there is no inner world that can completely conceal Jawad to the outer world. Jawad follows in the footsteps of his strong will and independent father; he is also a man who is not scared to defend what he believes in. His dad is out to preach continuity within the system, and he is termed as the first washer in the family. He follows his predecessors in adhering to traditions, yet, unlike the others, he cannot find the strength to give up the practice [24]. It also brings into our mind how the violent system can twist even the tough guys through its tricks. In the novel the role of the father as a strong and powerful man. The right to remember, the freedom to mourn of future generations, that of continuity, is in his favour very much. Similarly, Jawad struggles silently to restore a certain degree of his agency to the mghaysil that violence has placed Jawad in. Jawad is also able to open himself to violence without its physical and permanent deterritorialization in the ritual. He becomes his own agency and alters the course with the assistance of various narrative elements. It is pertinent to state that Jawad becomes a witness, a survivor under the tutelage of his father. He speaks to the dead, he sees the signs of the coming losses, he reads. Whatever his father leaves him, his knowledge, his wisdom, becomes as well to Jawad the groundwork as a narrative entity within the novel as he too becomes strong, dissonant to the startling intrusion of even the most grotesque and hideous figures into his workplace, or even all the sneering knocks of haunting horrors at the window of his soul [24].

The presence of Jawad in the story is first in a human aspect, this in turn makes him reveal the outside world in the inner part of his brain. And the main character is, to some extent, the owner of these psychological processes of the story, and his wishes are proclaimed. When the other opportunities fail him, he retires into a region that is way out of the violence. This interpretation of the psyche finds its meaning in the interpretation of Marjorie Agosin who holds that Jawad has not only created his own space and his own place in the imagination but also avoided the presence of oppression [26]. On the one hand, Jawad has found an escape in the mind, in the wounds that he has lived with, as a way of escaping the authoritarianism of his father in his childhood house [26].

To illustrate, Jawad has trained how not to touch things and move them; how to foresee the future and know what other people are planning to do [24]. The narrator tells us in the book that Jawad is able to foresee bombs, occurrences that are distant like bombs, the rare case of ceasefires in the capital city and even recognize victims before the authorities. However, despite all his gifts, Jawad does not succeed because they are rejected by almost everyone. It is skeptical about the supernatural or the extraordinary even when it has been proved otherwise and that reflects the isolation Jawad may experience due to his unique talent [24]. The shock of the traumatic experience that Jawad went through is a major part of his life and, consequently, also affects the lives of his family, although they disregard them. Since his youthful age, Jawad has been able to show the ability to foresee what is to happen in the future and the hidden agenda of people. The concerned person has the ability to foresee invasions, predict the occurrence of his brother in service, even understand the identity of a local criminal prior to the fact that the police will find the remains of the victim. It is

those kind of imagination and those formidable powers of the traumas that cause his isolation towards the real world. Even after he is entangled in ritual, Jawad holds on to his secret, the interior universe. By so doing, he goes counter to the notion of control over survivors in the entire novel as survivors are not normally granted the power to make their own decisions and instead can only be witnesses, grievers, or forgotten. Jawad has the capacity to perceive the dead and predict the future making him able to help. He also creates a world where only the survivors are possible. His mind is that world, the fractured psyche, which is a place of meetings and reunions of witnesses, writers, and other eccentrics. These are the Theosophists, the acupuncturists, the telepaths, the Rainmakers, the Peripatetics, the Seventh-day Adventists, as well as the ghosts who were the students of the spiritualism and the supernatural phenomenon [24].

The ghosts and Jawad perform numerous activities including contacting the past, remembering and also using the three-legged table of Jawad as a communication tool. All these experiences are indicative of the larger fight of the survivors against oppressive systems, and their relationships with various spheres of influence. The ghosts and Jawad are hence seen as being in a world of mixture when psychic communication is involved. As the ghosts entered the mind of Jawad, they knew each other, shared smiles and also have a strong spiritual contact with each other which lasted all their lives-or rather as per their faith-life after life [23]. The specified example shows that there is an immediate connection between the survivors, whether they live in physical space or they exist in the form of mnemonics.

The disintegrated psyche within the novels of Antoon is symbolic of the family and the psyche is a natural extension of the fact that the family and the world exist solely due to differences among two groups of people, namely the survivors and the oppressors. Antoon psychologically symbolizes the gap between the survivors and violence who are unlike, suggesting a spatial concept of the gap that exists in which there is the closed one in which the survivors are confined. An example is the traumatic capabilities of Jawad and the stamina he suffers during the process of improving his skills, which attracts marginalized people because he welcomes them into his world in a graceful manner. Moreover, Jawad is very generous with giving solace and refuge to the less fortunate. He gives these people the chance to interact with the outside world, which is a reflection of his inner being giving them the opportunity to enter a world in which violence is not allowed to venture. His psyche symbolizes the strength of his resilience, which is a metaphor of the power that survivors have in the Arabic literature. Ann Pescatello has defined this in *Female and Male in Latin America*:

The survivor rightly realizes that roles differentiation and definition is one of her strengths and power. The very concepts like the separateness and mystery of survivors, which are frequently regarded as ideological instruments of marginalizing survivors in the North American context, are, instead, viewed in the Iraqi context as the qualities to not only be retained but also enhanced in the Iraqi context [27].

No wonder, violence has always been in defiance of this Carnavalesque of the psyche and the daily spectacle, which transverses it. The carnival esque is a word affected by *Problems of Dostoevsky Poetics* by Mikhail Bakhtin, where he claims that the concept is based on the disruption of the cultural order where the roles are reversed, and the victims are crowned. There is no one prohibited or pushed aside, the marginalized has been in the forefront and the unvoiced has been given a voice, in authority. Power changes, and authority changes [28]. This is the reason why in his approach violence suggests that the psyche is not to pass through, and in an unfeeling way, he dictates that the daily carnivalesque must be over with.

The family of Jawad has consciously attempted to conceal his burdens particularly following an incident that occurred when he was a child, and he has lost it in a family. The authorities have consequently made Jawad to be claimed as being possessed by grief! The traumatic powers also shape the life of Jawad as he is highly affected by it. He also tells his family and granddaughter, Maha, his narrative way of life. The oppressors of Jawad in the novels do not show concern with the talents of Jawad. This generalization of their behavior elucidates the rest of the insensitivity to survivors that is practiced in the narrative. The family appears to ignore the trauma that Jawad was exposed to, but they keep on banking on his scope of strength whenever they are in a state of extreme distress. It means that the psychological abilities of Jawad are more significant than his

family tried to appear. Antoon in the novels skillfully brings traumatic themes to bring out the unexplained character of the world. By doing so he gives a strong argument in the ability of the psychological to provide solace during difficult moments.

Thus, when Jawad and his memories, mainly flashbacks, train a life of individual freedom, and occupy the desired space, of the anarchy, they leave the town without violence of any kind. In the case of its return, the psyche has a short-lived change in mood, and the party is at an end. Jawad is always having a hard time proving his superiority within the limits of the psyche as his family constantly fights to the last ounce. The space around him compels him to be affected by it as Jawad is restricted to a certain space and time and he cannot escape the cycle legally [24].

He carries out mental efforts to take a step forward, stretches to the furthest limits that violence has established within the fractured psyche, making it an enchanted maze which could not be washed as well as could not be covered with statutes and urban regulations [24].

The labyrinth is a tell-tale word as it refers to a maze-like form that does not have the linearity of a straight line and has the survival instinctive power of a brain. A survivor transforms the perfect, rational setting of violence, escapes the limits of his surrounding and turns it into his own. The fight over space is at its climax during the life of Jawad with the assistance of his mad memories. Michael Handelsman suggests that the term *eccentrics* is a symbol of the space occupied by Jawad and this description suggests that Jawad is strong. Consequently, the psyche signifies the need by Jawad to have a space where he can do his endless rituals. The mind becomes a mini-world that depicts the political and social changes in the outside world. The mind, which had been filled with the magical and spiritual figures of the whimsical imagination of Jawad, is now filled with political propaganda and party of violence men. This torrent of politics affect slowly the possession which Jawad has of his own mind, in that his retinue, is relegated into the shadows. That a line of invisibility is drawn in the psyche between Jawad and violence, to indicate their contrasting (yet interconnected) worldviews and the conflict between their connection. Gillian Rose in his book "Feminism and Geography", explains that the premise of psyche is not an objectively natural or an objectively neutral idea but a rather a socially built phenomenon, which is closely linked to the human experience. She further elucidates that space is not a well-established phenomenon, but it is produced in the course of daily activities and interpersonal relationships. The meaning and identity are always constructed in interactions of the people and others [29].

According to Rose, spatial trauma recognizes the dominant discourse, as well as resistance. This description, therefore, places the protagonist in a lot of marginal roles and central roles at the same time, as he is driven and opposing the forces inherent in his surroundings. This characterization does not only make him a subject, but also a challenger. In such a manner, it is in the fragmented psyche wherein Jawad has been struggling to be free that he prevails through narrative. Although the appearance of the psyche did not experience any changes [24],

Jawad possesses and controls the most intimate areas of the mind. Even the rear garden, once an ideal, strict imitation of a French garden, is his; tumbled jungle where all kinds of plants and flowers had grown and his birds continued to make a continuous noise, as well as dozens of generations of cats and dogs [24]. The owner of the property is Jawad since there was an invisible frontier between the halves of the psyche that belonged to violence and that which belonged to his wife [24].

The spatial division in the psyche, which is not visible, is an indicator of the disconnectedness of violence and the disconnection of the selves because the psyche has traditionally been the unity of its occupants.

The relations between the psyche and the character Jawad are discussed in *Writing Trauma in Iraq: Literary Representations of War and Oppression*. As per it, the psyche is the place where imagination of the survivor is expressed. Agosin also claims that Jawad is a different person in his own space and imagination. He consciously avoids the presence of oppression and escapes to other mental spaces a habit that he had acquired during his childhood while staying in the house of his father [26].

Simple pastimes such as remembering some piece of art or fantasizing himself off to another land give Jawad an escape of his immediate environment. The belief that Jawad has in his ability to narrate stories and the efforts that he puts to play with memories using his mind gives him a sense of

aloofness to reality [26]. The psyche has transformed its layouts to turn out as a representation of Jawad as opposed to violence. The psyche which violence long admired, constructed, and built is gone. Rather than a reflection of it, which it had hoped to be, the psyche is now the reflection of Jawad, his family, and the relations between them and Jawad. It is even possible to say that the psyche is a resolute presence. Although it might seem that the duplicity system of oppression dominates, the survivors manage to manipulate their power in the underworld, and Antoon manages to convey this message in these novels with the help of psychological metaphors.

This can be traced in the reaction of Jawad to the physical encroachment of violence that crushes him and paralyzes his dreams as he tries to protect his dreams [24]. He then shrugs it off, but at one-point retreats into his mind. The social confinement of the survivors to the personal sphere, according to Rose, is one kind of spatial dislocation that confines the survivors in a displaced position or no place. Although the survivors may find themselves in a position where they may be threatened, due to violence at their homes or under the local society, they cannot acquire the form of essential agency to take them out of the hazardous circumstances because of these norms [29].

The fact that Jawad would not permit violence to enter his interior world (mind, body) is a powerful weapon. It is even more radical change in his character and development that he would switch to oral communication then never to use verbal communication with violence again. Violence has created and equipped Jawad with the place where he lives so that he can be trapped but he uses his space to work against it. Such actions have been misinterpreted in the view as passive, however, psychological analysis shows that Jawad is not silent in the novels. The concept of space is redefined then as an individual space of creativity and imagination. How many times already at the beginning of the novels Jawad has already informed the body which is oppressing him that it has no place in his strong universe and makes the vow not to say an oppressive word anymore! Violence is not frustrated, but defeated because it does not even have access to the soul of Jawad [24].

Jawad exemplifies the defining spirit of the fascinating realm of the shattered mind and his perseverance means the beginning of a shift in that story [24]. In the absence of Jawad to absorb the bloody violent energy, there is no impulse to plaster the drywall holes or to rehabilitate the shattered pieces of furniture. The mind becomes a shambles as Jawad gets away [24]. Violence is pushed at last to admit that it was affected by the very fact that Jawad had an inherent sense of active survival in him and has learned to respect him in his own grotesque way. Therefore, the people can be described as holding a certain power, practically speaking, regarding capacity, capability, which may change the point of view because trauma is a symbol of position of dominance and power.

Such violence, many years later, having found itself alone in the giant psyche, has echoes only with it. It is frightened with the spooky noises that appear to fill the hallways in this solitude, afraid of the existence of haunting souls and spirits. Nevertheless, the suspicions of violence disappear each time it comes across the phantom of Jawad at the corridors or hears his voices at the terrace [24].

Jawad also has an innate ability to communicate with the dead which even continues to exist when he dies that allows him to keep in touch with the living. Violence is really confident that Jawad possesses a remarkable power, that Jawad is comforting itself with the high luxury of a heroic retreat. In addition, Maha, entangled in the violence, has lost the disgusting experience of loss and violence at the hands of the tension. During her saddest moments, she appeals to the merciful essence of her ancestors and demands their support and reassurance, in the pursuit of solving her suffering. The spirits do not manifest but Jawad comes to her in the semi-conscious state that Maha is in, which makes her strong and at peace with herself. Just like the rest, Maha does not care much about the trauma of Jawad only to realize she does according to her circumstances. She adores her grandfather admiring him as the beauty of the crippled psyche [25].

When Jawad is dying, Maha understands that becoming physically apart will not cause their spiritual bond to stretch. In her battles, the ghost of Jawad comes to her and makes her go against the death and re-identify with her by remembering. Maha talks frequently about spirits and ghosts in the house, and also how she can recall Jawad and his friends. In the perspective, of Maha, who holds the opinion that is shared by Jawad, these things are entirely normal and irrefutable. As an illustration, she appears not shy in discussing about the glorious past of meeting with spirits and flying tables in the large house [25].

The contacts that Maha and Jawad experience in the blending worlds mirror their empowerment. Jawad urges Maha to voice the survivors that were victimized against tyranny, and he directs her to write the experiences down. Trying to show how his characters refuse to remain submissive in the violent society, Jawad gives Maha the mission of revealing the ugly truths of the sufferings that the survivors go through under the law of war [25].

The product of creativity of Maha, which is limited only to her imagination space, is her personal escape in a world of disarrays, just the way the written stories that Jawad wrote were his way out of the unpackaged violence. By doing that, Maha begins her secret writing, which helps her to encapsulate the nature of existence that gave birth to life [25]. Just like much of the literature in the trauma-realist genre, one of the central goals of the novels by Antoon is to provide voice to those social groups that had been marginalized and silenced in society and provide them a means of expressing their own unique worldview. Reading the story of Maha, Antoon restores the perspectives of all survivors who have long been overlooked in the course of history, as well as his personal people, whom he encountered and encountered. Meyer quotes Cixous, says that survivors are thought to possess a greater knowledge of the latent realities. But these realities are not always realized in the open speech, but they live on in the oblique expressions of dreams, embodied experiences, silence, and muted or unspoken expressions of resistance that, though voiceless, are nonetheless strong [13].

Jawad has successfully imparted Maha the fact that the mnemonic world that is above the realm of the visible world, provides a way to promote togetherness and inter-departmental interaction. The traumatic and the psychological in the composite voice that Maha sees as a necessity to the development of a society is part of the ordinary.

The violence fades at the end of the novels as an antique. Maha is adamant that the spirit of Jawad exists in its demise. At the beginning, Jawad is spoken of as something as a blind radiance. Nevertheless, with time the rage which has engulfed the violence slowly substituted, Jawad starts to appear in his most colorful face. He comes out as though he is enjoying his best with a wide smile, dancing around the other spirits, as he glides along the psyche. Violence takes solace in the ghostly form and traumatic powers of Jawad to enable it to die happily as it whispers in his name: Jawad, the symbol of perseverance and witness. This is to emphasize how the traumatic in the novels has an incredible capacity of offering relief during times of great difficulty. The divided psyche in which the families have been living through generations is also represented through family, Jawad, and his psychological abilities.

Though the other members of the family remain unaware of it until Jawad tells them of it, Maha believes him to be the soul of the giant psyche on the corner. When Maha is young and Jawad disappears, the psyche very fast starts to unravel. The blinds and drapes are closed, the flowers in the vases die, and the roof tiles start to break. The rest of the psyche deteriorates over the course of decades, but violence keeps the space Jawad inhabits so tightly locked down it can find his ghost whenever it pleases. When Jawad fades, all the rest of the world's psyche found out later: the psyche lost its flowers, its nomadic friends, and its playful spirits and came to be known as the era of waning" [24]. In other words, in the absence of Jawad, the home slowly falls into a state of neglect and decay. Jawad has all but taken over the household, making the house run smoothly and keeping an almost magical atmosphere. And so, the enchantment of the psyche is diminished, and violence's curious fixation on politics and money so separates it from the rest of the family. Thus, the psyche becomes representative of the disintegrating families. In this life of violence seeking to own the life it finds within the institutions it makes for them, Jawad and the rest of the family's survivors have fought for their freedom.

The comparative analysis of both novels shows that fragmented narration is an important formal expression of war trauma in both of them, but it functions in different ways, depending on the experience of the protagonist. In *The Corpse Washer* fragmentation is seen in the repetitive rituals of Jawad and the spiritual encounters of the ghosts as a personal response to the death cycle, whereas in *Ave Maria*, fragmentation is considered in the spiritual visions of Youssef and the reorganization of the domestic space as the space of collective memory and resistance. Such narrative approach is consistent with the claims of Cathy Caruth (1996) who argues that trauma cannot be represented in a linear manner, and it requires fragmented shapes. The style of Antoon is reminiscent of shock/trauma literature all over the world. It is similar to how Gabriel García Márquez uses magic realism and

cyclical time to portray collective violence in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, and how Günter Grass uses fragmentation in narrative in *The Tin Drum* in an attempt to deal with the issue of war guilt and unprocessed historical trauma. Through such methods, Antoon takes the Iraqi experience out of its local situation, adding to a global comprehension of literature as a method of curing painful wounds into literary acts of resistance and survival.

5. CONCLUSION

When reading through *The Corpse Washer* by Sinan Antoon and *Ave Maria*, one can see that there is a constant academic anxiety that is focused on the unhealed wound that is the constant development of war trauma in Iraq a phenomenon that cannot be expressed as a neat package in an idealistic notion of closure or a healing curve that goes on a line with a lengthy tail. Jawad and Yussef, through their fractured psyches, enable Antoon to argue that war trauma in the Iraqi sense is not merely an object of historical memory but, through the continuum of space-temporality, in which the present exists.

In fact, in *The Corpse Washer*, the mghassal ritual is used in the form of a metaphor that combines the divine and the gruesome. The struggle faced by Jawad is a summation of the weight of a generation that is forced to exonerate the consequences of the Cold War on a global scale and the resultant geopolitical invasion. The fact that he goes beyond struggle to become haunted and conclusive in regard to accepting his vocation would indicate that a final bulwark to human dignity in the face of endless mortality is the pleading over and washing down of the dead. But the work *Ave Maria* extends this trauma, making it a part of a greater cultural and religious memory. The depiction of the protagonist of the book not being able to leave his native home and historical context is a counter-narrative to the displacement and sectarian divisions which became deeper after 2003.

The narrative means used by Antoon, especially the use of nonlinear temporality and callings to ghostly dreams and sensory experience, are more than just a simple documenting of and retracing suffering; but they act as a critical deconstruction of the national memory. These methods form part of a certain practice of corpse-washing which does not only question the Iraqi sociopolitical fabric.

The image of the shape of fractured memory of Baghdad alters the setting of the novel in a platform where the forgotten dead of the past can express their testaments. In this regard, the novel location turns out to be the place where the atrocities of the past are brought back and they have to be addressed. The study also argues that the unhealed wounds that Antoon has are not an indication of resignation but instead celebrate narrative resistance. This battle described in his fiction turns around the issue of forgetting and it is based on the assumption that despite the ruins of war and conflict, storytelling is a method of preservation which maintains the cultural identity and collective memory.

In conclusion, *The Corpse Washer* novel or as what they call in Arabic “*Ave Maria*” by Sinan Antoon prove that fragmented narration and memory is not only the tool of style but the tool of addressing and combating the trauma of war. Antoon, through the characters of Jawad and Youssef turns the wound of war that had not been healed yet to a place of psychological resistance and survival.

Future research can build upon the discussion of these narrative strategies in the later works of Antoon to examine how his notion of trauma and memory evolved in various phases of his writing career.

REFERENCES

1. Udasromo, W., Setiadi, & Firmonasari, A. (2023). The survival strategy of diaspora Javanese women in New Caledonia in the novel *La Bayou de Djakarta à Nouméa*. *Jordan Journal of Modern Languages and Literatures*, 15(4), 1445–1462. <https://doi.org/10.47012/jjml.15.4.18>
2. Moody, M. (1986). Isabel Allende and the testimonial novel. *Confluencia*, 2(1), 39–43. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27921696>
3. Cohn, D. (1996). To see or not to see: Invisibility, clairvoyance, and re-visions of history in *Invisible Man* and *La Casa de Los Espíritus*. *Comparative Literature Studies*, 33(4), 372–395.

4. Lértora, P. R. de. (1999). *Escritoras chilenas, novela y cuento*. Editorial Cuarto Propio.
5. Zapata, C. C. de. (2008). *Short stories by Latin American women: The magic and the real*. Modern Library.
6. Simpson, A. S. (1992). *New tales of mystery and crime from Latin America*. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.
7. Meyer, D. (1990). 'Parenting the text': Female creativity and dialogic relationships in Isabel Allende's *La Casa de Los Espíritus*. *Hispania*, 73(2), 360. <https://doi.org/10.2307/342815>
8. Fadla, S., & Awad, Y. (2018). Transcending the patriarchal border and re-claiming the self in Edna O'Brien's *The Light of Evening*. *Jordan Journal of Modern Languages and Literature*, 10(1), 47–62.
9. Swanson, D. R. (1990). Medical literature as a potential source of new knowledge. *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association*, 78(1), 29–37.
10. Warnes, C. (2014). *Magical realism and the postcolonial novel: Between faith and irreverence*. Palgrave Macmillan.
11. Bowers, M. A. (2004). *Magic(al) realism*. Routledge.
12. Roh, F. (1995). Magic realism: Post-expressionism (1925). In L. P. Zamora & W. B. Faris (Eds.), *Magical realism: Theory, history, community* (pp. 15–33). Duke University Press.
13. Menton, S. (1983). *Magic realism rediscovered: 1918–1981*. The Art Alliance Press.
14. Carpentier, A. (1949). *The kingdom of this world* (H. de Onís, Trans.). Farrar, Straus and Giroux
15. García Márquez, G. (1970). *One hundred years of solitude* (G. Rabassa, Trans.). Harper & Row.
16. Sim, S. (2012). *The Routledge companion to postmodernism*. Routledge.
17. Zamora, L. P., & Faris, W. B. (2005). *Magical realism: Theory, history, community*. Duke University Press.
18. Abdel Hafeez, G. (2023). Counter-conduct and persistence in selected works by Egyptian women writers. *Jordan Journal of Modern Languages and Literatures*, 15(1), 347–363.
19. Hart, P. (1989). *Narrative magic in the fiction of Isabel Allende* (Doctoral dissertation, Fairleigh Dickinson University).
20. Hatjakes, A. (2008). *Magical realism: The remythification, reconception, and regendering of narrative in Alejo Carpentier's El reino de este mundo, Gabriel García Márquez's Cien años de soledad, and Isabel Allende's La casa de los espíritus* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nevada, Reno).
21. Faris, W. B. (2004). *Ordinary enchantments: Magical realism and the remystification of narrative*. Vanderbilt University Press.
22. Hanmer, J., & Saunders, S. (1984). *Well-founded fear: A community study of violence to women*. Hutchinson Education.
23. hooks, b. (2015). *Yearning: Race, gender, and cultural politics*. Routledge.
24. Antoon, S. (2013). *The Corpse Washer*. Yale University Press.
25. Antoon, S. (2017). *The Baghdad Eucharist (Ave Maria)*. Hoopoe Fiction.
26. Agosin, M. (1985). Isabel Allende: The House of the Spirits. *Revista Interamericana de Bibliografía*, 35, 448–458.
27. Pescatello, A. (1979). *Female and male in Latin America: Essays*. University of Pittsburgh Press.
28. Bakhtin, M. M., Emerson, C., & Booth, W. C. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics*. University of Minnesota Press.
29. Rose, G. (1993). *Feminism and geography: The limits of geographical knowledge*. Polity Press.